

The Industrial Revolution: Ten stations, heterogenous groups, social learning included

Considering work effort I have figured out that at first it is a lot of work creating a learning centre but later on you benefit from it for years. We are using the created learning centres again each year. Students enjoy it and we are happy with the outcome. Students learn a lot because it is student-centered and they are active and not only receptive.

The results of the different groups are compared, checked and corrected (if necessary) regularly. Of course, it is not necessary to create learning centres for all the topics of the curriculum. We have excellent CLIL (bilingual) history books offered by Cornelsen or Klett.

The learning centre on the Industrial Revolution is a lot more demanding and bigger than the former learning centres on Egypt and Rome. This is taking into account that the students in grade eight are experienced group workers now, have grown intellectually and have acquired more skills in English and history.

Like in the former learning centres all students must finish the stations together in their groups. That means that they have to cooperate and help each other. The stronger students are aware of the fact that their efforts to help others will be acknowledged by the teacher. Often they find out that explaining to others doesn't only enhance their social and communicative skills but also helps them to understand and remember subject matters better. When the class has finished the learning centre, the Students will "brush up" their exercise books and the teacher will check and grade them. That makes them have them complete and tidy.

The students will use dictionaries during their group work but also many stations of the learning centre provide them with annotations (vocabulary lists).

In station I they will get a definition of industrialization and the Industrial Revolution and they will find out about the changes of cities and society the Industrial Revolution brought about and also work with the following methods: group discussion and note-taking. They will be provided with vocabulary they need in order to describe the sources.

Station IV is a lot about opinions and discussion, necessary phrases will be provided in "Activate your English" since it is always important to provide students with the adequate knowledge, material and skills to solve the exercises they are given. They will also receive information on how to present statistics (History skills), analyze charts and graphs.

In station V they have to analyze a factory rule. It is part of the curriculum to analyze sources. They should know the form (introduction, quotes, give lines etc.).

In station VII they have to finish the story of a girl that experiences the hardships of child labour. Here they have to use their knowledge on working conditions in those times.

Station VIII is approaching history, here the history of the industrialization in Great Britain, through literature. This will motivate students. The excerpt from Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist" is followed by questions to secure a deeper understanding of the text and the situation of the boy and other children during the industrialization. The students practice reading literary texts closely and stating their opinions. In their group they have to make sure that all understand the text, help each other with vocabulary and answer the questions on the text together. The teacher will provide help if needed.

Station IX is also about understanding texts and stating one's opinion (question 6).

In station 10 they have to describe pictures, read the excerpt of a science fiction excerpt on the positive and negative sides of industrial progress, make themselves aware of the benefits (e.g.. more convenience) and negative sides of industrial progress. Students should state their own opinions and discuss if permanent change is positive or negative.

Student Autonomy:

The teacher is only needed to control, check completed stations (discussion in the classroom) to avoid mistakes and hand out material. Of course, the teacher must monitor and provide help but usually the students help each other perfectly well. They definitely learn a lot more because they find out things themselves. Definitely the motivation and improvement of social skills is an important factor.