

WHAT CAUSED

THE PETERLOO MASSACRE?

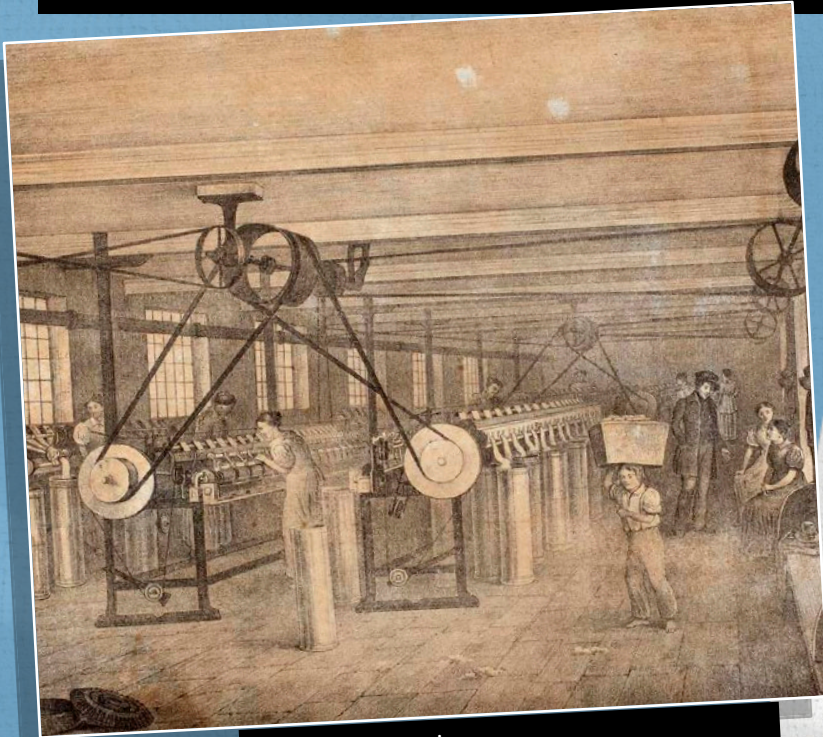
Lesson One



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand what life was like for people in Manchester in 1819
- To understand why some people in Manchester wanted change

WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE IN MANCHESTER IN 1819?



Bobbin and Drawing
© The Board of Trustees of the Science Museum

The population of Manchester had grown rapidly between 1801 and the 1820s.

Manchester's growth rested largely on the growth of the cotton industry. Young men and women poured in from the countryside, eager to find work in the new factories and mills.

Teacher Notes: Expansion links:

<http://www.localhistories.org/manchester.html>

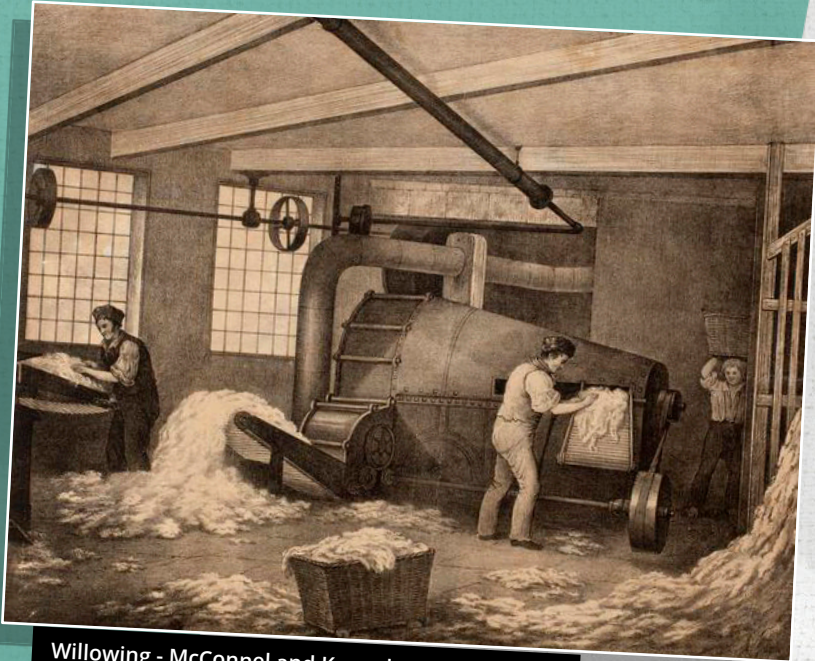
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-h0rrBz0On8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLNgW5KIUIs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFYKefpkEnc>

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PROTEST.
DEMOCRACY.
FREEDOM.

WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE IN MANCHESTER IN 1819?



Willowing - McConnel and Kennel
© The Board of Trustees of the Science Museum

The mills employed large numbers of people, many of whom were children.

Adults would work for up to 16 hours a day whilst children worked around 12 hours a day, six days a week in the mills.

Teacher Notes: Expansion links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87eVOpbc0Vo>

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WHY DID PEOPLE WANT CHANGE?

For a lot of people life was hard. Wages had halved since the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 and rising food prices left many unable to afford basic foods like bread.

People felt that their lack of representation was preventing them from having a say on important issues. Many started to ask for change and demand a voice in Parliament.



CAUSE 1: NOT EVERYONE COULD VOTE

Activity one – Who could vote in 1819?



A woman from Manchester who is a labourer



A woman from Manchester who is a servant



A woman from Manchester who is rich



A man from Manchester who is a labourer



A man from Manchester who owns a shop



A man from Manchester who is rich and owns land

Teacher Notes: Explanation links- Slide 6-9 Blackadder 'How England used to vote and rotten boroughs'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOEMRXI3sRS>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkb9Sle4WWo>

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CAUSE 1: NOT EVERYONE COULD VOTE



A man from Manchester
who is rich and owns land

In 1819 around 2% of the population
could vote - only men who were rich
and owned land.

This meant that for the vast majority
of people they didn't have a say on
the way laws were made.

Teacher Notes: Expansion links- Slide 6-9 Blackadder 'How England used to vote and rotten boroughs'
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOEMRXI3sRs> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkb9Sle4WWo>

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CAUSE 2: ROTTEN BOROUGHS

In 1819, parliamentary constituencies were different to today. Not all of them were the same size and some were known as rotten boroughs because although they were really small they were able to send one or more MP to parliament.

An extreme case was Dunwich in Suffolk. A lot of Dunwich had fallen in the sea due to coastal erosion and it only had a population of 230 people. However of those only 32 'freemen' were allowed to vote and they could still elect two MPs.

Teacher Notes: Expansion links- Slide 6-9 Blackadder 'How England used to vote and rotten boroughs' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOEMRXI3sRs>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkb9Sle4WWo>



Map of the borough towns and shires of England with the Number of Members of Parliament © John Andrews, December 1st 1799

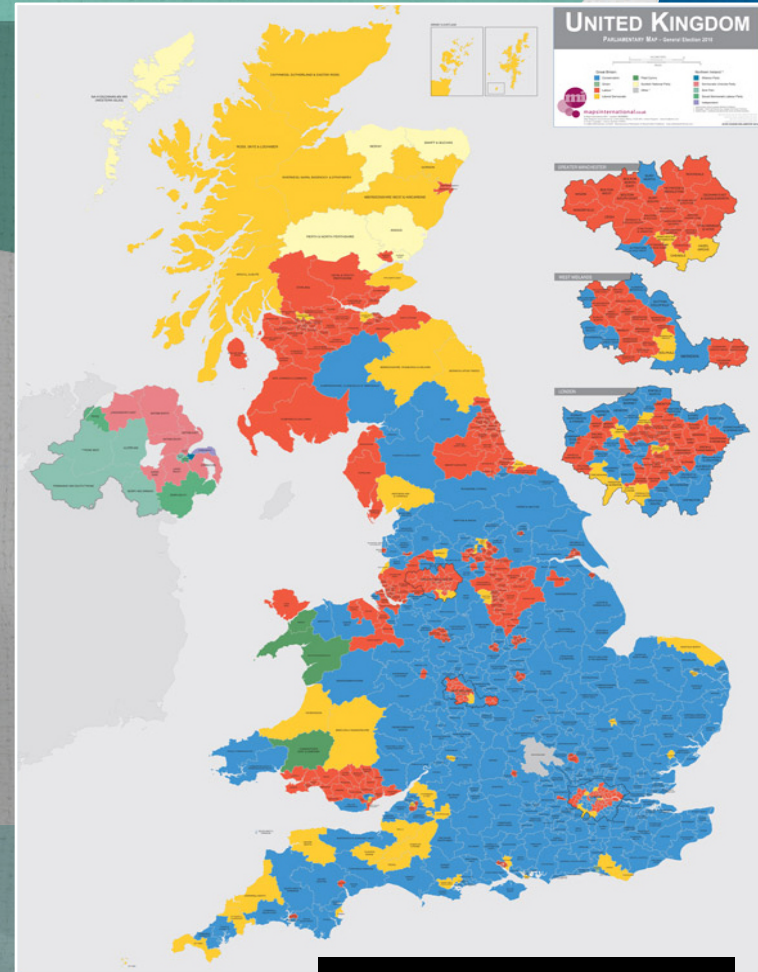
CAUSE 2: ROTTEN BOROUGHS

Manchester didn't have its own MP! Lots of the new industrial cities had no representation in Parliament at all. This meant that the views of people in Manchester didn't have a voice and weren't being properly represented.

In Parliament in 1819 there were 535 MPs representing 380 boroughs.

Today there are 650 MPs representing 650 constituencies. Here is what a modern map of the UK looks like.

Teacher Note: Click image for a link to a short video that explains elections and voting today. There is also a link here to a Blackadder comedy sketch which is a useful tool to explore the Rotten Boroughs - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkb9Sle4WWo>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6mjw50QdZ4>



CAUSE 3: ELECTION BY SECRET BALLOT



© Pontefract secret ballot box, August 1872, courtesy of Wakefield Council

What is a ballot?

The ballot is your vote.

In 1819 voting was not done in secret; everyone could see who you were voting for.

Activity: imagine that each student gets to vote for which teacher gets to be the head teacher.

Why might it be a problem if the vote isn't a secret?

Teacher Notes: Expansion link: first secret ballot box used in Pontefract by election - on show at PHM until February 2020:
<https://phm.org.uk/exhibitions/disrupt-peterloo-and-protest/>

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CAUSE 3: ELECTION BY SECRET BALLOT



THE WESTMINSTER ELECTION 1796.

The Westminster Election 1796 print, by Robert Dighton
© People's History Museum

Without a secret ballot all sorts of corruption was commonplace. People could be bribed to vote a certain way, or forced to by their employers.

In some places voting was just done by people holding up their hand in a meeting.

People wanted a secret ballot so that they could keep their vote private and avoid being pressured into voting a certain way.

CAUSE 4: MPS WERE NOT PAID

In 1819 MPs were not paid to do their job.

This meant that the only people who could afford to stand for elections were people who were already rich.

Why might this have been a problem?



CAUSE 4: MPS WERE NOT PAID

It actually took until 1911 for MPs to get a salary which was £400 per year.

Today MPs get £79,468 per year (as of April 2019).

Activity: There are still some powerful jobs today where there is no pay.

Do you know what they are?



MAKING A CHANGE



Protest



Boycott



Petition

Using your voice activity:

Write down all of the ways you can think of to make change today.

MAKING A CHANGE



Protest



Boycott



Petition

Using your voice activity:

Have a look at your list and remove all of the ways that would not have been possible in 1819.

What would you do then?

Teacher Notes: expansion link:
Slide 14 Making a change
https://www.ted.com/talks/omar_ahmad_political_change_with_pen_and_paper/up-next?language=en

WHAT PEOPLE DID

On 16 August 1819, an estimated 60,000 people walked to St Peter's Field in Manchester to protest for the right to vote.

They went with some of the following demands:

- **Election by Ballot**
 - voting in private on paper
- **Annual Parliaments**
 - having an election every year
- **Universal Suffrage**
 - the right to vote for all men



Teacher Notes: Universal suffrage at that time meant votes for all men - not all women - even though women were active campaigners.

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This learning programme for young people has been created by Manchester Histories and People's History Museum. The programme is supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England and UK Parliament Education and has been co-designed with The Politics Project.

