

History

Query paper:

Title: Spinning the industrial revolution

Abstract: The prevailing explanation for why the industrial revolution occurred first in Britain during the last quarter of the eighteenth century is Allen's 'high wage economy' view, which claims that the high cost of labour relative to capital and fuel incentivized innovation and the adoption of new techniques. This article presents new empirical evidence on hand spinning before the industrial revolution and demonstrates that there was no such 'high wage economy' in spinning, which was a leading sector of industrialization. We quantify the working lives of frequently ignored female and child spinners who were crucial to the British textile industry with evidence of productivity and wages from the late sixteenth to the early nineteenth century. Spinning emerges as a widespread, low-productivity, low-wage employment, in which wages did not rise substantially in advance of the introduction of the jenny and water frame. The motivation for mechanization must be sought elsewhere.

Candidate papers:

1. **Title:** The British industrial revolution in global perspective

Abstract: Why did the industrial revolution take place in eighteenth-century Britain and not elsewhere in Europe or Asia? In this convincing new account Robert Allen argues that the British industrial revolution was a successful response to the global economy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He shows that in Britain wages were high and capital and energy cheap in comparison to other countries in Europe and Asia. As a result, the breakthrough technologies of the industrial revolution-the steam engine, the cotton mill, and the substitution of coal for wood in metal production-were uniquely profitable to invent and use in Britain. The high wage economy of pre-industrial Britain also fostered industrial development since more people could afford schooling and apprenticeships. It was only when British engineers made these new technologies more cost-effective during the nineteenth century that the industrial revolution would spread around the world.

2. **Title:** The high wage economy and the industrial revolution: a restatement

Abstract: This article responds to Humphries's critique of Allen's assessment of the high wage economy of eighteenth-century Britain and its importance for explaining the industrial revolution. New evidence is presented to show that women and children participated in the high wage economy. It is also shown that the high wage economy provides a good explanation of why the industrial revolution happened in the eighteenth century by showing that increases of women's wages around 1700 greatly increased the profitability of using spinning machinery. The relationship between the high wage economy of the eighteenth century and the inequality and poverty in Britain in the nineteenth century is explored.

3. **Title:** The working life of women in the seventeenth century

Abstract: Working life of Women in the Seventeenth Century, originally published in 1919, was the first comprehensive analysis of the daily lives of ordinary women in early modern England. Clark uses a variety of documentary sources to illuminate the experience of women in the past. Gentlewomen left memoirs, letters, and household accounts detailing administration of their

family estates; craftsmen's wives and widows figure in the apprenticeship and licensing records of guilds and towns; the wives of yeomen, husbandmen and labourers are glimpsed in court evidence, petitions and the registers of parish poor relief. Alice Clark's evidence dates from the later sixteenth to the early eighteenth century, and her analysis addresses a broad transition, from a medieval subsistence economy to the industrial capitalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

4. **Title:** Gender and skills

Abstract: A survey of a random sample of over 600 employed adults in the Northampton area is used to compare men's and women's perceptions of the content of their jobs and to construct an index of skill. Differences were found between men and women in perceptions of both the types of skills required in their jobs, with women emphasising personal and social skills, and in the level of skill involved. Men's jobs on average appeared to be higher skilled, but the main difference was found in fact not to be by gender but between full- and part-time jobs. Some of these differences may be related to differences in perceptions of skill. Women part-timers were much less likely than men to perceive their jobs as skilled, even when sharing similar perceptions of job content.

5. **Title:** Why the industrial revolution was British: commerce, induced invention, and the scientific revolution

Abstract: Britain had a unique wage and price structure in the eighteenth century, and that structure is a key to explaining the inventions of the industrial revolution. British wages were very high by international standards, and energy was very cheap. This configuration led British firms to invent technologies that substituted capital and energy for labour. High wages also increased the supply of technology by enabling British people to acquire education and training. Britain's wage and price structure was the result of the country's success in international trade, and that owed much to mercantilism and imperialism. When technology was first invented, it was only profitable to use it in Britain, but eventually it was improved enough that it became cost-effective abroad. When the 'tipping point' occurred, foreign countries adopted the technology in its most advanced form.

6. **Title:** The Industrial Revolution: A Very Short Introduction

Abstract: The Industrial Revolution was a pivotal point in British history that occurred between the mid-18th and mid-19th centuries, and led to far reaching transformations of society. The Industrial Revolution: A Very Short Introduction analyses the key features of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, and the spread of industrialization to other countries. It considers the factors that combined to enable industrialization at this time, including Britain's position as a global commercial empire, and discusses the changes in technology and business organization, and their impact on different social classes and groups. It looks at how the changes were reflected in evolving government policies, and what contribution these made to the economic transformation.

Exemplary analysis:

1. **Relevance:** This work by Robert Allen forms the basis of the 'high wage economy' argument that the query paper seeks to challenge. Allen posits that high wages, cheap capital, and energy

incentivized innovation in Britain.

Reason for Citation: The query paper cites this to introduce the prevailing explanation it aims to contest, particularly emphasizing the discrepancy in the spinning sector.

2. **Relevance:** This article further elaborates on Allen's defense of the high wage economy theory, responding to critiques and incorporating the role of women and children in the economy.

Reason for Citation: The query paper likely cites this to address and counter the argument that high wages for women and children contributed to the profitability of spinning machinery, which the query paper disputes with new empirical evidence.

3. **Relevance:** This historical analysis provides a backdrop to the socio-economic conditions of women's work before the Industrial Revolution.

Reason for Citation: The query paper might use this to support its argument about the actual conditions of female and child spinners, emphasizing the low-wage, low-productivity nature of their work contrary to the implications of a 'high wage economy.'

4. **Relevance:** It argues that the undervaluation of women's and children's work contributed to the misinterpretation of wage dynamics in pre-industrial Britain.

Reason for Citation: This paper is likely cited to discuss perceptions of skill and gender in the labor market, which is relevant to the query paper's focus on spinning—a sector heavily reliant on female and child labor.

5. **Relevance:** This work provides a broader context for Britain's unique wage and price structure and its role in fostering innovation.

Reason for Citation: The query paper might cite this to acknowledge the broader economic and imperial factors at play while arguing that these conditions did not uniformly incentivize innovation across all sectors, such as spinning.

6. **Relevance:** This introductory text offers a comprehensive overview of the Industrial Revolution's key features and impacts.

Reason for Citation: The query paper likely references it to frame its discussion within the broader historical and economic transformations of the period, setting the stage for its focused analysis on the spinning sector.

Exemplary ranking: Ranked order: paper 1, paper 2, paper 3, paper 4, paper 5, paper 6

1. **Explanation:** As the foundational work that presents the high wage economy theory, this paper is crucial for any research that seeks to explore, challenge, or build upon the economic conditions leading to the Industrial Revolution. It provides the primary argument that the query paper contests, making it essential for understanding the broader debate.
2. **Explanation:** This paper is directly relevant for a follow-up study as it defends and elaborates on the high wage economy theory, responding to critiques. It is particularly important for a research follower interested in engaging with the most current arguments in the debate and providing new evidence or perspectives.
3. **Explanation:** Given the query paper's emphasis on the role of female and child spinners, this historical analysis is crucial for understanding the socio-economic backdrop against which the Industrial Revolution unfolded. It provides necessary context for discussions about labor conditions and the valuation of work in pre-industrial Britain.

4. **Explanation:** This paper is likely to be cited for its insights into how gender and perceptions of skill influenced the labor market, particularly in sectors like spinning that heavily involved women and children. It's relevant for research that aims to delve deeper into the socio-economic factors contributing to the Industrial Revolution beyond mere economic incentives.
5. **Explanation:** While providing a broader context for the Industrial Revolution, this paper is essential for understanding the unique economic and imperial conditions of Britain. It's particularly useful for research that seeks to place the spinning sector within the wider narrative of British innovation and global commerce.
6. **Explanation:** As a comprehensive overview, this introductory text is likely to be cited for background information and to frame the research within the broader historical and economic transformations of the period. It's useful for establishing the general context but may be less directly relevant to specific arguments about the spinning sector and the high wage economy theory.