A common misconception during the Industrial Revolution was the idea that people from all social classes could rise up the economic ranks if they worked hard enough. John Stuart Mill described this notion when he said “human beings are no longer born into their place in life… but are free to employ their faculties… to achieve the lot which may appear to them most desirable”. While Mill’s idea does put a bright spin on the economic effects of capitalism, it doesn’t take into account the hardships of the common worker. The divide between the lives of a common worker and that of an upper middle class merchant could not have been more different. Mill’s statement is false because during the industrial revolution people in the commoner class where relegated to poorer working conditions, a lack of good education, and little chance at workplace promotions.

Many commoners worked hard jobs in factories running the machines that enabled manufacturing to become such a success. Despite machines doing a lot of the work these jobs where not easy since the machines required a lot of maintenance in order to function properly. At times when doing this maintenance the workers could get seriously injured due to the little regard for their safety. Workers where also expected to work twelve to fifteen hour days that would leave them with little strength or will to try and do something about their economic situation. Despite enabling a group of middle class merchants to become very wealthy the Industrial Revolution did little to help people from the lower classes escape their economic hardships.

One of the most harmful effects of the Industrial Revolution was the immense gap in education it created between the people in the upper middle class and those in the lower class. Due to the poor wages given to factory workers many families where forced to send their children to work. Since the children where at work all day they where not given the proper education needed in order to succeed in any job other than manual labor. On the other side of the economic spectrum upper middle class children where given very good education on how to start, run, and manage businesses, this gave them an advantage that set them far ahead of their lower class counterparts. Not only where lower class children deprived of an education, many of them like their parents would get injured while working and this would further limit their ability to try and break out of their economic class. The lack of good education for people of the lowest social class was the most damning effect of the industrial revolution, since the lowest class made up the largest percentile of the population.

One concept of modern capitalism that was not present in the factories of the industrial revolution was that of a promotion. Even though they would toil away for hours six days a week at their jobs, people in the lower class where never rewarded with a promotion to an easier position in management; this was in large part due to their lack of education. The only promotions available to people in the lower class was usually just being forced into taking on a more physically taxing position. With such little hope for getting a better paying and less taxing jobs many lower class citizens where worked to death without any kind of real compensation. Since lower class workers where presented with no opportunity at the time to advance in their occupation they became stuck in their job and social class.

While the middle class may have seen significant advancements in their social position during the industrial revolution, little was done for the lower class that made up most of the population. The lower class where generally the factory workers and because of this had to send their days working long hours in dangerous conditions. Additionally their children where also forced to work due to their extremely low wages; since the children where working all day they had little time to attend school. Without schooling the children had no hope of getting a job outside of the hard physical labor that their parents did. Despite the hard work that many of the lower class factory workers put in there was no chance of workplace advancement for them since they had never learned the skills required to run a business. Without fair work, education, or chance for economic advancement the people of lower class birth where unable to escape their class and thus the Industrial Revolution did more to stagnate the economic classes of Europe them intermix them.