

Writing Assignment #2: Big Business During the Gilded Age DBQ

Historical Background:

During the late 1800s, the United States experienced rapid industrialization, leading to the growth of large corporations, new technologies, and enormous fortunes for industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie built one of the nation's largest steel companies and became one of the wealthiest Americans of the Gilded Age, while many industrial workers faced low wages, long hours, dangerous working conditions, and conflicts with employers over unions. At the same time, Carnegie became one of the nation's most generous philanthropists, donating millions of dollars to libraries, universities, and other public institutions. His involvement in the violent Homestead Strike of 1892, however, raised questions about how he treated his workers and whether his philanthropy could outweigh his business practices. Using the documents provided, evaluate the evidence and develop an argument answering the question: Was Andrew Carnegie a hero or a robber baron?

Prompt:

Was Andrew Carnegie primarily a hero or a robber baron?

Directions:

Read and answer the questions that follow each document. Then, complete the graphic organizer for putting your paragraph together. Lastly write a Step Up to Writing paragraph essay answering the prompt.

You will then type your answer on the Google Doc shared with you via Google Classroom. You will also submit your paragraph to Turnitin.com. Any suspected use of AI or any type of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero with no chance to make up the assignment.

The Documents

Document 1:

Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth," in the North American Review, June, 1889.

What is the proper mode of administering wealth after the laws (of survival of the fittest) upon which civilization is founded have thrown it into the hands of the few?

There are but three modes in which surplus wealth can be disposed of. It can be left to the families of the decedents; or it can be (given) for public purposes; or, finally, it can be administered by its possessors during their lives.

The first is the most injudicious.... Why should men leave great fortunes to their children? If this is done from affection, is this not misguided affection?

As to the second mode, that of leaving wealth at death for public uses, why should a man wait until he is dead before he becomes of much good in the world? Men who leave vast sums in this way may fairly be thought men who would not have left it at all had they been able to take it with them.

This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of Wealth: First, to set an example of modest, unostentatious living... and after doing so to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer... in the manner which, in his judgment, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community.

The man who dies rich dies disgraced.

1. What is "survival of the fittest" and how does it "throw" wealth into the hands of the few?

2. According to Carnegie, what should a rich person do with their fortune?

3. What does Carnegie mean when he says, "the man who dies rich dies disgraced"?

Document 2:

Chart created from Joseph Frazier Wall, *Andrew Carnegie*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1970

Carnegie's Philanthropy (Partial List)		
Gifts	Amount	Note
Princeton University	\$400,000	To create Lake Carnegie for rowing
TIAA	\$100,000	Teachers' Insurance & Annuity Association
Dunfermline Trust	\$4,000,000	Carnegie's boyhood home town
Homestead Relief Fund	\$4,000,000	Fund for steel workers and families
Church Organs	\$6,248,000	Total number, 7689 church organs
Carnegie Peace Endowment	\$10,000,000	To "hasten the abolition of war"
University of Scotland	\$10,000,000	Endowment for four universities
Teachers' Pension Fund	\$15,000,000	Old age help for poor professors
Carnegie Institution	\$25,000,000	To promote scientific research
Free Public Libraries	\$50,365,000	Total number, 2811, mostly in the U.S.
Carnegie Corporation*	\$145,000,000	Super trust for administering a large part of Carnegie's remaining fortune.
Total Giving Overall	\$350,695,653	
*The Carnegie Corporation's assets in 2005 were listed at \$2.167 billion. The foundation is currently giving out about \$100 million a year, most of it to education.		

4. Does this document demonstrate that Carnegie was a hero or a robber baron? Explain.

Document 3:

Andrew Carnegie, *The Gospel of Wealth*, 1889

The surplus wealth of the few will become, in the best sense, the property of the many, because administered for the common good... and this wealth, passing through the hands of the few, can be made a much more potent force for the elevation of our race than if it had been distributed in small sums to the people themselves.

The contrast between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the laborer with us to-day measures the change which has come with civilization. This change, however, is not to be deplored, but welcomed as highly beneficial.

5. According to Carnegie, why is it better for the wealth to go to only a few rather than to the people themselves?

Document 4:

William Jewett Tucker, "The Gospel of Wealth," *Andover Review*, Vol. XV, June 1891.

Note: William Tucker was a professor of religion at Andover Seminary and later became president of Dartmouth College.

I can conceive of no greater mistake, more disastrous in the end to religion if not to society, than that of trying to make charity do the work of justice.

I quote Mr. Carnegie's words, slightly transferring them, but not changing their meaning, that "the millionaire is entrusted for the time being with a great part of the increased wealth of the community, because he can administer it for the community far better than it could or would have done itself." This, of course, if accepted and carried out in any complete way, becomes patronage....

In the long run, society cannot afford to be patronized. It is better for any community to advance more slowly than to gain altogether by gifts rather than, in large part, by earnings. Within proper limits, the public is advantaged by the gifts of the rich, but if the method becomes the accepted method, to be accepted and relied upon, the decline of self-respect has begun.

Why should there be this vast amount of wealth in the hands of the few? The question is not, how shall private wealth be returned to the public? but, why should it exist in such bewildering amounts in the hands of the few?

It is estimated that two thirds of the property of the United States is in the hands of 5% of the population. It also seems safe to assume that more than one half of the wealth of the country is in possession of less than fifty thousand families.

The ethical question of today centers, I am sure, in the distribution rather than in the redistribution of wealth.

**patronage: As used by Tucker, the giving of gifts by the rich to the poor.*

6. Why is William Tucker Critical of Carnegie?

Document 5:

Adapted from Historical Statistics of the United States, Part 1. Bureau of the Census, Washington D.C., 1975

Average Daily Hours and Average Daily Wages in U.S. Manufacturing: 1892		
Industry	Average Daily Hours	Average Daily Wages
Textiles	10.20	\$1.09
Shoemaking	9.81	\$1.58
Paper makers	10.87	\$1.33
Machine shop workers	10.06	\$1.87
Iron and steel workers	10.67	\$1.81
All industries	10.04	\$1.46

Note: In 1900, Andrew Carnegie personally made \$23,000,000. Figuring that Carnegie worked a 50 hour week and a 50 week year, Carnegie's hourly wage in 1900 would have been equal to \$9,200. His daily wage was therefor about \$92,000 per day.

7. According to this chart, Andrew Carnegie made a lot more than his employees; but he also gave a lot of money to different charities (Document 2). Do you think his charitable donations justify this significant gap in wages? Explain.

Document 6:

Summary of *The Strike at Homestead Mill*, PBS American Experience, 2015

<p>The Homestead Strike of 1892 was one of the most controversial events in Andrew Carnegie's career and exposed a major contradiction between his public support for workers and his actions as an industrialist. As steel prices declined, Carnegie's manager, Henry Clay Frick, attempted to reduce workers' wages and eliminate the union at Carnegie's Homestead Steel Works in Pennsylvania. Although Carnegie was publicly known for supporting labor's right to organize, he privately gave Frick permission to take strong action against the union.</p> <p>When the workers refused to accept the new terms, Frick locked out 3,800 workers and built a heavily fortified fence around the steel mill. On July 6, 1892, approximately 300 (police officers) arrived to protect the plant and help bring in replacement workers. A violent battle broke out between the officers and the striking workers, lasting approximately 12 hours and resulting in several deaths. The officers eventually surrendered.</p> <p>The workers' initial victory was short-lived. Pennsylvania Governor Robert Pattison sent approximately 8,500 state troops to Homestead, allowing Frick to reopen the mill with replacement workers. The strike continued for several months, but the union eventually surrendered in November 1892. Union leaders were arrested, many workers were blacklisted, and the Carnegie Company successfully eliminated the union from Homestead. Afterward, wages were reduced, the workday was increased to 12 hours, and hundreds of jobs were eliminated.</p> <p>Carnegie publicly expressed regret over the violence and later wrote that the Homestead conflict was the experience that caused him the greatest pain in his business career. However, his company ultimately benefited from the defeat of the union. The Homestead Strike therefore became an important example of the conflict between Carnegie's image as a progressive philanthropist and his role as an industrialist who opposed organized labor when it threatened his company's control.</p> <p><u>Letter from Carnegie to Frick after the Factory Reopened:</u> "All anxiety gone since you stand firm. Never employ one of these rioters. Let grass grow over works. Must not fail now. You will win easily next trial."</p>

8. Why did the workers strike at Homestead Mill?

9. How did Carnegie want Frick to handle the employees who were apart of the Strike at Homestead Mill?

10. Do you think Carnegies words and actions regarding the Strike at Homestead Mill make him appear to be a hero or a robber baron? Explain.

Document 7:

Hamlin Garland, "Homestead and Its Perilous Trades," McClure's Magazine, Jun 1894.

Document Note: The Homestead Steel Mill in Pittsburgh was owned by Carnegie and was the site of one of the major strikes in American history. Hamlin Garland, a journalist, visited Homestead **two years after the strike** and observed these conditions.

<p>A cold, thin rain was falling as I took the little ferryboat and crossed the Monongahela River to see Homestead an its iron mills...</p> <p>Everywhere in the boiler plate mill were pits like the mouth of hell, and fierce ovens giving off the flare of heat, and burning wood and iron, giving off horrible stenchs of gases. Thunder upon thunder, clang upon clang, glare upon glare! Torches flamed far up in the dark spaces above. Engines moved to and fro, and steam hissed and threatened.</p> <p>Everywhere were grimy men with shallow and lean faces. The work was of the inhuman sort that hardens and coarsens. "How long do you work?" I asked of a young man who stood at the furnace near me. "Twelve hours," he replied. "The lights go on at six at night and come off at six in the morning. I go on at six and off at six."</p> <p>"For how much pay?" "Two dollars and a quarter." (a day) "How much do those men get shoveling there in the rain?" "One dollar and forty cents." (A cut has since taken place.)</p>	<p>"What proportion of the men get that pay?"</p> <p>"Two-thirds of the whole plant, nearly two thousand. There are thirty-five hundred men in the mills. They get all prices, of course, from a dollar and forty cents up to the tonnage men, who get five and ten dollars per day when the mills run smooth."</p> <p>I suppose not many men make ten dollars per day?"</p> <p>"Well hardly." He smiled...High above... an engine backed up with a load of crude molten iron...</p> <p>"Yes, the men call this the deathtrap," repeated my guide, they wipe a man out here every little while... Sometimes a chain breaks and the ladle tips over, and the iron explodes. Sometimes the slag falls on the workmen from the roadway up there. Of course, if everything is working smooth and a man watched out, why, all right! But you take it after they've been on duty for twelve hours without sleep, and running like hell, everybody tired and loggy, and it's a different story.</p>
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11. Why is it significant that this reporter's account took place two years after the labor strikes at Homestead Steel Mill?

12. Do the working conditions and wages at the Homestead Still Mill make Andrew Carnegie a hero or a robber baron? Explain.

Document 8:

Andrew Carnegie, Autobiography, *Chapter 12: The Homestead Strike*, 1919.

<p>It is for the interest of the employer that his men shall make good earnings and have steady work. The sliding scale enables the company to meet the market; and sometimes to take orders and keep the works running, which is the main thing for the working-men.</p> <p>Nothing... in all my life, before or since, wounded me so deeply. No pangs remain of any wound received in my business career save that of Homestead.</p>
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13. When it comes to wages, what is Carnegie saying is good for the employer?

14. How does Carnegie feel about the Strike at Homestead Mill 27 years after it occurred?