
Robots & Jobs: Revisited

Segment Length: 5:44 minutes; 3:04 minutes

Videos:

“Technology is Replacing Jobs. Are You Ready?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opdc8hQN0ew>

“Will Robots Make Human Jobs Obsolete?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gu4dPVkEjOw>

Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

Analysis Questions:

1. The FEE video notes that economic change is not new, citing the example of farming as a share of the economy. What does the CNN video note that makes more recent changes different in degree if not in kind?
2. To what extent do both videos agree with one another? How much of the difference in perspective can be attributed to conflicting arguments? How much is simply pessimism vs. optimism?
3. Human beings have always emerged from periods of immense economic change materially better off than they were before. How does this support the idea that technological advancement and globalization will improve our lives? What do you suppose is the most common counter-argument?
4. The CNN video points out that development comes at a cost. Who benefits? Who pays the cost of the transition?
5. The FEE video claims that robots do the work no one wants to do. Citing specific statements, does the CNN video seem to agree with this?
6. What does the CNN video claim is happening to the frequency of the economic transitions described in both videos?

7. How is the economic revolution of today similar to the industrial revolution of the late 18th and early 19th centuries? What are the major differences? (Think about the type of labor affected by each revolution.)
8. Why does the CNN video argue that technology and globalization mean workers will be forced to change their jobs more often than ever before?
9. What are the benefits of economic growth and change? What are the costs?
10. How might one argue that the economic transition facing workers is a crisis requiring government intervention? What might that intervention look like? What is a possible counter-argument?