

ASSEMBLY LINE SIMULATION

Purpose

In this unit, you will learn about how industrialization impacted different groups in society. This activity will allow you to experience a particular role through a manufacturing simulation. By doing so, you will develop an understanding and appreciation of both the positive and negative effects of industrialization (and specifically factory work) depending on your job and social class.

Process

In this activity, you're going to make greeting cards in an assembly line. Before getting started, watch a clip of assembly line production, such as [this one from *I Love Lucy*](#), or you might look for the slightly more up-to-date *Drake and Josh* episode, "I Love Sushi."

Once you've watched the clip, your teacher will assign you a role within a factory and will give you the opportunity to practice making one greeting card before starting. Once you're ready, there will be three rounds of card making. Start by imagining the following:

The year is 1845 and you've moved to Lowell, Massachusetts, where there are a number of factories. Each factory pays about the same amount to its workers (about 37 cents per day) for a 13-hour shift with 2 breaks (30-minutes each) per day. But your pay can be docked for cards that do not meet quality control protocols. So, the more you mess up, the less pay you and your team will earn. Note that each card takes about 2 cents to make, and they are sold to the store owners for 4 cents, for a profit of 2 cents a card.

Round 1

You will have 4 minutes to complete as many cards as you can. Your group's supervisor will check to see that the cards are completed successfully, and the factory owner is free to "encourage" you to work faster. After the 4 minutes are up, your group's recorder will tally the results (the number of cards that were successfully completed). Then, the cards will be delivered to the store owners, and they will decide how many more they want and from which factory.

Before moving into Round 2, the factory owner and recorder should tally their profits from Round 1.

Round 2

The factory owners are excited about the orders, but the profit margins are low, so the assembly line workers need to move faster this time. For this round, the workers will only have 3 minutes to fill the order, with the supervisor and factory owner ensuring efficient work. The factory owner and supervisor may decide to create rules for their workers, such as no talking while they're working. Once again, results will be tallied by the recorder, and products delivered. The store owners can choose whether to stick with one factory or another and whether or not to place another order. The recorders should share how much they made after Round 2, and see how this compares to other groups.

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Round 3

The factory owner needs more money—they want to build a new house. This time, workers will only have 2 minutes to fill the order, with the supervisor and factory owner ensuring efficient work. The supervisor and factory owner can create even more rules for their workers for this round. Once they're done, results will be tallied and products delivered. Recorders should calculate final profits.

Finish the activity with a class discussion:

- What did you experience during the simulation?
- Did you have positive emotions, negative emotions, or both?
- Was there anything particularly difficult or easy about this simulation?
- How do you think the workers of the Industrial Revolution felt about being on the assembly line?
- Why do you think business owners used this method of production?
- If you had a production business, would you use an assembly line? If not, what else could you do?