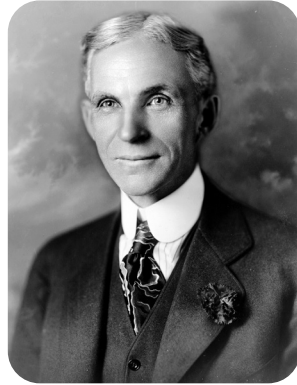


Henry Ford and the invention of the assembly line

Henry Ford (July 30, 1863 – April 7, 1947) was an American industrialist and business magnate, the founder of the Ford Motor Company and the sponsor of the development of the assembly line technique of mass production. He developed and manufactured the first automobile that many middle-class Americans could **afford**. In doing so, Ford converted the automobile from an expensive curiosity into a practical **conveyance** that would profoundly impact the **landscape** of the 20th century.



Henry Ford

The invention of Model T and the assembly line

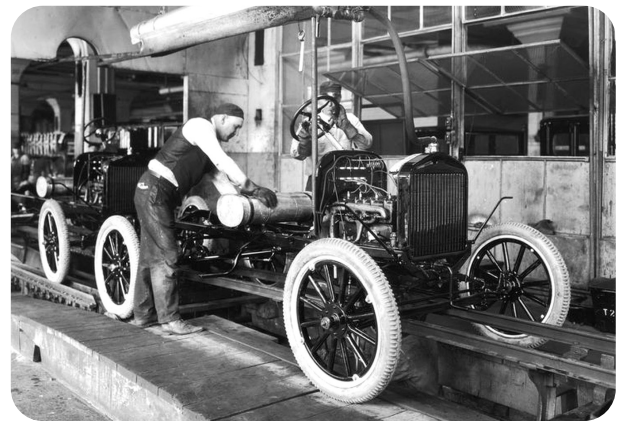
The Model T was launched on October 1, 1908. It had the **steering wheel** on the left, which every other company soon copied. The car was very simple to drive and easy and cheap to repair. It was so cheap, at \$825 in 1908 (about \$23,480 today) that by the 1920s, the majority of American drivers had learned to drive it.

Always on the hunt for more efficiency and lower costs, in 1913 Ford introduced **moving assembly belts** into his plants, which enabled an enormous increase in production. His idea was based on four principles: interchangeable

parts (making the individual pieces of the car the same every time), continuous **flow**, division of labour and reduced production time.

Ford's moving assembly line was a result of a **sudden** inspiration: would moving the cars past the men instead of moving the men past the cars save time and effort? One day Ford tried it out; a young worker put a **rope** over his shoulder and pulled the frame of Model T through the working crew while the workers began to assemble the parts and components onto the slowly moving car. The assembly line developed from this simple experiment; it literally revolutionised the entire car production process and led to mass production.


Sales of the Model T passed 250,000 in 1914. By 1916, the price had dropped to \$360 and sales reached 472,000. By 1918, half of all the cars in the United States were Model Ts.



A Model T on the moving assembly line

to afford: *permettersi*
conveyance: *mezzo di trasporto*
flow: *flusso*
landscape: *paesaggio*

rope: *corda*
steering wheel: *volante*
sudden: *improvviso*

1  **After reading the text and watching the video, give your own opinion about the assembly line and mass production. Use the prompts below.**

- How did the assembly line change the way of working?
- Why does a worker become a specialist when working on an assembly line?
- How would you explain the expression “mass production” in your own words?
- What is one of the main consequences of mass production?

2  **Translate these sentences into English.**

1. La catena di montaggio ha cambiato il sistema di produzione delle automobili.
2. Henry Ford voleva ridurre il prezzo delle auto riducendo i tempi di produzione.
3. Nel 1891 Ford iniziò a lavorare come tecnico presso la Edison Illuminating Company di Detroit.
4. Il Modello T era facile da guidare anche su strade di campagna ed ebbe un grande successo.
5. Il Modello A fu inventato nel 1927 e fu prodotto fino al 1931.
6. Ford nacque in una fattoria nel Michigan e voleva produrre auto per migliorare la vita dei contadini.