

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you read about the rapid industrialization of the United States and how this progress influenced the way average people earned their livings.

A Nation Transformed Rapid industrialization transformed American life in the decades following the Civil War. Entrepreneurs in banking, commerce, and industry amassed enormous wealth. Businesses grew larger in part because of new technologies, new investors, and policies such as laissez-faire. According to this theory, economies work best when governments do not interfere.

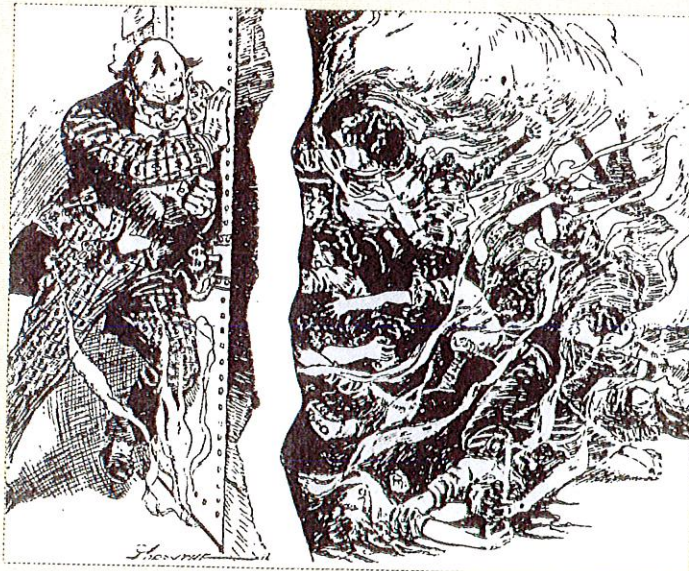
Improved Technology New inventions and manufacturing methods prompted the growth of new industries. A less expensive method of making steel made it possible for businesses to grow in size and efficiency. Other inventions, such as the electric light and the telephone, made daily life easier for many Americans.

The Rise of Big Business While new innovations allowed more Americans to afford manufactured items, there was a hidden price. With the rise of big business through corporations, trusts (such as Rockefeller's Standard Oil Trust), and monopolies, the wealthy got wealthier and the poor got poorer.

The Growth of Cities As cities grew, factories rose ten or more stories above the ground, and people from all over came looking for jobs. People lived in crowded, unclean, and dangerous tenement buildings.

Working Conditions Men, women, and children worked long hours for low wages in crowded, unsafe factories. Doors were kept locked, and workers could not leave their stations without permission. Workers didn't dare speak up for fear of losing their jobs.

Labor Unions By joining labor unions, workers could fight as a group for better wages and working conditions. When organized workers went on strike, factory owners often responded with violence or by hiring non-union workers. Although labor unions had some successes, many factories remained unsafe.



This political cartoon shows the women of the Triangle Factory desperately trying to open one of the few exit doors. A man dressed in a suit decorated with dollar signs holds the door closed.