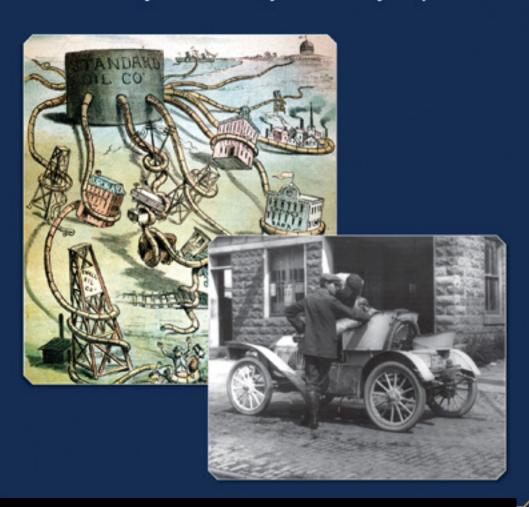
DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints in Primary Source Documents

Rockefeller Monster Monopolist or Marketplace Hero?

John D. Rockefeller and his Standard Oil Company were widely admired and just as widely despised.



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Teacher Introduction



Using Primary Sources

Primary sources are called "primary" because they are firsthand records of a past era or historical event. They are the raw materials, or the evidence, on which historians base their "secondary" accounts of the past.

A rapidly growing number of history teachers today are using primary sources. Why? Perhaps it's because primary sources give students a better sense of what history is and what historians do. Such sources also help students see the past from a variety of viewpoints. Moreover, primary sources make history vivid and bring it to life.

However, primary sources are not easy to use. They can be confusing. They can be biased. They rarely all agree. Primary sources must be interpreted and set in context. To do this, students need historical background knowledge. Debating the Documents helps students handle such challenges by giving them a useful framework for analyzing sources that conflict with one another.



"Multiple, conflicting perspectives are among the truths of history. No single objective or universal account could ever put an end to this endless creative dialogue within and between the past and the present."

From the 2011 Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct of the Council of the American Historical Association.

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The Debating the Documents Series

Each Debating the Documents booklet includes the same sequence of reproducible worksheets. If students use several booklets over time, they will get regular practice at interpreting and comparing conflicting sources. In this way, they can learn the skills and habits needed to get the most out of primary sources.

Each Debating the Documents Booklet Includes

- Suggestions for the Student and an Introductory Essay. The student gets instructions and a one-page essay providing background on the booklet's topic. A time line on the topic is also included.
- Two Groups of Contrasting Primary Source Documents. In most of the booklets, students get one pair of visual sources and one pair of written sources. In some cases, more than two are provided for each. Background is provided on each source. Within each group, the sources clash in a very clear way. (The sources are not always exact opposites, but they do always differ in some obvious way.)
- Three Worksheets for Each Document Group. Students use the first two worksheets to take notes on the sources. The third worksheet asks which source the student thinks would be most useful to a historian.
- One DBQ. On page 20, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to write an effective essay using all of the booklet's primary sources.



How to Use This Booklet

1. Have students read "Suggestions for the Student" and the Introductory Essay.

Give them copies of pages 5-7. Ask them to read the instructions and then read the introductory essay on the topic. The time line gives them additional information on that topic. This reading could be done in class or as a homework assignment.

2. Have students do the worksheets.

Make copies of the worksheets and the pages with the sources. Ask students to study the background information on each source and the source itself. Then have them take notes on the sources using the worksheets. If students have access to a computer, have them review the primary sources digitally.

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3. "Debate the documents" as a class.

Have students use their worksheet notes to debate the primary source documents as a class. Urge students to follow these ground rules:

- Use your worksheets as a guide for the discussion or debate.
- Try to reach agreement about the main ideas and the significance of each primary source document.
- Look for points of agreement as well as disagreement between the primary sources.
- Listen closely to all points of view about each primary source.
- Focus on the usefulness of each source to the historian, not merely on whether you agree or disagree with that source's point of view.

4. Have students do the final DBQ.

A DBQ is an essay question about a set of primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, students write essays using evidence from the sources and their own background knowledge of the historical era. (See the next page for a DBQ scoring guide to use in evaluating these essays.)

The DBQ assignment on page 20 includes guidelines for writing a DBQ essay. Here are some additional points to make with students about preparing to write this kind of essay.

The DBQ for this Booklet (see page 20):

"Rockefeller was truly a 'monster monopolist' whose power over the oil industry harmed the public far more than his charitable giving ever helped it." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

- Analyze the question carefully.
- Use your background knowledge to set sources in their historical context.
- Question and interpret sources actively. Do not accept them at face value.
- Use sources meaningfully to support your essay's thesis.
- Pay attention to the overall organization of your essay.

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Complete DBQ Scoring Guide

Use this guide in evaluating the DBQ for this booklet. Use this scoring guide with students who are already familiar with using primary sources and writing DBQ essays.

Excellent Essay

- Offers a clear answer or thesis explicitly addressing all aspects of the essay question.
- Does a careful job of interpreting many or most of the documents and relating them clearly to the thesis and the DBQ. Deals with conflicting documents effectively.
- Uses details and examples effectively to support the thesis and other main ideas. Explains the significance of those details and examples well.
- Uses background knowledge and the documents in a balanced way.
- Is well written; clear transitions make the essay easy to follow from point to point. Only a few minor writing errors or errors of fact.

Good Essay

- Offers a reasonable thesis addressing the essential points of the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least some of the documents and relates them to the thesis and the DBQ.
- Usually relates details and examples meaningfully to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some relevant background knowledge.
- May have some writing errors or errors of fact, as long as these do not invalidate the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Fair Essay

- Offers at least a partly developed thesis addressing the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least a few of the documents.
- Relates only a few of the details and examples to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some background knowledge.
- Has several writing errors or errors of fact that make it harder to understand the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Poor Essay

- Offers no clear thesis or answer addressing the DBQ.
- Uses few documents effectively other than referring to them in "laundry list" style, with no meaningful relationship to a thesis or any main point.
- Uses details and examples unrelated to the thesis or other main ideas. Does not explain the significance of these details and examples.
- Is not clearly written, with some major writing errors or errors of fact.

Suggestions to the Student



Using Primary Sources

A primary source is any record of evidence from the past. Many things are primary sources: letters, diary entries, official documents, photos, cartoons, wills, maps, charts, etc. They are called "primary" because they are first-hand records of a past event or time period. This Debating the Documents lesson is based on two groups of primary source documents. Within each group, the sources conflict with one another. That is, they express different or even opposed points of view. You need to decide which source is more reliable, more useful, or more typical of the time period. This is what historians do all the time. Usually, you will be able to learn something about the past from each source, even when the sources clash with one another in dramatic ways.



How to Use This Booklet

Read the one-page introductory essay.

This gives you background information that will help you analyze the primary source documents and do the exercises for this *Debating the Documents* lesson. The time line gives you additional information you will find helpful.



2. Study the primary source documents for this lesson.

For this lesson, you get two groups of sources. The sources within each group conflict with one another. Some of these sources are visuals, others are written sources. With visual sources, pay attention not only to the image's "content" (its subject matter) but also to its artistic style, shading, composition, camera angle, symbols, and other features that add to the image's meaning. With written sources, notice the writing style, bias, even what the source leaves out or does not talk about. Think about each source's author, that author's reasons for writing, and the likely audience for the source. These considerations give you clues as to the source's historical value.

3. Use the worksheets to analyze each group of primary source documents.

For each group of sources, you get three worksheets. Use the "Study the Document" worksheets to take notes on each source. Use the "Comparing the Documents" worksheet to decide which of the sources would be most useful to a historian.

4. As a class, debate the documents.

Use your worksheet notes to help you take part in this debate.

5. Do the final DBQ.

"DBQ" means "document-based question." A DBQ is a question along with several primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, write an essay using evidence from the documents and your own background history knowledge.

Rockefeller: Monster Monopolist or Marketplace Hero?

In the late 1800s, John D. Rockefeller was one of the most admired men in America. Yet he was also one of the most hated. Why?

Rockefeller was one of the richest men in the world. By 1878, his Standard Oil company owned or leased 90% of the nation's oil-refining capacity. He was well on his way to becoming a billionaire. Such riches often call forth envy and hatred. Yet such success is also deeply admired. Rockefeller provoked especially strong feelings, pro and con, because of how he earned his money—and because of how he spent it. In both cases, his story seemed to sum up the best and the worst of the astounding changes that transformed life in America in the late 1800s.

After the Civil War, rails linked the nation into one huge market. Inventions, new machines, and new industrial methods vastly increased production. Businesses could sell much more, but they also had to compete with other firms all across the nation. One way to do this was to grow very large and take advantage of what are called "economies of scale." These are savings that come from using the best machinery and large-scale factory organization to produce huge amounts of a product. When this is done, each unit of a product can often be manufactured at much lower cost.

In steel, tobacco, sugar refining, meat-packing, and other industries, some companies grew rapidly. They bought out their competitors. Or they drove them out of business by setting their prices well below those charged by those competitors. In time, a few huge corporations came to dominate key industries. As they did, fears of "monopoly" spread. A business is a monopoly if it is the sole producer of a product. Monopoly power supposedly gives a business the ability to restrict supply and keep prices artificially high. Rockefeller's company came to be seen as the worst of the monopolies.

In the 1860s, when the oil industry really began, there were hundreds of oil refiners. At first, the main oil byproduct was kerosene, used as a lighting fuel. Rockefeller and his associates soon began to grow and take over other companies. They built pipelines, barrel-making factories, and tank cars to streamline production and cut costs. Their highly efficient operation steadily brought kerosene prices down throughout the late 1800s.

Rockefeller did many things that angered people. For example, he made secret deals with railroads to give him "rebates," reductions on what they charged to ship his oil on their lines. He even got some railroads to pay him a fee when they shipped his competitors' oil. Rockefeller organized his companies in various ways. In 1899, he set up Standard Oil of New Jersey as his "holding company" (it held the stock of the other oil companies under his control). In 1911, the Supreme Court ruled that Standard Oil had used illegal monopoly practices and ordered it broken up into many smaller companies.

Was Rockefeller really that bad? Monopolies supposedly keep prices artificially high. Yet, prices overall fell steadily in the late 1800s. The price of refined oil fell even faster. Even before Standard Oil was broken up, its share of the oil-refining market was starting to decline. Meanwhile, Rockefeller had contributed in a major way to America's booming industrial economy and to an improved lifestyle for millions. In getting rich, he also became a generous charitable donor. He gave away hundreds of millions of dollars over his lifetime to various religious and educational causes.

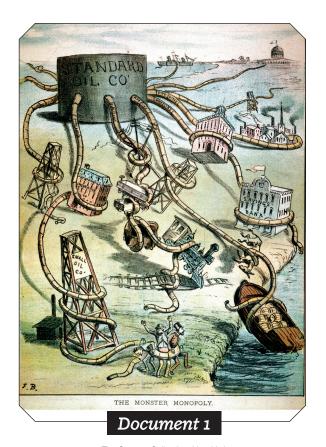
Do these facts make Rockefeller a hero of the American marketplace? Or do his ruthless business practices make him the monster monopolist of his age? The documents in this booklet should help you decide.

Rockefeller Time Line John Davison Rockefeller is born in Richford, New York, on July 8. Edwin Drake drills the first oil well in Titusville, Pennsylvania, launching the oil industry. In 1863, Rockefeller and his partners build an oil refinery in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1860-1869 1868 Rockefeller reaches a deal with Jay Gould's Erie Railroad to get discounts, or rebates, on large-volume oil shipments. In 1870, Rockefeller founds Standard Oil of Ohio. He soon begins using his alliance with the railroads to convince other Cleveland refiners to sell out to 1870-1879 Standard Oil. After 1873, when economic hard times set in, Standard Oil buys out refineries in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York, and Pennsylvania's Oil Region. In 1882, Standard Oil trust is formed. It is called a "trust" because it gives the stockholders of other oil refining companies trust certificates in exchange for their 1880-1889 stock. This gives the trust control of those other companies. In 1889, Rockefeller contributes \$600,000 to help found what will become the University of Chicago. In 1890, the Sherman Antitrust Act outlaws trusts and other combinations in restraint of trade. By then, Rockefeller's companies control almost 90% of the oil refined in the United States. In 1892, an Ohio suit causes the Standard Oil Trust to be dissolved. Soon after that, New Jersey changes its laws to allow a single company to hold stock shares in other companies in any state. Thus, in 1899, 1890-1899 Standard Oil of New Jersey becomes the holding company for all of Rockefeller's companies. That is, it owns—or "holds"—the stock of those other companies. Meanwhile, in the late 1890s, electricity starts to replace kerosene as a lighting fuel. At the same time, the automobile creates a rising demand for another oil by-product, gasoline. In 1901, President McKinley is assassinated. Vice President Theodore Roosevelt becomes president. He is an outspoken opponent of trusts. In 1902, The Rockefellers create the General Education Board to promote education in the 1900-1909 South for all races. In that same year, McClure's Magazine begins publishing muckraker Ida Tarbell's highly critical history of Standard Oil. By 1911, Standard Oil's share of the refined oil market has fallen to 64%. That year, the Supreme Court upholds a lower court and forces Standard Oil to split up into 34 companies. In 1913, the Rockefeller Foundation is founded. Rockefeller gives the foundation \$100 million in its first year. In 1910-1919 1914, a Rockefeller-owned mining company in Colorado is the scene of labor strikes and violence. At least 24 people die in a battle between miners and the National Guard.

John D. Rockefeller dies.

DOCUMENTS 1 & 2

Visual Primary Source Documents 1 & 2





The Granger Collection, New York

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Information on Documents 1 & 2

Document 1 is an 1884 cartoon captioned "Monster Monopoly." It uses the image of an octopus in its attack on the power of Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company. The tentacles of this octopus can be seen grabbing other oil companies, railroads, banks, ships, and other businesses.

Document 2 is a 1905 cartoon commenting on Rockefeller's charitable giving. The cartoon shows that his hundreds of millions of dollars of charitable donations were based on the fortune his powerful oil company gave him. As the cartoon suggests, Rockefeller gave his money for various religious and educational purposes.