


Module 6: Examining the World to Discover Truth

Topic 1 Content: The Causes and Aftermath of the Peterloo Massacre






Introduction

The Causes and Aftermath of the Peterloo Massacre

Introduction



The Peterloo Massacre was a defining moment in British history during the Romantic period. There were many causes leading up to the tragedy, and there were many more consequences that rippled throughout the world and into the 20th century. Examining the causes and effects of the Peterloo Massacre allows you to consider whether history affects literature or whether literature affects history. Or perhaps it is both. In this interactivity, click the image thumbnails or the **NEXT** button to learn more about the causes and aftermath of the Peterloo Massacre.



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The Industrial Revolution

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The Industrial Revolution

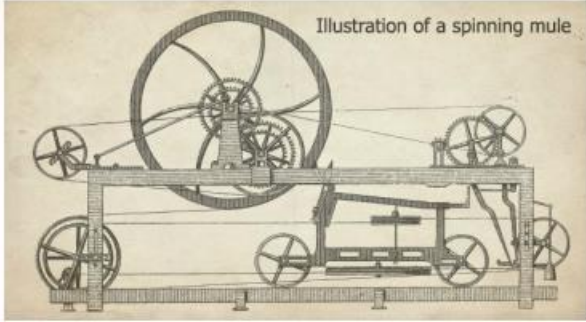



Illustration of a spinning mule

The Industrial Revolution originated in Britain during the 18th and 19th centuries. Innovative technologies and new machines led to the rise of factories and had a profound impact on the textile industry. People previously tied to the land through agriculture migrated to cities to work in factories and mills.



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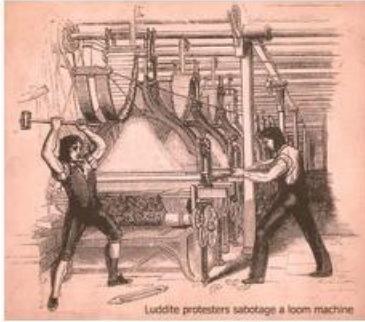
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Political Unrest


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Political Unrest



Luddite protesters sabotage a loom machine

Though technology made the manufacturing of goods more efficient and profitable, working conditions in most factories were dire. Children as young as four labored alongside other factory workers in dangerous conditions for long hours at a time. The scant income of factory and mill workers confined them to a life of poverty. To make matters worse, lower class citizens had no voting rights for electing representatives in Parliament, leaving their quality of life completely at the mercy of wealthy factory owners.



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St. Peter's Field

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St. Peter's Field



In August of 1819, protesters gathered at St. Peter's Field in Manchester, the center of the booming textile industry. As many as eighty thousand men, women, and children arrived unarmed to peaceably demonstrate for parliamentary reform. Instead, leaders of the rally were arrested, and army cavalymen brutally trampled and sabered hundreds of innocent people in the crowd. Around a dozen people died of their injuries.



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The Manchester Guardian


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The Manchester Guardian



The first edition of *The Manchester Guardian*

The *Manchester Observer* was a publication established by leaders for political reform. Its editor, James Wroe, was the first reporter to write about the massacre at St. Peter's Field. He dubbed the atrocity "the Peterloo Massacre," an allusion to the Battle of Waterloo that had occurred four years earlier. The *Manchester Observer* eventually shut down after Wroe was imprisoned for sedition due to his publications. However, another liberal newspaper called the *Manchester Guardian* was founded in its



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The Masque of Anarchy

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The Masque of Anarchy



When British poet Percy Bysshe Shelley received news in Italy of the Peterloo Massacre, he composed a poem about the event called *The Masque of Anarchy*, which calls on the British people to practice nonviolent resistance in the face of oppression. His lyrics would inspire future thinkers and leaders, including American writer Henry David Thoreau, who wrote about the power of civil disobedience in 1849. *The Masque of Anarchy* was also read to audiences by peace leader Mahatma Gandhi during



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