

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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MISSION 4: "City of Immigrants"

Report on the Clothing Industry in New York, 1905

Clothing manufacturers constantly sought ways to pay workers less. One way was to divide the task of assembling a garment into a series of small, repetitive operations. This report describes how one manufacturer divided the assembly of a coat into thirty-nine separate steps.

There is a constant tendency in industry to make use of cheaper labor where it is possible. In England the custom grew up of subdividing the work . . . Male labor was still largely retained to do the operating work, but the greater subdivision [of tasks] made it possible to employ a lower grade of that labor, not controlled by the union. . . .

The principle of this system has been widely adopted but the extent to which the division of labor has been carried varies greatly. The extreme of this division is seen in one of the leading contractor's shops in New York City, where thirty-nine different processes, carried on by the same number of people, are represented in the manufacture of a coat.

This shop turns out a very high grade of work, and two-thirds of its employees are women. Those who carry on the processes of manufacture spoken of above are as follows:

- (1.) The fitter, who also cuts the linings, marks the pockets, and puts on tickets,
- (2.) pocket maker,
- (3.) canvas baster,
- (4.) padder of lapel,
- (5.) bar tacker (on pockets),
- (6.) seam presser,
- (7.) lining maker,
- (8.) lining operator,
- (9.) sleeve maker,
- (10.) lining presser,
- (11.) sleeve presser,
- (12.) collar padder,
- (13.) shaper,
- (14.) baster and fuller of stay tape,
- (15.) lining baster, prepares for machine,
- (16.) operator,
- (17.) presser,
- (18.) edge cutter,
- (19.) edge baster,

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- (20.) lining baster for shoulders,
- (21.) operator for shoulders,
- (22.) sleeve baster around edge,
- (23.) collar and sleeve baster, prepares for operator,
- (24.) presser on sleeve,
- (25.) joiner of collar to lapel,
- (26.) arm-hole baster,
- (27.) operator who sews in sleeves,
- (28.) garment examiner,
- (29.) J collar finisher,
- (30.) lining finisher, around arm-hole,
- (31.) basting puller,
- (32.) edge presser,
- (33.) button hole cutter,
- (34.) button-hole maker,
- (35.) general busheler and hanger sewer,
- (36.) presser of entire coat,
- (37.) button marker,
- (38.) button sewer,
- (39.) busheler.

With the single exception of the pocket maker, a highly skilled mechanic, every one of these workers can become proficient in his line within a few months.

Source: Jesse Eliphalet Pope, *The Clothing Industry in New York* (University of Missouri), September 1905, pp. 69-71.