

# the men who built america worksheet

The Men Who Built America Worksheet is an essential educational tool designed to help students explore and understand the significant figures and events that shaped the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This period, often referred to as the Gilded Age, was marked by rapid industrialization, economic expansion, and the rise of powerful entrepreneurs. The worksheet typically accompanies the History Channel's documentary series of the same name, providing a structured approach to learning about the titans of American industry such as Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and J.P. Morgan. This article will delve into the key figures featured in the documentary, the themes explored in their stories, and how educators can effectively utilize the worksheet to enhance student understanding.

## Key Figures in "The Men Who Built America"

The documentary centers around several influential industrialists whose innovations and business practices not only transformed the economy but also had a profound impact on American society. Below are some of the most prominent figures featured in the series.

### 1. Andrew Carnegie

- Background: Born in Scotland in 1835, Carnegie emigrated to the United States as a child. He began his career as a bobbin boy in a cotton factory and eventually rose to become one of the wealthiest men in America through his steel empire.
- Key Contributions:
  - Carnegie Steel Company: Revolutionized steel production with the introduction of the Bessemer process.
  - Philanthropy: After selling his company to J.P. Morgan, Carnegie dedicated his life to philanthropy, establishing libraries, educational institutions, and museums.

### 2. John D. Rockefeller

- Background: Born in 1839, Rockefeller founded the Standard Oil Company, which became the first great U.S. business trust.
- Key Contributions:
  - Standard Oil: Dominated the oil industry and was instrumental in developing the petroleum industry.
  - Philanthropy: Contributed to medical research, education, and public health initiatives, establishing institutions like the University of Chicago.

### **3. J.P. Morgan**

- Background: Born in 1837, Morgan was a powerful banker who played a crucial role in the consolidation of industries.
- Key Contributions:
  - Banking: Restructured railroads and organized the merger of several leading corporations, including General Electric and U.S. Steel.
  - Cultural Impact: A patron of the arts, Morgan also contributed to the establishment of the Morgan Library & Museum in New York.

### **4. Cornelius Vanderbilt**

- Background: Known as the "Commodore," Vanderbilt was a key figure in transportation, particularly railroads and shipping.
- Key Contributions:
  - Railroad Expansion: Played a major role in the development of the railroad system in the United States.
  - Fortune Building: Amassed a vast fortune that laid the groundwork for future American industrialists.

### **5. Thomas Edison**

- Background: An inventor and businessman, Edison, born in 1847, is best known for his innovations in electric power generation.
- Key Contributions:
  - Inventions: Credited with creating the phonograph, the motion picture camera, and the electric light bulb.
  - General Electric: Co-founded the company, which became one of the largest and most diversified industrial corporations in the world.

## **Thematic Elements of the Documentary**

The documentary not only highlights the achievements of these men but also explores several overarching themes that are crucial for understanding this transformative period in American history.

### **1. Innovation and Industry**

- The rise of industrialization was fueled by technological advancements and innovative business practices.
- The introduction of assembly line production and mass manufacturing techniques played a significant role in increasing efficiency and output.

## **2. Capitalism and Competition**

- The fierce competition among titans like Rockefeller and Carnegie exemplified the capitalist spirit of the era.
- Business strategies, such as horizontal and vertical integration, were employed to dominate markets and eliminate competition.

## **3. Philanthropy and Legacy**

- Many of these industrialists became known for their philanthropic efforts, leaving a lasting impact on society.
- The concept of the "Gospel of Wealth," popularized by Carnegie, promoted the idea that the wealthy have a moral obligation to distribute their fortunes for the greater good.

## **4. Labor and Social Change**

- The rise of industry also led to significant labor movements and social challenges.
- Workers often faced harsh conditions, leading to strikes and the formation of labor unions advocating for rights and better wages.

## **Using the Men Who Built America Worksheet in Education**

The Men Who Built America Worksheet serves as a valuable educational resource for teachers and students. Here are some ways educators can effectively incorporate it into their curriculum:

### **1. Guided Viewing**

- Encourage students to watch the documentary with the worksheet in hand, allowing them to take notes and answer questions as they go.
- This active engagement helps reinforce learning and retention of key concepts.

### **2. Group Discussions**

- Facilitate small group discussions based on the worksheet prompts.
- Students can share insights, debate the merits and pitfalls of the

industrialists' actions, and explore the broader implications of their legacies.

### **3. Research Projects**

- Assign students to research specific figures or events highlighted in the worksheet.
- Encourage them to present their findings to the class, fostering a deeper understanding of the historical context.

### **4. Critical Thinking Exercises**

- Use the worksheet to prompt critical thinking about the ethical implications of capitalism, labor rights, and philanthropy.
- Pose questions that challenge students to consider the balance between wealth creation and social responsibility.

## **Conclusion**

The Men Who Built America Worksheet is more than just a study aid; it is a gateway to understanding the complexities of American history during a pivotal era. By examining the lives of influential figures such as Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Morgan, students can gain insights into the forces that shaped modern America. The themes of innovation, competition, philanthropy, and labor rights provide a multifaceted view of not only the industrialists' contributions but also the societal changes that accompanied their rise. As educators utilize this worksheet in their classrooms, they foster a deeper appreciation for the historical narrative that continues to influence the fabric of American society today.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is 'The Men Who Built America' worksheet about?**

The worksheet is an educational resource that accompanies the documentary series 'The Men Who Built America,' focusing on the lives and contributions of key industrialists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

### **Who are the main figures featured in 'The Men Who Built America'?**

The main figures include Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan,

Cornelius Vanderbilt, and Henry Ford, who played significant roles in shaping American industry and economy.

## **What types of activities are included in 'The Men Who Built America' worksheet?**

Activities often include comprehension questions, character analysis, timelines of events, and discussions about the impact of these industrialists on modern America.

## **How does the worksheet encourage critical thinking?**

The worksheet encourages critical thinking by prompting students to analyze the motivations, successes, and ethical implications of the actions taken by these industrialists.

## **Can 'The Men Who Built America' worksheet be used in classrooms?**

Yes, the worksheet is designed for classroom use, providing educators with a structured way to engage students with historical content.

## **What historical themes are explored in the worksheet?**

The worksheet explores themes such as capitalism, innovation, social responsibility, and the impact of industrialization on society.

## **Is 'The Men Who Built America' worksheet suitable for all grade levels?**

While it can be adapted for various grade levels, it is primarily aimed at middle and high school students studying American history.

## **What skills can students develop using this worksheet?**

Students can develop skills in historical analysis, critical thinking, writing, and understanding economic principles through the activities provided.

## **Are there any supplementary materials recommended for use with the worksheet?**

Supplementary materials may include the documentary episodes, biographies of the industrialists, and related articles on the Gilded Age.

## How can teachers assess students' understanding using this worksheet?

Teachers can assess understanding through completed worksheets, group discussions, presentations, or essays based on the themes and questions posed.

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