Reading Guide for:
“Liberty is Exploitation: The Force of Tradition in Early Manufacturing” by Barbara M. Tucker

Content Question#2: How did industrialization change the US economically, geographically and socially?

Instructions: Read “Liberty is Exploitation—The Force of Tradition in Early Manufacturing” and provide thoughtful written responses to the following prompts.

(1) What does Tucker mean when she writes that, “the factory floor became a contested and negotiated place?”

(2) How did the focus of historical study (historiography) of the rise of the factory system change in the 1970s?

(3) According to Tucker, how was the Boston Manufacturing Company innovative?

(4) Why does Tucker choose to focus her analysis of the rise of the factory system on the Slater mill rather than the Lowell system?

(5) What labor force was Slater looking for in his mill and where did he find them?

(6) What were the problems with both indigent (homeless & family-less) and pauper (poor) labor?

(7) Explain the “family system” of labor.

(8) How did Slater attempt to adapt the family system of labor to his mill?

(9) How did labor contracts show “the strength and influence of householders [fathers] exerted over manufacturers [people like Slater]?”

(10) How did “the new factory villages [villages built around a mill to support the mill] Slater established reflect the needs of New England families?”

(11) How did traditional home and church values support factory culture?

(12) Why did Slater establish schools for his workers?

(13) Why did child labor in factories become scandalous when generations of apprenticeships before had not? (Hint: What was the difference between apprenticeships and child labor in factories)

(14) How did the economic downturns of the 1830s and 1840s affect Slater’s factory system including the family labor model?

(15) How did the availability of French Canadian and Irish immigrant labor affect the labor organization in the Slater mills?

(16) How had manufacturers’ perspective on labor changed by the 1850s?