

Robber Barons of the Gilded Age

Summary

This lesson will ask students to research industrial giants of the late 19th century, analyze the information they gather about the industrialists, and determine whether they deserve the title Robber Barons. In addition, students will be asked to evaluate the habits and philosophies of the industrialists in order to determine whether the "robber baron" term is consistent with the ideas and practices that define this era as the Gilded Age.

Essential Questions:

- Where did the term "robber barons" originate and what does it mean?
- Who were the robber barons in United States history?
- What does "gilded" mean?
- Why are the late 1800s called the "Gilded Age"?
- **Is the term "robber barons" compatible with the ideas and practices that make the late 1800s the "Gilded Age"?**

Time Frame

4 class periods of 90 minutes each

Group Size

Individual

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning

Materials

For Students:

- 1 poster board each to use for cube

For Teacher:

- 1 poster board to use for demonstration
- cut out cube pattern for students to trace. See attachment.
- list of robber barons, cut into separate names for student "drawing" for topics (See attached list)
- video about the life of Andrew Carnegie (see bibliography)
- handout of assignment and grading rubric

Background for Teachers

- Knowledge of the Gilded Age and the Robber Barons.
- Introduction presentation that defines "gilded" and includes reference to Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warren's book, *The Gilded Age*. I recommend using a PowerPoint presentation. (Web sites for homes of the Robber Barons are included in Bibliography)
- Teacher demonstration of how to create the cube using information obtained from the Carnegie video. Stress importance of citing visuals used in the presentation.

Student Prior Knowledge

Associated chapters from the course textbook

Intended Learning Outcomes

- Students will assess the actions and lives of individual industrialists
- Students will demonstrate through the information presented on the cube project that this age and its people were complex and had both good actions and bad actions
- Students will analyze materials gathered from their research
- Students will gain valuable practice searching for materials from the Internet and other sources
- Students will gain practice citing their information sources correctly
- Students will develop a quality product to demonstrate their findings

Instructional Procedures

Day 1:

- Introduction activity by teacher (See teacher background)
- Assign each student to bring their own poster board to class on Day 3
- Introduce the cube assignment to the students
- Assign students to find out all they can about the term robber barons and bring that information to class with them at the next meeting.

Day 2:

- Discuss what students found out about robber barons.
- Show the video about Andrew Carnegie
- Using information from the video, create a Satisfactory (C) cube as a demonstration
- Draw names to receive industrialist assignments

Day 3:

- Students will need to trace cube form from pattern onto their poster boards. They may wish to cut cube form out in order for easier handling.
- Spend this day doing research on the Internet, your Media Center, etc.
- Students need to complete their cubes by Day 4.

Day 4:

- Students should briefly introduce their industrialist, what their research revealed, their answer to the assignment question, and their justification for their decision.
- Teacher should display the cubes. (I hang mine from the ceiling)
- Wrap up. Answer the essential questions as a group.

Strategies for Diverse Learners

This lesson plan was designed for Advanced Placement U.S. History students. For an average class, students could be divided into groups of 4--one researching the biography, one searching for possible negative aspects, one researching positive aspects, and one working on the illustration and graphic information. Working in groups would require an additional day to organize and assemble the project. Individual days may need to be adjusted as well.

Another option could be to concentrate more on technology-based skills and have students create PowerPoint shows.

Extensions

This lesson can be used to work into an additional lesson on big business and labor practices. Immigration can also be tied to this lesson because so many of the Robber Barons were immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants. They also hired immigrants to work in their businesses. A more social approach could be tied to this unit by contrasting the Victorian lifestyles of the upper and middle classes with the lifestyles of the workers in tenements and immigrant ghettos.

Rubrics

[Robber Baron Cube Project](#)

Bibliography

Authors

[TYLA WALTON](#)