

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**ROBERT W.  
STRAYER:**

Chapter 17, the Industrial Revolution changes everything. About 200 years ago, the Industrial Revolution began to transform human ways of life more fundamentally than anything since the coming of agriculture about 12,000 years ago. That huge process is the focus of Chapter 17, which deals with two major issues.

The first is about causation. Why did this breakthrough to industrialization occur first in Western Europe rather than, say, in China or the Islamic world with their more impressive scientific and technological traditions? This why-Europe question has been at the top of the agenda of world history for the last 30 years or so. Chapter 17 explores some of the arguments surrounding this controversy.

A second major issue involves the consequences or the outcomes of the Industrial Revolution. What was so revolutionary about the Industrial Revolution? How did it reshape class and gender relationships? How did this first industrial breakthrough change the relationship between Europeans and the rest of the world?

In considering these issues, we are reminded that industrialization is very much an unfinished process. While industrialization became genuinely global during the 20th century, its long-term outcomes are still very much in question. Will we see fully industrialized societies all over the world in the same way that the Agricultural Revolution globalized farming? Or will the world remain divided between a few industrialized and very wealthy countries and the majority who live in less industrialized societies amid mass poverty? Or will the entire industrial enterprise fade away as we deplete the resources of the Earth and pollute its environment?

Of course, we cannot know the answer to these issues. But we do know that the study of history sometimes raises as many questions about the future as it does about the past.