

Grade 8, Social Media Quiz Prompt for Informative / Explanatory Writing (Comparison and Contrast) Common Core Standard W.CCR.2

Our understanding of important figures in American history help us understand the story of our country, who we are, and what we have believed in the past and what we believe now.

The great capitalists of the late 19th and early 20th century may have much to say to us in 2015 about how our country is one of opportunity and sometimes one of oppression. Capitalists such as Rockefeller, Carnegie, Stanford, and Morgan supported the arts, higher education, and public libraries, but they were often criticized as Robber Barons who employed business practices that did not benefit those who worked for them or those with whom they worked.

You are going to read at least three texts by or about the Robber Baron you chose using the social media quiz. As you read and re-read these texts, think about what the texts show you about how the capitalist seems to have affected the individual people who were involved. I encourage you to find additional texts that agree with or disagree with the assigned text below. Next, you will choose one additional capitalist from the same industry and identify three or more reliable texts.

Possible comparison choices:

Leland Stanford	J.P. Morgan	John D. Rockefeller	Andrew Carnegie
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cornelius Vanderbilt • Collis Potter Huntington • John D. Spreckels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jay Cooke • James Fiske 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew W. Mellon • Henry Ford 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henry Clay Frick • Charles M. Schwab

Use the discussion web to develop your thinking about each of the capitalists.

Three assigned texts:

Leland Stanford	J.P. Morgan	John D. Rockefeller	Andrew Carnegie
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leland Stanford 2. Workers of the Central Pacific Mines and Inaugural Address. 3. Leland Stanford, Part of the Central Pacific's "Big Four" 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. JP Morgan biography: The Most Influential Banker in History and J.P. Morgan 2. John Pierpoint Morgan – Banker extraordinaire 3. The Golden Touch 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Wealthiest Americans Ever (interactive timeline) and New York Times Obituary 2. Biography: John D. Rockefeller, Senior. 3. The Ludlow 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Andrew Carnegie's Legacy 2. Strike at Homestead Mill 3. How Andrew Carnegie Turned His Fortune into a Library Legacy

		massacre, 1914 – Sam Lowry	
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Three texts you selected:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Finally, using these texts, you will write a news magazine article (for example, *Time*) comparing and contrasting the views of these two individuals.

For the article, your focus question is:

According to these texts, what did the capitalists do to improve people's lives and why might they still be considered Robber Barons? Be sure to use evidence from the texts to support and develop your thinking.

Challenge: Based on evidence, in what ways do the lives and actions of your two capitalists speak to us today?

Challenge: How reliable do you think your sources are?

Remember, good informative writing in the compare and contrast style:

- *Has a clear introduction*
- *States a focus/topic clearly, precisely, and thoughtfully*
- *Uses specific evidence from the text(s) to support and develop the topic and explains that evidence*
 - *Determines and explores specific traits or characteristics for comparison or contrast.*
 - *Uses reliable evidence to support claims*
- *Concludes by making a worthwhile point about both subjects*
- *Uses precise language*
- *Shows control over conventions*

You will have four class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. You will present a high-quality rough draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.