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5th grade students
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The invention of the steam engine played a big part in the Industrial Revolution. Before the steam engine, finding a source of power included horses, water wheels, human effort and windmills. With the invention of the steam engine, life was easier because you didn't have to feed the horses or rely on the wind to blow. It was quicker to transport goods from place to place. Some of the major machinery that began using the steam engine included: cotton factories, coal mines, steamboats, and trains.

Just like gasoline, wind and sun are sources of energy. Steam is also a source of energy for some engines. Here is how a steam engine works- First, coal is used to make a fire. That fire heats up a boiler full of water that creates steam. Next, that steam expands and pushes itself into a cylinder, causing the pistons to move first one way, then another. At the end of the stroke, the exhaust pipe opens letting the steam escape which causes the train to move. Attached are two drawings of how a steam engine works.

In history, traveling across the United States was difficult because it took months and months on a wagon and horse. During the 1800's, crossing waterways was hard on the equipment and some people even drowned! Because it was so difficult to move throughout the country, the populations existed near the coasts and stopped at major rivers. The railroad was extremely helpful in Kansas because it brought settlers to live around the area, and increased the population. Since the railroad was more reliable than horse and wagons, it transported food, cattle and supplies that the people needed to build their new homes and live. One cool fact is that when the Kansas railroad was built, the population of Kansas grew one million, compared to the 100,000 only twenty years before! Did you know that one third of all the country's railroad lines are laid in Kansas!

The Abilene Smoky Valley Railroad has been a tourist favorite for years! The engine was built in 1919 and even though it is not used for transporting goods anymore, it is still essential to the tour industry of Abilene. When people travel to Abilene to ride the Smoky Valley Railroad, they do more in our city than just enjoy a round-trip train ride to Enterprise, Kansas. Tourist visit the Eisenhower Center and museum, eat lunch at the local restaurant *The Hitching Post*, and shop at Casey's for fuel.

The Abilene Smoky Valley Railroads is good for Abilene, good for Kansas (the home of Dwight D. Eisenhower) and good for our nation!