

1-8-2016

# Captains of Industry and Robber Barons

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## Recommended Citation

Evensen, David, "Captains of Industry and Robber Barons" (2016). *Curriculum Unit on the Gilded Age in the United States*. Book 1.  
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**Title:** Captains of Industry and Robber Barons

Adapted from lesson plan <http://www.history.com/images/media/pdf/Constitution-LessonPlans.pdf>

**Authors:** David Evensen

**Grade Levels:** 9-12

**Time:** One 90 Minute Class Period

**Focus Statement:** As we move through our unit on the Gilded Age, we will spend time taking about the era's Captains of Industry and Robber Barons. In this age, capitalism in the United States begins to reflect our current market economy. In this lesson we will see Captains of Industry and Robber Barons test the boundaries of that system. The emergence of men like Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Morgan and how they bring about government subsidies, labor reform, money in politics, political corruption, and larger government over-site in commerce, industry, and labor.

To help student get into the history habits of mind, this lesson will recognize the importance of individuals who have made a difference in history, and the significance of personal character for both good and ill. We will learn about this topic by comparing the wages of the common man to the Captains of Industry and Robber Barons of the time, businesses that emerged as major players in America's economy, growth of these businesses, and their impacts on the common man.

**MN Standard:** 9.4.4.20.1

Benchmark - Explain how technological innovation, heavy industrialization, and intensified boom-bust cycles of an unregulated capitalist economy led to changes in the nature of work, economic scale and productivity, the advent of the modern corporation, and the rise of national labor unions. (Development of an Industrial United States: 1870—1920)

**Learning Objectives:**

- Students will be able to compare and contrast the differences between a Captain of Industry and Robber Baron
- Students will be able to describe the motivation behind the Captains of Industry/Robber Barons and the American citizen to call for legislative changes in American law.
- Students will be able to understand the events that brought about the birth of labor unions in America and defend their necessity during the Gilded Age

**Resources:**

- Web Quest from the beginning of the unit
- Markers, paper, scissors, glue, pen, pencil, crayons, protractor
- Access to computers for research
- Printers (preferably color)

**Methods/Procedures**

**Beginning (15 minutes):**

- Explain to students that they will be creating posters about Captains of Industry/Robber Barons and by comparing their wealth to the wages of the common man, investigating which industries were most lucrative, looking into railroad subsidies, and comparing the wealth men of the time to the

richest Americans throughout history. This will help contextualize the rise of labor unions, and legislation used to define the boundaries/powers of American business and labor.

- Classroom discussion reviewing the textbooks readings on how capitalism in the United States begins to reflect our current market economy and how Captains of Industry and Robber Barons tested the boundaries of that system. The teacher will guide this discussion to cover the emergence of men like Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Morgan and how they bring about:
  - Government subsidies
  - Labor reform
  - Money in politics
  - Political corruption
  - Larger government over-site in:
    - Commerce
    - Industry
    - Labor

**Middle: Instructional Strategies / Learning Activities (55 minutes):**

- In groups of 5, students will review a Web Quest (performed at the beginning of the unit) researching Captains of Industry and Robber Barons. We will choose groups by numbering off 1,2,3,4,5.
- Each group will be assigned one Web Quest research topic and source guide to access information about the changes over time from roughly 1865 to 1900. Using these source guides, students will be reviewing and looking for additional quantifiable information to be graphed or pictured on poster boards to help foster deeper background knowledge.
- Students will then discuss their findings with the class in a 5 minute presentation.

**End / Summary (15 minutes): Should include Evaluation / Assessment / Student Achievement (# of minutes if formal)**

- Students will participate in a group discussion. The class will be split into four groups (politicians, union laborers, nonunion laborers, Captains of Industry). The teacher will moderate while students will debate the issues effecting their group and will collectively come up with a list of rules they create for government over-site in commerce, industry, and labor.
- Teacher will moderate this discussion and refer students to posters as they engage in other lessons in the unit. Examples –
  - Government subsidies
  - Labor reform
  - Money in politics
  - Political corruption
  - Larger government over-site in:
    - Commerce
    - Industry
    - Labor

**Assignment if there is one (5 minutes):**

- Students will journal at home on their feeling about today's lesson. Ideas include: Where they Captains of Industry or Robber Barons? Are Labor Unions necessary? What laws help/hurt today's Captains of Industry/Robber Barons? There are not right/wrong answers, students will receive credit for completing their work.

## Afterwards

### **Provisions for Individual Differences** (physical, emotional, mental, language, etc.):

- Check with the special education teachers to discuss possible accommodations for this lesson.

### **Self-Reflection**

What worked?

What needs Improvement?

What changes would I make before doing the lesson again?

# Web Quest



Picture from: <https://tiefenbrun10a.wikispaces.com/Captains+of+Industry>

Today we will embark on a Web Quest to gather information on the “Robber Barons” of the Gilded Age (1865-1900). Attached you will find web links to aid your exploration and information gathering on these “Captains of Industry”. As you explore these sites, fill in the blank information boxes located below each link. You will use this information to create bar graphs, pie charts, collages, and line graphs to share with your classmates.

*Have fun!*



Picture from: <http://battleofhomestead.org/battle.php>

## Wage of the common man

National Bureau of Economic Research

<http://www.nber.org/chapters/c2486.pdf>

*Fill in this information from page 15*

<b>Male</b>	<b>1870</b>	<b>1880</b>	<b>1889</b>	<b>1899</b>
Farm Labor				
Non Farm Labor				
Carpenter				
Cotton Mfg				
Wool Mfg				
Shoe Mfg				
Iron Mfg				
<b>Female</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>
Cotton Mfg				

Wool Mfg				
*All listed in dollars per month				

*Create a bar graph using this information*

### ***Richest of the rich***

The forty richest people in America's history <http://www.celebritynetworth.com/articles/entertainment-articles/30-richest-americans-time-inflation-adjusted/> Use this website for both activities on this page.

*Find the dates of death of these Americans. Use tally marks under the correct era.*

<b>Date of Death</b>	1820-1864	1865-1900	1901-1945	1946-1990	1991-Still Living
<b>Tally -&gt;</b>					

*Create a pie chart using this information*

### **Second Activity**

Print pictures of these Americans who lived during the Gilded Age 1865-1900

Use these pictures to create a collage. Add the name, businesses, and birth/death dates to their pictures

### Subsidies to Big Business

Encyclopedia.com

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3406400787.html>

Fill in the information below

Public Domain \_\_\_\_\_ acres

\_\_\_\_\_ acres transferred to Rail Roads

	California	Kansas	Minnesota	Montana	North Dakota	Washington	21 other states
<b>Acres transferred to Rail Roads -&gt;</b>							
*millions of acres							

Create a pie chart using this information

One pie chart will show public domain acres and acres transferred to Rail Roads

*One pie chart will show the distribution of this free land per state*

## **Big Business of the Gilded Age**

Big businesses

<http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guides/history/us-history-ii/industrial-america/big-business-steel-and-oil>

*Use this website to gather information to create a collage of symbols (trains...) that represent big business in the Gilded Age*

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