

# The Industrial Revolution – Lesson 6

## The Great Reform Act

### Subject Knowledge Notes

Until the 1830s, Britain's elections were neither representative nor balanced. A range of factors determined whether you were eligible to vote, including whether you lived in a county or a borough and whether your area was eligible to send an MP to Parliament at all.

In a few places all men could vote, but in the vast majority of locations it depended on whether you owned property or paid certain taxes. Some boroughs, such as those in the rapidly growing industrial towns of Birmingham and Manchester, had no MPs to represent them at all. At the same time, there were notorious 'rotten' boroughs, such as Old Sarum at Salisbury, which had two MPs but only seven voters. There were also 'pocket' boroughs – those owned by major landowners who chose their own MP. Moreover, with no secret ballot, voters were easily bribed or intimidated.

A range of factors, including a popular campaign by the Birmingham Political Union, caused many people to begin to realise that change was necessary. The Prime Minister at the time, the Duke of Wellington, remained defiantly against reform, but he was forced out of office. King William IV asked the Whig, Earl Grey, to form an administration and he used his position to pursue reform of the electoral system. The path of the resulting reforming Bill through Parliament was extremely tough and its being finally passed on 4th June 1832 was only as a result of widespread public unrest and the resignation of Earl Grey.

In its final form the Reform Act of 1832 increased the electorate from around 366,000 to 650,000, which was about 18 per cent of the total adult-male population in England and Wales. The vast majority of the working classes, as well as women, were still excluded from voting and the Act failed to introduce a secret ballot. The working classes felt betrayed by an act which made no real difference to their lives. However, the reform of Parliament had begun, and this paved the way for the popular agitation of the Chartists.

Taken from the British Library

(<https://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/21cc/struggle/chartists1/historicalsources/source2/reformact.html>)

Further Reading:

[https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-](https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/overview/reformact1832/)

[heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/overview/reformact1832/](https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/overview/reformact1832/)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/politics/g6/>

<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/great-reform-act-1832>

## Lesson Six: What Political Changes Took Place During the Industrial Revolution?



5 mins

- Display the key question for the lesson (Slide 2)
- Display the retrieval quiz and give pupils five minutes to complete it independently (Slide 3).
- Circulate to gather information about common misconceptions or mistakes.
- Display the correct answers and allow pupils to self-mark (Slide 4).



5 minutes

- Read **Political Power in England**.
- As you progress through the reading refer to timeline slide and pause after each event to note how the monarchs power is decreasing and the influence of parliament is increasing
- After reading pupils partner talk to discuss 'How has power in England shifted since 1066?' Ask pupils to share answers before answering question 1.








5 minutes

- Pupils answer question 1.
- The following be offered as a sentence starter if required: 'Power has shifted from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. For example \_\_\_\_\_
- Check responses to judge pupils' grasp of the direction of travel in terms of power.
- Discuss the role of the Queen today – she has very limited power.

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 <p>10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read <b>Voting problems during the Industrial Revolution</b></li> <li>Pause and partner talk 'Why did people want to improve living and working conditions during this period?'. Encourage children to think about what the major issues were that people wanted to change.</li> <li>Refer to slide 7 for Birmingham/Old Sarum example</li> </ul>
 <p>5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils answer question 2 using information from 'Problems with voting during the Industrial Revolution'</li> <li>Have a discussion regarding what students think the most significant problem with voting was in this period, if the aim was to have proper representation.</li> </ul>
 <p>10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read the first part of <b>The Great Reform Act</b> up to question 3.</li> <li>Check for understanding of key word: petition</li> <li>Pupils answer question 3 with the slide 7 displayed and ask them to look at the slide as they think about it.</li> </ul>
 <p>10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to read the remainder of <b>The Great Reform Act</b></li> <li>Pupils complete the table in question 4 explaining what the Act achieved and what it did not manage to achieve.</li> <li>Ask pupils to share whether they think the Great Reform Act was a success or not overall.</li> <li>You might share you opinion – the Act did not go all the way but was a further step on the road to a fair system of government.</li> </ul>
 <p>5 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils to complete their learning review.</li> <li>You could share the points that they thought were most important.</li> </ul>