

Flower, Raymond, and Michael Jones. "The Self-Propelled Dream." Chapter 1 in *100 Years on the Road: A Social History of the Car*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1981. ISBN: 9780070327849. pp. 8 - 19.

This is an overview of the creation of the car, in terms of the big names and events which led up to it. It's important to consider how the collective consciousness of this time period and the preexisting technologies made the development of the car timely and appropriate.

- "Why did so many different and widely separated persons have the same thoughts at about the same time?"
- What was the perception of early cars, and what difficulties hindered their initial acceptance?
- What roles did the early races place?
- According to the reading, the key components of the car are the change-speed gear, center-point steering, a differential gear on the driving axle, driving shafts with universal joints, independent suspension of the wheels, and the internal combustion engine. Are these all necessary and sufficient, and why?

Cowam, Ruth Schwartz. "Automobiles and Automobility." Chapter 10 in *A Social History of American Technology*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997. ISBN: 978-019504605. p. 224 – 232.

The most important pieces of these reading are the descriptions of Fordism and Sloanism, the two social paradigms that jointly define the manufacturing of American cars. Not only the paradigms, but the process of their emergence had wide-ranging effects that solidified the car industry into a form that has only started changing again recently.

- Defend or refute the claim, "Like the sorcerer's mop, the automobile is a desirable technology that has gotten out of hand."
- What were the ramifications of assembly-line-ifying the car industry?
- What is decentralized organization, and why is it useful?
- Why is the yearly model so important to car manufacturers?
- What do Fordism and Sloanism both agree on or accept in the manufacturing of cars?
- Today, the big three car manufacturers are dying. Is it due to flaws in Fordism and/or Sloanism?

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

ES.272 Culture Tech
Spring 2003

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.