

LIFE AS A FACTORY WORKER



The Sociology Guy
helping students understand society

You are working in a factory that produces smartphones. You work 10 hours a day on the assembly line, piecing together screens. For every phone you make, your employer earns £800. However, you are paid £80 a day, regardless of how many phones you assemble. The factory is run by a small group of wealthy owners who do not work on the production line but manage the company and decide where profits go. The working conditions are repetitive, with minimal breaks, and you rarely see the final product you help create.

How is your work contributing to the profits of the factory owners?

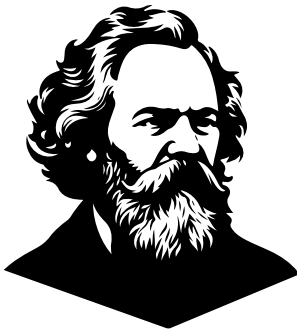
What does Marx mean by "exploitation," and how does it apply to your wages compared to the value of the smartphones you produce?

Why do the factory owners pay you £80 instead of a wage closer to the £800 value of each smartphone?

How might the repetitive nature of your job impact your sense of purpose or creativity?

What would change in your work if you had more control over the production process or owned a share of the factory?

Using the scenario, calculate the surplus value the factory owners gain for each phone you produce if you produce 10 phones per day.



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The factory owners implement new rules and practices to maximise their profits:

Surveillance and Monitoring:

Cameras are installed across the factory floor to monitor your performance. If you work too slowly or take unscheduled breaks, your wages are docked. Workers feel constantly watched and pressured to increase productivity.

Competition Among Workers:

The factory owners introduce a "bonus system" that rewards the top-performing workers with a small increase in pay. However, this creates tension among workers, as everyone competes for limited bonuses, reducing solidarity among the workforce.

Debt and Dependency:

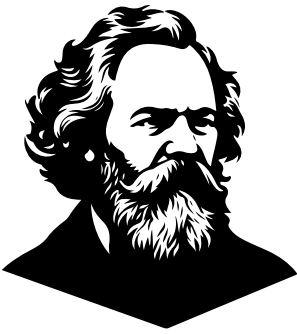
To "help" workers, the factory offers loans to purchase housing near the factory or essentials like food and clothing from a company store. However, the prices are inflated, and interest rates are high. Many workers become indebted to the factory, unable to leave or strike for better conditions.

Manipulating Ideas:

The factory management runs mandatory meetings where they promote slogans like "Hard work leads to success!" and "We're one big family!" They also discourage unionization, claiming it will hurt your job security.

Lack of Alternatives:

The factory is the main employer in the area. Other jobs pay even less or have worse conditions. Leaving the factory feels impossible, as it means losing your income and stability.



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How does constant monitoring make it harder for workers to resist exploitation?

Why might the bourgeoisie encourage competition between workers?
How does this benefit them?

What role do slogans like “Hard work leads to success!” play in keeping workers compliant?

According to Marx, how does ideology help the bourgeoisie maintain their dominance?

Why is it difficult for workers in this scenario to unite and challenge the factory owners?

What actions might workers take to resist the control of the bourgeoisie, and what obstacles would they face?

How does debt tie workers to the factory?

What does this say about the power dynamic between the bourgeoisie and proletariat?