

Honors Literature – World History

TASK: Read the following text carefully, making all appropriate notations. Identify SOAPStone, DIDLS, PERSIAN, and other information as evidence of your research and analysis of the piece of literature. Answer the related questions on notebook paper or on this document. You may use this information for any written essay on the piece. See the text at the very bottom of these notes.

TASK: Comprehension Questions

1. What kinds of people supported Luddism, and why?
2. How did officials react to Luddism, and why?
3. What effects was Luddism likely to have over the course of the industrial revolution?

Protesting the Industrial Revolution

As machines were introduced with industrialization, attacks mounted. The process was called Luddism, after British protests between 1810 and 1820 in the name of a mythical leader called Ned Ludd. The following documents describing Luddism come from a wool manufacturing area around Vienne, in France, in 1819. The first document is a government source, the second a worker petition.

Police Report

We, king's attorney in the court of first instance at Vienne, acting on the information which we have just received, that the new cloth-shearing machine belonging to Messrs. Gentin and Odoard had just reached the bank of the Gère river near the building intended to house it when a numerous band of workers hastened toward the spot crying "*Down with the shearing machine*"; that some rifle shots were heard, and in general everything about this meeting of workers announced the will and the intent to pillage by force a piece of property, we immediately went to the place where the mayor and the police commissioner agreed to authorize us to use armed force and to state the nature of any crimes and their perpetrators, and to hear with us the declarations of any persons who had information to give us.

Having arrived near the shop of Messrs. Odoard and Gentin, on the right bank of the river, we saw in the steam, at a distance of about fifteen feet, a carriage without horses, its shafts in the air, loaded with four or five crates, one of which was obviously broken, and at three or four paces off in the water, an instrument of iron or some other metal of the same size as the crate, in terms of its length. Various calvary posts and policemen, on foot and mounted, placed at various distances on the two banks of the Gère and on the hills, regarded all the paths and roads; the windows which gave onto the river were partially closed.

Some minutes before our arrival . . . many individuals in short vests whom he did not know but whom he presumed to be workers, hurled themselves into the water and rushed the carriage, armed with wooden clubs and an iron instrument called a cloth-shearer, that they broke the first crate which fell into their hands and threw into the water one of the instruments which it contained.

Edlon Montal (Jean or Pierre) of Grenoble of Beaurepaire, who did his apprenticeship as cloth-shearer, is the man who provided half the strength to break the crates.

Jacques Ruffe, shearer for his cousin Dufieux, was on the carriage, breaking and throwing crates into the water.

The daughter of Claude Tonnerieux, butcher, threw stones at the dragoons and incited the workers with her shouts: "*Break it, smash it, be bold, etc.*" Another woman, Lacroix, who has only one eye, shouted similar things. Marguerite Dupont, spinner for Mr. Frémy, called the lieutenant-colonel of dragoons a brigand.

Jacques Boullé, a glass worker, was noticed shouting among the first workers who came down the Saint-Martin bridge.

Basset, weaver, said, "*Let's get the machine*" and Rousset, an itinerant, expressed himself thus: "*We'll get Gentin* (one of the owners of the machine). *It's not the machine we ought to wreck.*"

Poster

Gentlemen, we are beside ourselves because of the inhumanity and hardness of your hearts, your scorn toward the poor workers who have helped you make your fortune. Seeing that we are abandoned by you, gentlemen, this alone has forced us to do what we don't want to do. We have no intention of attacking your fortunes, but if you don't arrange to give us work we can't avoid attacking you and the machines; so you have eight days to reflect. If at the end of these eight days you don't take your wool out of the machines in order to give work to four or five hundred people who are at your doors and whom you don't deign to look at, don't be surprised if you see a storm descend upon you and the machines—so much do we the poor workers suffer for ourselves and for our poor children.

We hope that you'll wish to spare us this effort which is otherwise inevitable.

QUESTIONS: What kinds of people supported Luddism, and why? How did officials react to Luddism, and why? What effects was Luddism likely to have over the course of the industrial revolution?