

Work Changes Course

Tracing how economic change reshaped worker skills and education.

12.E3a "As the United States has evolved from an agrarian to an industrial to an information economy, the workplace requires a more highly skilled and educated workforce."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one work requirement for each era. Circle ways workers learned skills. Mark continuities across eras.

From Fields to Data

- ① Farming was central to the early nineteenth-century U.S. economy. Agrarian workers needed knowledge of crops, seasons, animals, tools, and markets. Families and apprenticeships taught many skills; accounting and trading also required literacy and arithmetic. Limited formal schooling did not mean workers lacked skill. Machinery later raised output per worker, helping reduce farming's employment share. Farming remained important as work shifted toward towns and cities.
- ② Industrialization expanded factories, mines, offices, and construction. Workers operated machines, followed schedules, and coordinated production. Skilled jobs involved technical reading, measurement, and maintenance, while some divided tasks reduced the training required for particular jobs. High schools, vocational courses, apprenticeships, and workplace instruction supported different paths. New technology could eliminate tasks, create occupations, or change existing jobs. Workers able to learn new equipment or enter skilled trades often had more options, though training access was unequal.
- ③ Since the late twentieth century, digital networks and data have transformed manufacturing, farming, health care, and other services. Many roles require interpreting information, communicating, solving problems, and updating skills. Colleges, community colleges, certification programs, and employer training provide preparation or evidence of skills. Technicians may combine mechanical expertise with digital records. Not every job requires college, and older sectors have not disappeared. Access to suitable training shapes opportunity.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did many agrarian workers learn, and why should limited formal schooling not be confused with a lack of skill?

2 Name two duties that industrial workers had to perform that show why stronger literacy, mathematics, and technical preparation became useful.

3 List the four education or training pathways named in paragraph 3.

4 Why did industrial workers who could learn new machines or enter skilled trades have more options?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

In three sentences, compare agrarian, industrial, and information-economy work. Include one skill from each era and explain how preparation changed without suggesting earlier workers were unskilled.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline one work requirement for each era. Circle ways workers learned skills. Mark continuities across eras. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did many agrarian workers learn, and why should limited formal schooling not be confused with a lack of skill?	Families and apprenticeships passed on knowledge of crops, tools, animals and markets. Such work required practical skill even without lengthy schooling.
2	Name two duties that industrial workers had to perform that show why stronger literacy, mathematics, and technical preparation became useful.	Examples include technical reading, measurement, machine maintenance, operating equipment, and coordinating production.
3	List the four education or training pathways named in paragraph 3.	Colleges, community colleges, certification programs, and workplace training provided by employers.
4	Why did industrial workers who could learn new machines or enter skilled trades have more options?	Technology changed tasks and occupations; learning equipment or skilled trades could open more job options.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Agrarian workers learned practical crop and tool knowledge through families or apprenticeships. Industrial jobs ranged from divided routine tasks to skilled measurement and machine maintenance, supported by workplace and vocational training. Information-economy jobs often combine earlier expertise with digital analysis and continuing learning, through several educational pathways.

Accept accurate examples from each era and evidence of changing preparation. Do not require a claim that every modern job needs college or that farming and manufacturing disappeared.