



The Industrial Revolution

In the first decades of the 19th century, Britain was still a rural nation with 80% of the population living in the countryside. Most people were farmers or spun wool and cotton to weave into cloth. Soon new machines were invented that could do these jobs much faster. For this reason many people lost their job and moved to the towns to work in factories.

By the middle of the 19th century over 50% of the population lived in towns and cities. The population grew from 16 million in 1801 to over 41 million by 1901.

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Britain experienced change in all aspects of life, as a result of the Industrial Revolution.

The Industrial Revolution occurred thanks to the power of steam. Victorian engineers developed bigger, faster and more powerful machines that could run whole factories. The industry depended on steam and steam depended on coal. The number of coalfields doubled between 1851 and 1881. Men, women and children worked in factories, and in coal mines.

These great changes in industry and economy were possible thanks to a series of technological inventions that influenced and affected every

aspect of human life. James Hargreaves developed the spinning jenny in 1764. This machine allowed workers to spin more wool at one time greatly increasing productivity. James Watt created the first truly reliable steam engine in 1775, which made locomotives and many of the textile machines possible. Samuel F. B. Morse created the telegraph in 1836, which changed the face of communication.

Thanks to machine tools and new manufacturing techniques developed during the Industrial Revolution there was a mass production of agricultural equipment such as reapers, binders and combine harvesters in the late 19th century. Fertilizers were also introduced, resulting in increased productivity and agricultural prosperity.

Early spinning jenny



ACTIVITIES

1 Complete the chart below with information from the text.

British society before the Industrial Revolution	British society after the Industrial Revolution

2 Talk about the main technological inventions which revolutionised industry and farming in 18th - and 19th-century England.