

The North**Lesson 2****MAIN IDEAS**

1. The spread of mills in the Northeast changed workers' lives.
2. The Lowell system revolutionized the textile industry in the Northeast.
3. Workers organized to reform working conditions.

Key Terms and People

Rhode Island system Samuel Slater's strategy of hiring families and dividing factory work into simple tasks

Francis Cabot Lowell New England entrepreneur whose ideas completely changed the textile industry in the Northeast

Lowell system Lowell's practice of hiring young unmarried women to work in his mills

trade unions groups of skilled workers that tried to improve members' pay and working conditions

strikes union workers' refusal to work until their employers met their demands

Sarah G. Bagley a mill worker who founded the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association

Lesson Summary**MILLS CHANGE WORKERS' LIVES**

Samuel Slater had difficulty hiring enough people to work in his mills. Young male apprentices often left because they thought their work was boring. Slater began hiring entire families to move to Pawtucket.

Slater constructed housing for the workers. He paid workers in credit at the company store rather than paying them cash. This way Slater could reinvest money in his business. Children usually earned in one week what an adult was paid for one day's work. Slater's method was known as the **Rhode Island system**. Many northeastern mill owners imitated Slater's system.

How much did child workers earn in factories?

Lesson 2, *continued***THE LOWELL SYSTEM**

Francis Cabot Lowell developed a different approach called the **Lowell system**. It transformed the Northeast's textile industry. With the aid of a company, Lowell built mills in Waltham and Lowell, both in Massachusetts. The factories were clean, and the workers' boardinghouses were neat.

Many young women, called Lowell girls, journeyed from across New England to earn money instead of working on the family farm. The Lowell girls were encouraged to take classes and join clubs. However, they worked 12- to 14-hour days, and cotton dust caused health problems for them.

Name one advantage and one disadvantage of Lowell mill work.

WORKERS ORGANIZE

Factory workers' wages went down as people competed for jobs. Many immigrants entered the workplace, causing even more competition. The Panic of 1837 led to unemployment for many. Skilled workers started **trade unions** for protection. Sometimes union members held **strikes**. But most strikes were not very successful.

Sarah G. Bagley battled for the workers. She was the first woman to hold a high-ranking position in America's labor movement. In 1840 President Martin Van Buren had given a ten-hour workday to many federal employees. Bagley wanted the ten-hour workday for all workers.

The unions won some legal victories. Some states passed ten-hour workday laws. But companies often found ways to get around them. Other states did not pass the ten-hour workday laws. Union supporters kept fighting for improved working conditions during the 1800s.

Why did workers' pay decrease?

What did workers achieve in the mid-1800s?

Lesson 2, *continued*

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Contrast Write a letter to the editor contrasting the lives of workers in Slater’s mills and Lowell’s mills.

Sarah G. Bagley	Francis Cabot Lowell	Lowell system
Rhode Island system	strikes	trade unions

DIRECTIONS On the line provided before each statement, write **T** if a statement is true and **F** if a statement is false. If the statement is false, write the correct term on the line after each sentence that makes the sentence a true statement.

_____ 1. The Lowell system included practices such as hiring young unmarried women from local farms to work in the textile mill.

_____ 2. Sometimes union members staged protests called trade unions.

_____ 3. The Lowell system was Samuel Slater’s strategy of hiring families and dividing factory work into simple tasks.

_____ 4. One of the strongest female voices in the union movement belonged to Sarah G. Bagley, who founded the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association.

_____ 5. Francis Cabot Lowell was a businessman from New England whose ideas completely changed the textile industry in the Northeast.

Lesson 2, *continued*

_____ 6. Groups that tried to improve pay and working conditions for their members were called strikes.

_____ 7. Mill owners advertised for “Men with growing families wanted” in support of the Lowell system.

_____ 8. Workers on strike refuse to work until their employers meet their demands.
