

**Due:** January 21

*Describe the enclosure movement and how this impacted the typical person of the day.*

Enclosure movement is the division or consolidation of communal lands in Western Europe into the carefully delineated and individually owned farm plots of modern times. Before enclosure, farmland was under the control of individual cultivators only during the growing season; after harvest and before the next growing season, the land was used by the community for the grazing of livestock and other purposes. In England the movement for enclosure began in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and proceeded rapidly from 1450 to 1640; the process was virtually complete by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the rest of Europe, enclosure made little progress until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Common rights over arable land have now been largely eliminated.

Furthermore, the enclosure movement led to dramatic increases in agricultural production. Individual farmers now had the ability to experiment with new crops. Many of the new crops, such as turnips and potatoes, rejuvenated the soil better than fallowing did, and also provided more food for people and animals. This enabled the farmers to increase their stock of animals. More animals led to more meat in the diet, which led to healthier people. Even more importantly, more animals led to more dung, which was used as fertilizer. This fertilizer resulted in higher yields for the farmer's crops. Higher yields meant more food for people and animals, which meant more animals for meat and fertilizer, which meant even higher yields and better diets. Thus a positive cycle was established which led to improved agricultural output almost every year.

The consequences of this agricultural revolution were enormous. A surplus of food meant that people were healthier, and they lived longer. The infant mortality rate dropped significantly, which led to rapid population growth. The standard of living also improved dramatically. Increased food production led to lower food prices in the cities. So instead of spending most or all of their money on food, people now had extra money to spend on luxury items, or to invest in a bank or some other venture. Once people were freed from total dependency on growing or buying food, they could direct the power of their minds and bodies to other efforts. This was the incentive necessary for industry to begin developing in a big way. Thus, the agricultural revolution in Britain led directly to the industrial revolution.