

# INDUSTRIAL PICKPOCKET

*This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of wealth: First, to set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; ... and, after doing so, to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer... to produce the most beneficial results for the community—the man of wealth thus becoming the mere trustee and agent for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves.”*

—From “Wealth,” by Andrew Carnegie, *North American Review* (1889)

“Law? Who cares about the law. Hain’t I got the power?”

—Comment alleged to have been made by Cornelius Vanderbilt, when warned that he might be violating the law

Though a century has passed since the heyday of the great industrialists and financiers, debate continues: were these men captains of industry, without whom this country could not have taken its place as a great industrial power, or were they robber barons, limiting healthy competition and robbing from the poor to benefit the rich? Where do we draw the line between unfair business practices and competition that leads to innovation, investment, and improvement in the standard of living for everyone? Would the industrial economy have succeeded without entrepreneurs willing to take competition to its extremes?

During the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century America experiences a wave of industrialism driven by a group of men known as industrialists. There is no doubt that these industrialists were driven initially by one motive: wealth. However, historians and others debate the title to be bestowed on these men — that of “captains of industry” or “robber barons”!

By identifying these individuals as captains of industry, we offer a positive impression of their achievements as men of inventiveness who hard work and ingenious strategies transformed the American economy of the post-Reconstruction era and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These men are also be honored for their charitable activities (philanthropy).

In extending the title of robber baron to these men, we emphasize the cruel and self-centered entrepreneurs who took advantage of the worker, whether it be immigrant, female, or child to accumulate wealth. The factory was a place where the worker experienced harsh conditions and poor pay.

## PART I: RESEARCH

**1.** Read the selections and create a brief fact sheet on each of the following individuals below:

**ANDREW  
CARNEGIE**

**J.P.  
MORGAN**

**HENRY  
FRICK**

**JOHN D.  
ROCKEFELLER**

**CORNELIUS  
VANDERBILT**

- Describe the major contributions to each of the industrialists listed above.
- In what ways did they achieve their wealth?
- What tactics did they use in “building their empires”?
- What were their accomplishments in business?
- What was each one’s reputation as a business man?

**2.** Write a response to the prompt: *The industrialists of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries are best characterized as \_\_\_\_\_ . Defend your choice.*

## **PART II: PROJECT**

In this assignment, you have found a wallet belonging to one the wealthiest Captains of Industry during the era of the Industrial Revolution! You open the wallet only to discover the following contents:

- **A BUSINESS CARD**
  - *About Me Biography Provided On Back Of Card (1st Person)*
- **IMPORTANT PICTURES (4)**
  - *Notable Relationships or Prized Possessions*
- **CONTACTS LIST**
  - *List of Contemporaries & Possible Contacts*
- **TO DO LIST**
  - *Anticipated Weekly Scheduled*
- **MEMBERSHIP CARDS TO CLUBS/ORGANIZATIONS**
  - *Possible Clubs, Philanthropic Committees, Organizations Associated With*
- **CURRENCY NOTE**
  - *Depicts Contributions To The Industrial Revolution*
  - *Equivalent To Actual Accumulated Net Worth*

### **YOUR PROJECT WILL BE GRADED AGAINST THE PROVIDED RUBRIC:**

- ✓ **CONTENT (20 POINTS):** All items are accounted for and presented in a professional manor.
- ✓ **AUTHENTICITY (20 POINTS):** Submission demonstrates an accurate attention to detail of both Industrial figure as well as the time period.
- ✓ **CREATIVITY (10 POINTS):** Displays strong of evidence of effort and abstract thinking.

Have fun, be creative and if you have any questions, please feel free to consult Mr. R!

