

Industrial Production

As the first industrialized country, Britain had an important head start that helped it become the world's industrial leader. In the beginning, technology and new machinery were relatively inexpensive, and the British economy was prosperous enough to support investments in them. Later, the young British industries had a monopoly (complete control in the market) on their products and reaped great profits, thus allowing them to finance further growth and development. Britain dominated world industry in the nineteenth century. By the time other European nations tried to catch up, British industries were very strong, and it was expensive to buy the new machinery and technology all at once.



Cotton was Britain's greatest industry, and merchants all over the world purchased British cotton cloth.



Inventions like the steam engine pushed ahead the coal industry, and innovations in iron smelting and a new demand for iron tools in factories fueled the growth of the British iron industry. Soon England was the world's greatest iron and coal manufacturer.



Railways were developing alongside industry. Henry Bessemer's discovery of a new process by which iron could be relatively easily converted into steel resulted in tremendous growth for the British steel industry. While in 1830 only 70 miles of steel railway tracks existed in Britain, by 1870 15,000 miles had been built. This improved communication between areas of the country tremendously.

