

WHAT IF?

Purpose

Get ready to think critically about the benefits and hidden costs of industrialization as it reshaped lives, communities, and the environment worldwide.

Process

1. Imagine that you are the leader of a country in the 1800s. The Industrial Revolution is sweeping across the globe, bringing powerful new technologies. Should your country embrace industrialization and reap the benefits of progress but risk the downsides? Or should it hold back and preserve tradition but risk being left behind? Weigh the pros and cons of each scenario and decide what would be best for the citizens of your country.

Scenario A: *Foreign investors want to build factories in your country. These factories would create thousands of jobs and produce goods at lower costs, which would allow for economic growth. However, the factory machinery is noisy and will pollute the air and water. Will you allow the factories to be built, thereby bringing jobs but risking environmental impact? Circle your choice below and explain your answer.*

Build factories

Don't build factories

Scenario B: *A foreign company offers to build a railroad through your country, promising to connect towns and make transportation faster. However, the railroad would cut through farmland, displacing farmers and reducing available land for crops. Do you allow the railroad construction, thereby increasing trade and travel speed but risking disruption to agriculture and rural communities? Circle your choice below and explain your answer.*

WHAT IF?

Allow railroad construction

Don't allow railroad construction



Scenario C: *A foreign country offers your nation modern steam-powered ships in exchange for raw materials. These ships will make your country's military stronger, but to afford the trade, you would need to divert resources from food production. Will you accept the trade, thereby gaining military strength but risking food shortages? Circle your choice below and explain your answer.*

Accept the trade

Reject the trade



2. If you can, discuss your decisions with a classmate.