

## **Unit Rationale**

This unit on the expansion of American industry is important for students to comprehend the roots of the modern, technological society in which they live in today. Although the industrial revolution in the United States began well before the Civil War, it did not begin to take root and to significantly impact everyone's lives until after the Civil War. It is this period in time when we begin to see the end Thomas Jefferson's dream of an agrarian nation and the rise of the United States as the industrial colossus that it remains today. Many modern conveniences which we now take for granted had their roots in this time period. For example, modern forms of communication such as the telegraph and telephone were both invented during this time period. In addition, Henry Bessemer's steel process which was brought to the United States by Andrew Carnegie allowed the United States to reach incredible feats of architecture. The skyscraper and long spanning, among countless other structures, bridge were born during this time period, large in part to the Bessemer Process. More importantly, Thomas Edison's incandescent light bulb may be seen by some to be the most important invention of the last two hundred years. The light bulb completely revolutionized the way that Americans lived their lives. No longer were their daily lives governed by the amount of daylight there was. Instead, the light bulb allowed average Americans to continue to be productive even after the sun had gone down. Finally, this period in history brought about the rise of the modern corporation and the labor unions that would struggle and continue to struggle against them.

It is important to teach this unit to allow students to make the connection between the modern technological world that they live in today and its origins in the nineteenth century. This unit allows students to see how the modern world of business and technology became what it is today. In addition, this unit provides students with an opportunity to use critical thinking skills

to analyze the pros and cons of industrialization. While this debate was one that raged in the nineteenth century, it is still a debate that continues to be waged today as the struggle between labor and employers continues. Ultimately, this unit will help students to see how their nation became what it is today.