The 19th century

Steam, rail, electricity, and the end of slavery.

The century the West broke the old ceiling on human life. Income per person roughly tripled in Western Europe, railways crossed continents, germs were understood, slavery was abolished, and ordinary people learned to read.

What rose

1807–1833. Britain abolishes the slave trade (1807) and slavery across its empire (1833). Source: Slavery Abolition Act 1833

1825–30. The first public steam railways, Stockton and Darlington, then Liverpool and Manchester. Source: Liverpool and Manchester Railway

1859. Darwin's On the Origin of Species. Source: On the Origin of Species

1860s. Pasteur's germ theory and Lister's antiseptic surgery. Maxwell unifies electricity and magnetism. Source: Germ theory of disease

1865. The Thirteenth Amendment ends slavery in the United States. Source: Thirteenth Amendment

1869. The first transcontinental railroad joins the United States. Source: First transcontinental railroad

1876–79. The telephone and the practical incandescent light bulb. Source: Electric light

What fell or stalled

Industrial cities were crowded and deadly before sanitation; life expectancy in Britain barely rose until the 1870s. Source: Our World in Data

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