

ASSEMBLY LINE SIMULATION

Purpose

Take on the role of a factory worker in a manufacturing simulation to see how industrialization affected different groups in society. You'll explore both the benefits and hardships of factory life and consider how your perspective might be shaped by your job and social class.

Key information

It is the mid-nineteenth century, and you've moved to Lowell, Massachusetts, where there are many factories. Workdays in the factory are long and grueling. Each factory pays its workers the same low wage (1 cent per minute). Your pay can be docked for cards that do not meet quality-control standards. So, the more you mess up, the less pay you and your team will earn. Note that each card takes about 10 cents to make, and cards are sold to the store owner for 15 cents, which is a profit of 5 cents per card.

Process

1. It's time to get to work! You'll be assigned a factory team and a role. Your team will work to create greeting cards based on the demands of each round. There are three rounds. Your team's supervisor will work with the team to track results on your team worksheet.
2. After you've completed all three rounds, respond to the questions below:
 - Did you have a positive or negative experience in the simulation? Explain your answer.

- Do you think you could have made more cards in the time allotted if you had been working alone? Why or why not?

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- How did the quality of your birthday cards change during the simulation?

- How do you think the invention of the assembly line method of production changed life for workers?

- Why do you think business owners adopted this method of production?

- If you had a production business, would you use an assembly line? If not, what else could you do?