The North’s People

Main Idea
Many cities grew tremendously during this period.

Key Terms
trade union, strike, prejudice, discrimination, famine, nativist

Reading Strategy
Determining Cause and Effect  As you read the section, re-create the diagram below and list two reasons for the growth of cities.

Read to Learn
• how working conditions in industries changed.
• how immigration affected American economic, political, and cultural life.

Section Theme
Geography and History  Growth of industry and an increase in immigration changed the North.

Preview of Events
1820 1830 1840 1850 1860
1827 Freedom’s Journal, first African American newspaper, is published
1833 The General Trades Union of New York is formed
1854 American Party (Know-Nothings) forms
1860 Population of New York City passes 800,000

AN American Story
“At first the hours seemed very long, but I was so interested in learning that I endured it very well; when I went out at night the sound of the mill was in my ears,” a Northern mill worker wrote in 1844. The worker compared the noise of the cotton mill to the ceaseless, deafening roar of Niagara Falls. The roar of machinery was only one feature of factory life workers had to adjust to. Industrialization created new challenges for the men, women, and children who worked in the nation’s factories.

Northern Factories

Between 1820 and 1860, more and more of America’s manufacturing shifted to mills and factories. Machines took over many of the production tasks.

In the early 1800s, in the mills established in Lowell, Massachusetts, the entire production process was brought together under one roof—setting up the factory system. In addition to textiles and clothing, factories now produced such items as shoes, watches, guns, sewing machines, and agricultural machinery.
Working Conditions

As the factory system developed, working conditions worsened. Factory owners wanted their employees to work longer hours in order to produce more goods. By 1840 factory workers averaged 11.4 hours a day. As the workday grew longer, on-the-job accidents became more and more common.

Factory work involved many dangerous conditions. For example, the long leather belts that connected the machines to the factory’s water-powered driveshaft had no protective shields. Workers often suffered injuries such as lost fingers and broken bones from the rapidly spinning belts. Young children working on machines with powerful moving parts were especially at risk.

Workers often labored under unpleasant conditions. In the summer, factories were miserably hot and stifling. The machines gave off heat, and air-conditioning had not yet been invented. In the winter, workers suffered because most factories had no heating.

Factory owners often showed more concern for profits than for the comfort and safety of their employees. Employers knew they could easily replace an unhappy worker with someone else eager for a job. No laws existed to regulate working conditions or to protect workers.

Attempts to Organize

By the 1830s workers began organizing to improve working conditions. Fearing the growth of the factory system, skilled workers had formed trade unions—organizations of workers with the same trade, or skill. Steadily deteriorating working conditions led unskilled workers to organize as well.

In the mid-1830s skilled workers in New York City staged a series of strikes, refusing to work in order to put pressure on employers. Workers wanted higher wages and to limit their workday to 10 hours. Groups of skilled workers formed the General Trades Union of New York.

In the early 1800s going on strike was illegal. Striking workers could be punished by the law, or they could be fired from their jobs. In 1842 a Massachusetts court ruled that workers did have the right to strike. It would be many years, however, before workers received other legal rights.

African American Workers

Slavery had largely disappeared from the North by the 1830s. However, racial prejudice—an unfair opinion not based on facts—and discrimination—unfair treatment of a group—remained in Northern states. For example, in 1821 New York eliminated the requirement that white men had to own property in order to vote—yet few African Americans were allowed to vote. Both Rhode Island and Pennsylvania passed laws prohibiting free African Americans from voting.

Most communities would not allow free African Americans to attend public schools and barred them from public facilities as well. Often African Americans were forced into segregated, or separate, schools and hospitals.
A few African Americans rose in the business world. Henry Boyd owned a furniture manufacturing company in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1827 Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm founded *Freedom’s Journal*, the first African American newspaper, in New York City. In 1845 Macon B. Allen became the first African American licensed to practice law in the United States. The overwhelming majority of African Americans, however, were extremely poor.

**Women Workers**

Women had played a major role in the developing mill and factory systems. However, employers discriminated against women, paying them less than male workers. When men began to form unions, they excluded women. Male workers wanted women kept out of the workplace so that more jobs would be available for men.

Some female workers attempted to organize in the 1830s and 1840s. In Massachusetts the Lowell Female Labor Reform Organization, founded by a weaver named Sarah G. Bagley, petitioned the state legislature for a 10-hour workday in 1845. Because most of the petition’s signers were women, the legislature did not consider the petition.

Most of the early efforts by women to achieve equality and justice in the workplace failed. They paved the way, however, for later movements to correct the injustices against female workers.

**Reading Check** Describing How did conditions for workers change as the factory system developed?

**The Rise of Cities**

The growth of factories went hand in hand with the growth of Northern cities. People looking for work flocked to the cities, where most of the factories were located. The population of New York City, the nation’s largest city, passed 800,000, and Philadelphia, more than 500,000 in 1860.

Between 1820 and 1840, communities that had been small villages became major cities, including St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Louisville. All of them profited from their location on the Mississippi River or one of the river’s branches. These cities became centers of the growing trade that connected the farmers of the Midwest with the cities of the Northeast. After 1830 the Great Lakes became a center for shipping, creating major new urban centers. These centers included Buffalo, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Chicago.

**Immigration**

Immigration—the movement of people into a country—to the United States increased dramatically between 1840 and 1860. American manufacturers welcomed the tide of immigrants, many of whom were willing to work for long hours and for low pay.

The largest group of immigrants to the United States at this time traveled across the Atlantic from Ireland. Between 1846 and 1860 more than 1.5 million Irish immigrants arrived in the country, settling mostly in the Northeast.

The Irish migration to the United States was brought on by a terrible potato famine. A famine is an extreme shortage of food. Potatoes were the main part of the Irish diet. When a devastating blight, or disease, destroyed Irish potato crops in the 1840s, starvation struck the country. More than one million people died.

Although most of the immigrants had been farmers in Ireland, they were too poor to buy land in the United States. For this reason many Irish immigrants took low-paying factory jobs in
Immigration

Newcomers came to America from many different countries in the mid-1800s, but the overwhelming majority came from Ireland and Germany.

**Graph Skills**

Immigration to the United States increased dramatically between 1820 and 1860.

1. **Identifying** Which country provided the most immigrants between 1840 and 1860?
2. **Analyzing information** From the graph, in which years did immigration surpass 100,000?

Northern cities. The men who came from Ireland worked in factories or performed manual labor, such as working on the railroads. The women, who accounted for almost half of the immigrants, became servants and factory workers.

The second-largest group of immigrants in the United States between 1820 and 1860 came from Germany. Some sought work and opportunity. Others had left their homes because of the failure of a democratic revolution in Germany in 1848.

Between 1848 and 1860 more than one million German immigrants—many in family groups—settled in the United States. Many arrived with enough money to buy farms or open their own businesses. They prospered in many parts of the country, founding their own communities and self-help organizations. Some German immigrants settled in New York and Pennsylvania, but many moved to the Midwest and the western territories.

**The Impact of Immigration**

The immigrants who came to the United States between 1820 and 1860 changed the character of the country. These people brought their languages, customs, religions, and ways of
life with them, some of which filtered into American culture.

Before the early 1800s, the majority of immigrants to America had been either Protestants from Great Britain or Africans brought forcibly to America as slaves. At the time, the country had relatively few Catholics, and most of these lived around Baltimore, New Orleans, and St. Augustine. Most of the Irish immigrants and about one-half of the German immigrants were Roman Catholics.

Many Catholic immigrants settled in cities of the Northeast. The Church gave the newcomers more than a source of spiritual guidance. It also provided a center for the community life of the immigrants.

The German immigrants brought their language as well as their religion. When they settled, they lived in their own communities, founded German-language publications, and established musical societies.

**Immigrants Face Prejudice**

In the 1830s and 1840s, anti-immigrant feelings rose. Some Americans feared that immigrants were changing the character of the United States too much.

People opposed to immigration were known as nativists because they felt that immigration threatened the future of “native”—American-born—citizens. Some nativists accused immigrants of taking jobs from “real” Americans and were angry that immigrants would work for lower wages. Others accused the newcomers of bringing crime and disease to American cities. Immigrants who lived in crowded slums served as likely targets of this kind of prejudice.

**The Know-Nothing Party**

The nativists formed secret anti-Catholic societies, and in the 1850s they joined to form a new political party: the American Party. Because members of nativist groups often answered questions about their organization with the statement “I know nothing,” their party came to be known as the Know-Nothing Party.

The Know-Nothings called for stricter citizenship laws—extending the immigrants’ waiting period for citizenship from 5 to 21 years—and wanted to ban foreign-born citizens from holding office.

In the mid-1850s the Know-Nothing movement split into a Northern branch and a Southern branch over the question of slavery. At this time the slavery issue was also dividing the Northern and Southern states of the nation.
Why Learn This Skill?
Have you ever watched someone dish out pieces of pie? When the pie is cut evenly, everybody gets the same size slice. If one slice is cut a little larger, however, someone else gets a smaller piece. A circle graph is like a pie cut in slices. Often, a circle graph is called a pie chart.

Learning the Skill
In a circle graph, the complete circle represents a whole group—or 100 percent. The circle is divided into “slices,” or wedge-shaped sections representing parts of the whole.

The size of each slice is determined by the percentage it represents.

To read a circle graph, follow these steps:
• Study the labels or key to determine what the parts or “slices” represent.
• Compare the parts of the graph to draw conclusions about the subject.
• When two or more circle graphs appear together, read their titles and labels. Then compare the graphs for similarities and differences.

Practicing the Skill
Read the graphs on this page. Then answer the following questions.
1. What do the four graphs represent?
2. What percentage of workers were in agriculture in 1840? In 1870?
3. During what decade did the percentage of workers in manufacturing increase the most?
4. What can you conclude from the graphs about the relationship between manufacturing and agricultural workers from 1840 to 1870?

Applying the Skill
Reading a Circle Graph Find a circle graph related to the economy in a newspaper or magazine. Compare its sections. Then draw a conclusion about the economy.

Glencoe’s Skillbuilder Interactive Workbook CD-ROM, Level 1, provides instruction and practice in key social studies skills.