

The stories of inventions

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Abstract

During the second industrial revolution (1870–1914), scientists moved away from trial-and-error methods to more systematically apply the principles of chemistry, physics, and biology (Mokyr 1998). We chose this period as the foundation of a project-based learning (PBL) unit integrated with the ninth-grade U.S. history curriculum (Thomas 2000). This project, a collaboration of two university faculty members (the authors) and a high school social studies teacher, reflected the integrative learning promoted by the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS Lead States 2013; see box, p. 49). The unit encouraged students to associate the second industrial revolution's many inventions (in such areas as manufacturing, transportation, and communication) with methodical investigation and professional collaboration rather than random eureka moments. The goal was to develop student understandings about the evolution of different inventions within their scientific and societal contexts.

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