Growth and Its Costs

Trace how industrial growth changed work, markets, and government.

USH.C.2 "Analyze the social, economic, and political changes that occurred during the American Industrial Revolution, the Gilded Age, and reform movements. Evaluate the transformation of American society, economy, politics..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two new opportunities and circle two problems created by industrial growth. Number each reform mentioned, then draw an arrow to the problem it addressed.

A Nation Connected

1. In the late 1800s, a wagon of wheat could become part of a national market. Railroads carried grain from farms to distant cities, while factories turned raw materials into goods on a scale small workshops could not match. Jobs drew people to growing cities, where electric lights made some streets and workplaces brighter after dark. Yet a farmer might pay high freight rates to ship a crop and still receive a low price for it. Farmers formed Granges to share information and press for railroad regulation. Industrial growth offered wider markets, but control over transportation shaped who benefited.

2. In cities, large corporations could raise money to build mills and hire thousands of workers. Steel made with the Bessemer process helped supply railroads and buildings. Some industrialists combined competing companies into trusts, gaining power to influence prices and wages. Workers faced long hours and dangerous conditions even as manufactured goods became more available. Unions pressed for better pay and safer workplaces. After the 1894 Pullman Strike disrupted rail traffic, federal troops intervened, and the strike collapsed. The same rail network that connected markets also made a dispute between workers and a company a national political issue.

3. Public pressure pushed government toward reform, though change was uneven. The Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 targeted restraints on trade, but early enforcement was limited. Journalist Ida Tarbell later documented Standard Oil's business tactics, helping readers question concentrated corporate power. Progressives sought stronger rules, and the Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914 restricted certain anticompetitive practices while giving labor unions some protections. Reform did not end inequality or make all work safe. Still, the debate had shifted: citizens increasingly asked whether government should protect competition and workers rather than leave business practices largely unchecked.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did railroads create an opportunity for farmers while also creating a problem for them?

2. How did industrial growth create both jobs and reasons for workers to organize?

3. Why did the Pullman Strike become a national political issue rather than remain a dispute at one company?

4. What change in ideas about government's role is shown by the antitrust acts? Give one limit of that change.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you serve on a town council in 1915. A new factory promises jobs, but farmers report high shipping costs and workers fear unsafe conditions. In four or five sentences, recommend two different actions the town or residents could take, and explain one likely benefit and one limit of your plan.

Growth and Its Costs

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two new opportunities and circle two problems created by industrial growth. Number each reform mentioned, then draw an arrow to the problem it addressed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did railroads create an opportunity for farmers while also creating a problem for them?	**Railroads let farmers sell crops in distant markets, but high freight rates could cut into what farmers earned.**
2	How did industrial growth create both jobs and reasons for workers to organize?	**Large mills hired thousands, but long hours and dangerous conditions led workers to form unions for better pay and safer workplaces.**
3	Why did the Pullman Strike become a national political issue rather than remain a dispute at one company?	**The strike disrupted rail traffic on a network connecting markets, and federal troops intervened.**
4	What change in ideas about government's role is shown by the antitrust acts? Give one limit of that change.	**The acts show growing support for government action against restraints on trade and other anticompetitive practices. Early enforcement of the Sherman Act was limited, and reform did not end inequality.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would ask the town to inspect factory fire exits before the plant opens. This could make work safer, although inspections alone would not raise wages. I would also help farmers form a Grange to press lawmakers for fairer railroad rates. That could lower shipping costs, but the town cannot force the railroad to change its rates.

Accept other historically plausible actions if the response explains a likely benefit and a realistic limit. Students should distinguish local action from laws that require state or federal authority.