#3932 Exploring History—Industrial Revolution

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John D. Rockefeller, Sr.

Standard/Objective

• Give and explain examples of ways that economic systems structure choices about how goods and services are to be produced and distributed. (NCSS)

• Students will discuss questions that explain what actions by a company will lead to government intervention through antitrust laws. They will apply this knowledge to create a game of monopoly using modern day businesses.

Materials

Copies of both sides of the Standard Oil Monopoly photo card; Copies of historical background information (page 24); Monopoly games; Poster boards

Discussion Questions

• What is a monopoly?

• Why did John D. Rockefeller’s focus change from profit to charity?

• In what ways do you admire Rockefeller? In what ways are you critical of him?

Using the Primary Source

A few days before this activity, ask students to bring in copies of the game Monopoly. Have students play Monopoly. After allowing enough time for students to participate in the game, ask students if they can explain why this game is called Monopoly.

Then, distribute copies of the political cartoon photo card. See if students can figure out what this cartoon has to do with the game that was just played. Explain that the American government uses the court system to get rid of monopolies. In fact, there is even a special branch of the Justice Department called the Antitrust Division. The Antitrust Division seeks to protect competition in business by enforcing laws. If one company is allowed to control an entire business, more than likely, the prices will go up on that product. If there is a competitor, both businesses will compete for the public’s business. This will ensure fair prices and better quality for the public. The antitrust laws apply to every business, including manufacturing and transportation.

Read and discuss the historical background information (page 24) as a class. Discuss the questions listed above. Then have pairs of students complete the activities on the back of the card. When students are finished, let them share their answers and ideas with the class.

Tell students that they will be creating a modern day Monopoly game. Put students into small groups to brainstorm a list of modern companies to include on their game boards. If time permits, let students create the game boards on poster board. This can also be completed as homework. Let students trade and play their games.

Extension Idea

• Have students research on the Internet two examples of recent companies that have been judged guilty of antitrust laws and the reasons for government intervention. Use the United States Department of Justice Antitrust Division’s website http://www.usdoj.gov/atr as a starting place.
John D. Rockefeller, Sr. (cont.)

**Historical Background Information**

John Davidson Rockefeller made his fortune in the oil industry, and at the turn of the century was considered to be the richest man in the world. Rockefeller was born in Richford, New York, in 1839. His father was a traveling salesman and his religious mother was a firm believer in hard work and charity. When he was 14, his family moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where Rockefeller attended high school. He excelled in mathematics. At the age of 16, he started working as a clerk for a produce company, where his honesty and efficiency led to a respected reputation. Rockefeller had a natural business sense and a special knack for making money. He formed a partnership in a grain commission house that became very profitable. Rockefeller then used those profits to invest in a new product—oil. By 1866, Rockefeller had formed a partnership with his brother, William, and they became very busy expanding their oil business. In 1868, they added a new partner, Henry Flagler.

Rockefeller used his mathematical and organizational skills to improve the oil industry by cutting waste and poor management habits. He strongly believed that central control of the industry was essential to smoothly take the oil products from the producer to the consumer. He and his partners decided to seek control of all parts of the oil industry from making their own oil barrels, to manufacturing the sulfuric acid used in the refining process, to owning their warehouses, to building tank cars to carry the oil on the railways. The company bought other oil companies and forced the railroads into a tax system for hauling the oil. Within a few years, Rockefeller and his partners had developed an orderly refinery system called Standard Oil Company. Rockefeller had a reputation as a cunning businessman and financier.

By the end of 1872, Rockefeller owned all the main refineries in Cleveland, New York, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia. In 1882, the Standard Oil Trust was formed and all properties were placed in the Trust. By 1888, they had an elaborate oil distribution system whereby almost every town felt compelled to buy Standard products. His oil monopoly controlled most of the world oil trade. A *monopoly* means that the person or company has complete control and there is no competition from other companies. People criticized his monopoly and forced the courts to close the Standard Oil Trust in 1892. Government laws called antitrust laws have since been set in place to keep one company from controlling the entire market or having a monopoly on that market.

In 1897 Rockefeller retired from active management of the business and began to focus his life on philanthropy. A *philanthropist* is someone who gives away money to help others. Rockefeller’s fortune rose in 1912 to almost $900 million. By that time he had already given away hundreds of millions of dollars.
STANDARD OIL MONOPOLY
Standard Oil Monopoly

**Historical Background Information**

This is a cartoon of John D. Rockefeller. It is called “King of the World” and was drawn by C. J. Taylor. The cartoon shows the control Standard Oil had over the entire world oil market. Rockefeller was a shrewd businessman who knew how to make money. For awhile, his company held the monopoly on oil. Antitrust laws broke up the company so that other companies could offer competition. Competition helped to bring the prices down for the public.

**Analyzing History**

**Knowledge**

How did Rockefeller become the richest man in the world by the turn of the century?

**Comprehension**

Explain the symbols in this cartoon and how they represent the Standard Oil monopoly.

**Application**

If Rockefeller were alive today, what advice would you ask him about his business dealings? Write a letter from Rockefeller to you in which he expresses his expert advice.

**Analysis**

A monopoly that is under criticism today is the Microsoft Corporation. This company supplies most of the software on our computers. Using a Venn diagram, compare this monopoly to the oil monopoly. How do both affect people and how can the antitrust laws prevent them from squelching the competition?

**Synthesis**

While there was resentment against Rockefeller for building a huge oil empire, he also provided jobs for millions of people and eventually a new way of life for everyone. Imagine what our lives would be like today if men like Rockefeller had not pushed to make the production of oil so efficient and profitable. Write a paragraph describing how you think life would be different.

**Evaluation**

People who work really hard have made our lives easier in many ways. Some have also made millions of dollars because they are great businessmen. Do you think monopolies are unfair to those who work really hard and become successful? Do the antitrust laws go against the “American Dream” that anyone can work hard and achieve success?

**Historical Writing**

**Fiction**

Write a short skit from the viewpoint of a small businessman who must deal with Standard Oil when buying the kerosene and gasoline he sells to his customers. Include conversations with Standard Oil distributors and with this man’s customers.

**Nonfiction**

If you had 500 million dollars to donate to good causes, where would you contribute your money? Why?

**History Challenge**

Where did Rockefeller’s money go? Research the names of several of the philanthropic causes and projects Rockefeller endorsed. Record what you discover in a paragraph or two.
Cyrus Field and His Transatlantic Cable Dream

Standard/Objective

• Describe and analyze the effects of changing technologies on the global community. (NCSS)
• Students will be able to describe and illustrate the significant effects of the 1866 transatlantic cable on global relations by creating their own telegrams and making a two column chart comparing communication before the cable and after the cable.

Materials

Copy of the facsimile *The Eighth Wonder of the World*; Copies of the historical background information (page 44); Copies of the student activity sheet, *The Benefit of Cable Messages* (page 45); For optional use: *The Atlantic Cable* (page 46); Two large sheets of chart paper; Markers

Discussion Questions

• How did this cable change communications between the two continents, Europe and North America?
• What would it have been like to wait two weeks for news from Europe, especially during a war?
• Discuss why this poster is so effective in visually showing the historic event.
• Who do you think is pictured at the top of this page surrounded by flags? Which flags are they?
• Why did the artist include a picture of the sea god Neptune (Poseidon)?
• What do the lion and the eagle represent?
• What does the rope-like border represent?

Using the Primary Source

Make copies of *The Eighth Wonder of the World* poster to hand out to pairs of students. Share the full-color copy with the whole class. Have students share their observations about this poster prior to reading any of the background information. Then read together the historical background information (page 44) about Cyrus Field. Discuss the questions listed above. Students can then work with partners to complete the student activity sheet *The Benefit of Cable Messages* (page 45). Brainstorming as a group might be helpful for students to generate ideas for their telegrams.

After students have finished their telegrams, have students complete a large T-chart comparing communication between the two continents before the cable and after the cable.

Extension Ideas

• Cyrus Field was extremely persistent. Have students write a poem about how he never gave up and kept on trying new ways to meet his goal of laying a telegraph cable between the two continents.
• Have students research to discover what Queen Victoria and President Buchanan wrote to one another in 1858.
Cyrus Field and His Transatlantic Cable Dream (cont.)

Historical Background Information

Imagine running a hose from your house to your school. You would need to keep connecting sections of hoses together and check to see if they remained connected. Now imagine laying a very thick cable for 2,700 miles (4,350 km) under water from Europe to North America.

Cyrus Field, a wealthy American merchant and businessman, dreamed of creating a transatlantic telegraph cable to allow rapid communication between Europe and North America. He wanted to especially link New York City with London, but the straight route across the Atlantic between those two cities was not realistic. He and Samuel Morse consulted on ways to make this possible. A land cable was finally laid from New York to Hearts Content, Newfoundland. Crossing the ocean from Newfoundland to Ireland was much safer, since the ocean floor was smoother and shallower. Between 1857 and 1866, Field organized five very expensive expeditions to lay the cable. The first three were failures. The cable either broke, portions were lost, or the signal ceased to function.

After the third such failure, Field wrote the following account in his diary:

For a week all went well; we had laid out 1,200 miles of cable and had only 600 miles farther to go, when, hauling in the cable to remedy a fault, it parted and went to the bottom. That day I never can forget how men paced the deck in despair, looking out on the broad sea that had swallowed up their hopes; and then how the brave [Samuel] Canning for nine days and nights dragged the bottom of the ocean for our lost treasure, and, though he grappled it three times, failed to bring it to the surface. We returned to England defeated, yet full of resolution to begin the battle anew.

Measures were at once taken to make a second cable and fit out a new expedition; and with that assurance I came home to New York in the autumn.

The fourth attempt finally linked the cable across the ocean between Newfoundland and Ireland. In August 1858, Cyrus Field arranged for Queen Victoria to send the first transatlantic message to President James Buchanan. The 98-word message took 16.5 hours to transmit. Until that moment, messages across the ocean took at least 12 days to send by ship. The president’s reply of 143 words took 10 hours. New Yorkers responded with celebrations, praising Field and the telegraph inventor Morse. Unfortunately, the new cable was not successful for very long. Within 14 days it had stopped transmitting messages. People’s praise then turned to jokes and criticism.

Finally, Field’s group decided to make one long continuous cable. Only one ship was big enough to carry such an enormous load—The Great Eastern. The cable weighed 21,000 tons (19,100,000 kg) when it was completed. On July 13, 1866, The Great Eastern left Valencia, Ireland, laying cable all the way to Hearts Content, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland. It landed on July 27, 1866. The cable was a success at last and continued to transmit messages from one continent to another for many years. Field and his crews were eventually admired for their determination and commitment to overseas communication. The two continents could finally communicate in a reasonable time span.
The Benefit of Cable Messages

Background Information

The American entrepreneur, Cyrus Field, promoted the Transatlantic Cable. Between 1857 and 1866, he made five expeditions to try to lay a telegraph cable on the ocean floor between Newfoundland and Ireland. A cable was successfully installed in 1858, but its signal lasted only a few weeks. After the Civil War ended, Field tried again to get his cable installed and working. In 1866 he was successful and stated that his victory was “like clasping hands across the sea.” The artist who designed this poster called the cable the eighth wonder of the world. (Source: Library of Congress)

Activity

Directions: How did the telegraph cable change the way people responded to their world when it was first invented? The following is one example of how telegrams might have changed the world.

Letter received on May 26, 1865: May 12, 1865, Dear Lilly, I am so sorry to inform you that your father is gravely ill. I pray you can come in time to be with him in these last days. With deepest sympathy, Your cousin, Mary.

Response: Mary, I will leave tomorrow on a steamer to London. I’ll see you on June 5.

Outcome: If only I had known sooner, I could have been there. When I finally arrived on June 5, I learned my father had died on May 26.

versus

Telegram received on May 13, 1865: May 12, 1865, Lilly, Your father is ill. Come be with him these last days. Your cousin, Mary.

Response: Will catch steamer tomorrow and arrive May 23. Will send details later.

Outcome: I was with my father during his last three days. He died May 26.

Work with a partner to create a letter, telegram message, response, and outcome situation like the example above. Other ideas might include: sending messages about births and deaths to relatives, discussing important topics between two governments, notices about diseases that could be spreading, or notices about the death of a world leader and how that might affect some decisions.

Challenge

Why do you think the artist called this cable the eighth wonder of the world? What were considered the seven wonders at that time?
The Atlantic Cable
Child Laborers

These two photos were taken by Lewis Hine during his tour across the country in 1908 to survey the number of children in the workforce and to evaluate their working conditions. The photo on the left is of boys working for the railroad. The photo on the right is of boys working in the mines.

1. Describe the appearance of the boys in each photo (age, clothing, physical appearance, expressions, etc.).

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2. Compare and contrast the working conditions for these two groups of child laborers (safety, work environment, etc.).

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