

Education

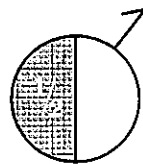
During the 1700s, few children received any formal education. Although some wealthy people sponsored Charity Schools for poor children, many working-class children still were not able to attend school. Often this was because they did not have enough clothing or were forced to work or beg on the streets during the day to help support their families. Those children who were fortunate enough to attend school tended to receive only minimal education.

Elementary schools were run by older women or men who were poor and could not find other employment. They would simply put a sign in their window saying “SKOOL.” Wealthier schools could afford paper notebooks, while poorer schools made children practice the alphabet by forming letters with sticks in a pile of sand on the floor.

The nineteenth century led to changes and advances in education. The government became worried about the large number of children working in factories all day and began providing more financial support to schools. Laws enacted during the nineteenth century increasingly mandated (ordered) that children be educated for a certain number of hours per day, and insisted that all students learn the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. In 1833 children aged 9 to 13 had to receive two hours of education a day by law; by 1880 six hours of education were made mandatory for all 5- to 10-year-old children. However, even with these acts, the majority of workers could not read or write. The graphs below show the literacy rates around 1850:



Fraction of women who could not read or write



Fraction of men who could not read or write

In response to the new, competitive world of industry, technical schools began to develop. This new type of secondary school provided technical and industrial training for young people who had finished grammar school and were waiting to begin an apprenticeship a few years later. This effectively increased the ability of children to become skilled industrial workers in the new age of manufacturing and technology.

