

The Origins of American Post-Industrialism
Boston Experiential Learning Trip Lesson Plan
Matt Buckles, Summer 2009

Abstract: This lesson will expand upon ideas and activities from the AHTC visit to the Lowell National Historical Park. In general, this lesson will look back to the Industrial Revolution in order to define and identify the roots of an American Post-Industrial Society and find similarities and differences between Post-Industrialism, Industrialism, and Agrarianism.

Essential Understandings:

Through the completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Define and differentiate between industrialization and post-industrialization
- Identify the causes of the creation of the creation of a post-industrialized society and evaluate its impact on American society

Essential Questions:

- How did the American working class and business class each contribute to the creation of a post-Industrial America?
- What are some positive and negative implications of the economic shift that has occurred over the last forty years?

Assessments:

On the first day of the two-day lesson, there will be a group activity reproducing an assembly line to help students identify the characteristics of an Industrial Society. They will be assessed informally on the first day. On the second day, the assessment will focus on transitions between the three types of economic societies in the case of Lowell, Massachusetts, and they will use a Venn Diagram to analyze maps and photographs.

Setting the Purpose:

This lesson should be conducted towards the end of a unit on Industrialization or the Industrial Revolution. Before this lesson, they should have already have an understanding of Industrialization and its impacts on society. The first day will connect that study to the effects on individuals working in the factory system during the Industrial Revolution. The second day of the lesson addresses the long-range impact of Industrialization and the tension caused on society when there is a major transition.

Lesson Procedure Day 1:

The first day of the lesson should mirror the hands on activity from the [Tsongas Industrial History Center at Lowell National Historical Park](#), entitled “[Workers on the Line](#).” For the purposes of this lesson, the objectives and procedure of the Assembly Line Activity are similar, but are modified slightly in order to look at post-industrialism as well as industry and labor. The activity uses the attached roller blades from the lesson. It could also just as easily be done with any other “product,” real or fictional, as long as the “construction” be performed easily in a class and broken up in steps.

Analysis of Primary Sources:

Students will analyze original maps from Lowell, Massachusetts, from 1821, 1839, and 1869 as well as Geographic Imaging and photographs from 2008.

As students arrive, the arrangement for the classroom should be arranged accordingly for the Assembly Line activity, and students will each be issued a role:

1. *Company President/CEO* – Played by Teacher. Issues directives to management. Exclusive goal is to maximize profit for the corporation.
2. *Team Managers* – Receive directives from and report team progress to CEO. Serves as Chief Evaluator of Productivity and Quality Control for individual laborers and the team as a whole. Submits approved, completed goods to CEO for sale. Goals are to ensure a peaceful, productive, functioning team in order to maximize profit for the corporation and earn bonuses. Can use positive reinforcement and punishment on the team or individuals in order to achieve these goals.
3. *Laborers* – Each Laborer has one job on the Assembly Line as part of a team. Responsible to Team Manager for quality and productivity. Goal is to maximize wages and benefits in a positive working environment.

Laborer jobs include (can vary based on the size of the class):

- Parts Construction – cuts individual roller blade pieces
- Design 1 and 2 – designs and colors separate parts of roller blade
- Assembly – Glues parts together

“CEO” should issue directives to Team Managers about every 5 minutes, depending on the pace of the class.

Possible Directives from the “CEO,” which should be issued one at a time and vary slightly based on reactions and performance of the class:

- Increased demands
- Raise offered to highest performing team (most completed products, best looking product, most completed and approved products)
- Lay-offs or wage cuts of lowest performing team
- Lay-offs of all of one class of laborers, adding duties on to other laborers
- Threats against Unionizing

Stop activity, and have each team name conditions that would have made them more productive. Team leaders represent team and have collective bargaining agreement with CEO and make compromises for working conditions and wages. Determine what will be reasonable for both sides to maximize their individual goals.

Ask class to brainstorm about what has changed in American manufacturing since the height of production. Working conditions have improved greatly, but there are far fewer jobs in these areas. What are people doing instead? Why? Introduce concept of Post-Industrialism. Try to define meaning as a class.

Lesson Procedure Day 2:

The second day of the lesson should focus on this transition, and the differences in a society because of it. We are fast-forwarding 100 years, and the students will get updates on their roles in the company, which does still produce the same product, but the workers have much different

jobs. Provide students with individual updates of their position in the company. The goal of the CEO has not changed, but in order to make money, the company has had to change strategies. Robots on an assembly line perform more and more processes. Former Team Managers still have jobs, but work in different ways. Some work as Quality Control watching computers that evaluate the product. They randomly inspect 1 product out of every 1,000 manually. Other team managers work in advertising and marketing for the project. Still others work in research and development for new products or managers of regional stores. Create varying number of modern management-level positions for students who were Team Managers yesterday.

For the laborers, even though the number of products produced and the company's profits have increased dramatically, only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the laborers now work in similar jobs on the Assembly Line facilitating the work of the robots. Others may be salespeople in stores or assistants. The rest no longer work for the company and have had to find other employment.

Based on this new information, students fill out T-Chart of Similarities and Differences between their old and new jobs and the company. To be a successful employee, what abilities must you have in each role?

<u>Similarities</u>	<u>Differences</u>
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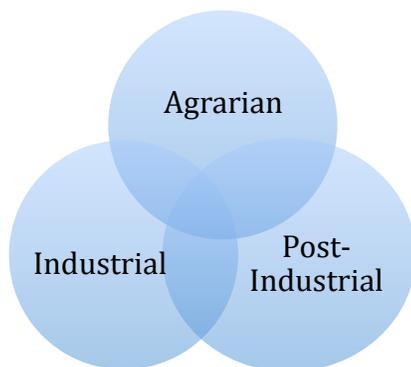
Establishing what has changed, the class should determine how we got there. Discuss Lowell, Massachusetts as an example city of industrial change.

*For this portion of the lesson, it may be best to work in a computer lab to get color photographs and maps, and the ability to zoom, but it also can be functionally altered with copies given to students.

Begin by reviewing what came before industrialization in all societies: agriculture. Show 1821 map of Lowell (located [here](#)). As a class, discuss how the map shows the land uses of the region. How do people change the environment for purposes of farming?

In pairs, they will compare land uses for Agrarian, Industrial, and Post-Industrial Societies. How do humans manipulate the environment?

Pass out [Three-Way Venn Diagram](#):



To represent the industrial societies, they will analyze City Atlases of Lowell from [1879](#) and [1896](#), which can be found at the [Digital Map Collection of the Center for Lowell History at the University of Massachusetts Lowell Library](#). They should look through the base map from each year, and then focus on the areas labeled that correspond to the 1821 map (the center of Lowell). They also should add things from yesterday's lesson. In a factory system, what other byproducts and effects on the land would there be? How can we see those effects on a map?

To represent post-Industrial societies, they may use the geographic imaging on the same website. How has the built environment changed? (It has not – 80% of the buildings built as a part of the mill system in Lowell are still standing, used for all kinds of different purposes.) They may also browse the [modern photographs](#) of Lowell National Historic Park from the National Parks Service or from my personal collection (attached). Using the primary sources, students will use the Venn Diagram to identify the different ways in which land needs to be used to support a society, and how that changes its dynamics (i.e. use of buildings for tourism, housing, etc.).

After the class finishes the assignment, we will have a concluding class discussion. As there is a major transition in society, there is always tension. People lose jobs (specifically the working class). Eventually, it settles to a system that is most efficient and can make the most money. In the case of Lowell, they replaced the agrarian society so that they would not have to buy all of their manufactured goods from England. Eventually manufacturing jobs moved to the South and abroad where labor was cheaper. Lowell has recently revived itself by becoming a center for tourism and a community for the arts. Other areas have not been so lucky, such as Decatur.

Finally, on the back of the Venn Diagram paper, the class will write a paragraph identifying the positive and negative implications of the shift to post-industrialism based on the Venn Diagram and their changed experiences as employees of the company.