



Name: _____

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Industrial Strength

Like other developed countries, the United States has gone through a number of economic stages in its history. Originally, it was an almost entirely agricultural economy, but by around the time of the Civil War in the 1860s, manufacturing had become more important than agriculture. Then, by the late 20th century, the service industry had reached the same level as manufacturing. Since then, the manufacturing industry has declined dramatically. Indeed, so few people work in factories now that many economists say the U.S. is a “post-industrial” economy.

There were two reasons for this trend. The first was the development of new technology, especially computers. Far fewer workers were needed to make the same number of goods. The other reason was rising wages in the U.S. These made American workers much more expensive than workers in developing countries such as China. As a result, many American companies moved their factories abroad to take advantage of the cheaper labor. On the other hand, within the U.S. service industries such as tourism and healthcare, grew greatly.

Now, though, there are signs that some of the manufacturing industry that went abroad is beginning to return. One example of this is the clothing industry. Originally, many companies in the clothing industry moved their factories to countries in Asia and South America to take advantage of the lower wages. Since then, however, wages have risen in these countries. Additionally, the rising price of fuel has made transporting the clothes back in the U.S. much more expensive. Furthermore, many American customers say that they would rather buy clothes made in the U.S. to support the economy, even if they were to be more expensive.

However, when companies reopen their factories in the U.S., they are faced with a big problem. Most of the clothing jobs went abroad years ago, there are few American workers with the skills and experience needed to operate the machines. As a result, many companies have begun to set up training programs to teach workers the skills they need. If these programs work, it seems that the U.S. may begin to see many types of manufacturing increase again.



Industrial Strength

1. What happened to the United States around the time of the Civil War?
 - a. The number of jobs available in factories stopped growing.
 - b. Its economy went from being agriculture to manufacturing based.
 - c. It began to be called “post-industrial” by economic experts.
 - d. The service industry became the most important source of jobs.
2. Rising wages in the U.S.
 - a. allowed workers to afford new technology such as computers.
 - b. caused some shops to close because they could not pay their workers.
 - c. caused companies to move factories to places where workers were paid less.
 - d. allowed the development of technology that could take the place of workers.
3. What is one reason that clothing manufacturing is returning to the U.S.?
 - a. The price of fuel needed to import clothes made abroad has gone up.
 - b. People feel that the quality of clothing is better if it is more expensive.
 - c. The clothing made in Asia does not match American tastes in fashion.
 - d. Workers in factories in South America are being treated badly.
4. Why are companies that are trying to reopen factories in the U.S. having trouble?
 - a. There are not enough workers who know how to use the machines.
 - b. It is too expensive to run training programs for new factory workers.
 - c. The weakness of the economy has caused the U.S. to raise taxes.
 - d. The equipment used in manufacturing abroad must be brought back.
5. Which of the following statements is true?
 - a. Experts expect that factory jobs in Asia will continue to decline dramatically.
 - b. Not only clothing but other types of industries might return to the U.S. in the future.
 - c. No human workers will be needed at all in the future to make goods in factories.
 - d. Wages in developing countries might soon become higher than those in the U.S.