

Unit 5 Response Assignment

According to the film *Chicago: City Of The Century*, how was Gustavus Swift able to expand his original business into a “Big Business”?

While watching the film I became impressed with the notion that Gustavus was blessed with “the perfect storm” of conditions to allow his business to have unprecedented growth. First; there was technology available to him that didn’t even exist in years prior, like the factory assembly line. This allowed him to use unskilled labor that cost less per hour and worked faster because the work was relatively easy and repetitive. He also perfected what the pork industry had been doing already, using ice to keep the meat from spoiling. He actually hired an engineer to design a refrigerated boxcar for the purpose of transporting his “dressed beef”.

Second; financing was available. Big businesses need capital! So, corporations with “stock certificates” were able to raise large amounts of money quickly by selling shares. This made it possible for people like Gustavus to take much greater financial risks than ever before.

Third; there were no labor laws. There was a huge increase in immigration, flooding the big cities with unskilled labor. Many of these new laborers were children or people who did not speak English. They could be worked extremely long hours in unsafe conditions and there was virtually no recourse.

Fourth; because he was working in mass production he could use parts of the animal that had previously been thrown away. He mastered the art of using byproducts! His beef was probably being sold at below cost, but he made up the loss by finding ways to use all that was

left. Hair made paint brushes. Skins made shoes and purses. Hooves made glue. Fat made soap. Intestines made tennis rackets. The list went on and on.

Fifth; “Vertical Integration”, whenever an obstacle was put in front of Gustavus he overcame it. If the railroads would not let him transport his beef, he bought his own. If the stores wouldn’t sell it, he opened his own store next door. By the end, he owned every aspect of his business from production of the raw material, transportation, the plants and factories, all the way through to distribution. This kind of big business was not possible just a few years earlier.

According to the film *New York: Sunshine & Shadow*, what was a tenement?

A tenement was the worst that America had to offer in terms of housing. Tenements were buildings that “concentrated as many people into as little space as possible”. It offered the landlord low overhead costs as he crammed as many tenants as he could into small cramped rooms. There were no laws governing what the landlord could or could not do. Some buildings had no running water or electricity. Most had extremely poor ventilation. Filth was everywhere. One out of every four children in these slums died before its first birthday. Diseases such as typhoid, dysentery, cholera and pneumonia were rampant. The worst however, was tuberculosis. There were 20,000 new cases and 8,000 deaths a year from this disease alone. Crime thrived as despair and hopelessness was nearly inevitable.

According to the textbook, how did industrialization change the lives of workers?

The lives of the workers changed in every way imaginable. Farmers and peasants were now ruled by a clock instead of the sun or seasons. (Page 525; Paragraph 2) Factories could run 24 hours a day with ruthless employers restricting even basic human needs. Bathroom breaks and time for lunch were not even considered. Skilled labor was replaced with assembly line work that destroyed pride in workmanship and reduced people to just part of a machine. Women and children entered the work place out of necessity with children as young as 8 working 60 hours a week to help feed the family. (Page 527; Paragraph 1) However, not every aspect was negative. The buying power of most Americans did improve; not so much because their pay went up, but rather prices for goods slowly went down. (Page 529; Paragraph 2)

According to the film *Triangle Fire*

1. What were the fears of Issac Harris and Max Blanck?

Issac Harris and Max Blanck were businessmen that made over a million dollars each year. They had many fears. First off they were in the fashion industry. They were known as the Shirtwaist Kings! But, styles change and costs rise, so they were always only one bad season away from going broke. Volume and speed were imperative! Secondly, they were industrialists that saw themselves as somewhat benevolent to society in that they provided so many needed jobs. During this time there was a lot of talk about unions, fair pay and shorter hours. They were very afraid of losing control of their own company. Last, but definitely not least, they were afraid of theft from their own workers. This was their downfall! They were so afraid of theft that they locked all but one exit out of the building so that the girls' bags could be checked on their way out.

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Section 73

2. What was the “Factory Safety Commission” and do you think its efforts were successful? Why or why not?

In the immediate aftermath of the Triangle fire, civic and religious leaders insisted that a commission be formed to investigate conditions in the factories throughout the state. This commission ultimately inspected 2000 factories, enacted thirty new laws governing workplace conditions and child labor, as well as set up standards for better pay and treatment of laborers. For the first time people started to think of the government as a solution to some of society’s ills.