

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION 1

Directions: The following question requires you to construct a coherent essay that integrates your interpretation of Documents 1–7 and your knowledge of the period referred to in the question. High scores will be earned only by essays that both cite key pieces of evidence from the documents and draw on outside knowledge of the period. (For complete directions for a DBQ, see the Introduction, page 404.)

1. Some historians have characterized the industrial and business leaders of the 1865–1900 period as “robber barons,” who used extreme methods to control and concentration wealth and power. To what extent is that characterization justified based on the historical evidence?

Document 1

Source: Interview with William H. Vanderbilt, *Chicago Daily News*, 1882

Q: How is the freight and passenger pool working?

W.V.: Very satisfactorily. I don't like that expression “pool,” however, that's a common construction applied by the people to a combination which the leading roads have entered into to keep rates at a point where they will pay dividends to the stockholders. The railroads are not run for the benefit of the “dear public”—that cry is all nonsense—they are built by men who invest their money and expect to get a fair percentage on the same.

Q: Does your limited express pay?

W.V.: No; not a bit of it. We only run it because we are forced to do so by the action of the Pennsylvania road. It doesn't pay expenses. We would abandon it if it was not for our competitor keeping its train on.

Q: But don't you run it for the public benefit?

W.V. The public be damned. What does the public care for the railroads except to get as much out of them for as small consideration as possible? I don't take any stock in this silly nonsense about working for anybody's good but our own.

Document 2

Source: Thomas Alva Edison, Letter written November 14, 1887

My laboratory will soon be completed. . . . I will have the best equipped and largest Laboratory extant, and the facilities incomparably superior to any other for rapid & cheap development of an invention, & working it up into Commercial shape with models, patterns & special machinery. In fact there is no similar institution in Existence. We do our own castings and forgings. Can build anything from a lady's watch to a Locomotive.

The Machine shop is sufficiently large to employ 50 men & 30 men can be worked in other parts of the works. Invention that formerly took months & cost a large sum can now be done in 2 or 3 days with very small expense, as I shall carry a stock of almost every conceivable material of every size, and with the latest machinery a man will produce 10 times as much as in a laboratory which has but little material, not of a size, delays of days waiting for castings and machinery not universal or modern. . . .

You are aware from your long acquaintance with me that I do not fly any financial Kites, or speculate, and that the works I control are well-managed. In the early days of the shops it was necessary that I should largely manage them [alone], first because the art had to be created, 2nd, because I could get no men who were competent in such a new business. But as soon as it was possible I put other persons in charge. I am perfectly well aware of the fact that my place is in the Laboratory; but I think you will admit that I know how a shop should be managed & also know how to select men to manage them.

Document 3

Source: Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth," *North American Review*, 1889

The problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth so that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmony. . . .

The price which society pays for the law of competition, like the price it pays for cheap comforts and luxuries, is also great; but the advantages of this law are also greater still. For it is to this law that we owe our wonderful material development which brings improved conditions. While the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department. We welcome, therefore, as conditions to which we must accommodate ourselves, great inequality of environment, the concentration of business, industrial and commercial, in the hands of a few; and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial, but essential for the future progress of the race.

Document 4

Source: James B. Weaver, "A Call to Action," 1892

It is clear that trusts are contrary to public policy and hence in conflict with the common law. They are monopolies organized to destroy competition and restrain trade. . . .

It is contended by those interested in trusts that they tend to cheapen production and diminish the price of the article to the consumer. . . . Trusts are speculative in their purpose and formed to make money. Once they secure control of a given line of business, they are masters of the situation and can dictate to the two great classes with which they deal—the producer of the raw material and the consumer of the finished product. They limit the price of the raw material so as to impoverish the producer, drive him to a single market, reduce the price of every class of labor connected with the trade, throw out of employment large numbers of persons who had before been engaged in a meritorious calling and finally . . . they increase the price to the consumer. . . . The main weapons of the trust are threats, intimidation, bribery, fraud, wreck, and pillage.

Document 5

Source: Standard Oil Company with tentacles, Library of Congress



Document 6

Source: Statement of Pullman Strikers, June 1894

Pullman, both the man and the town, is an ulcer on the body politic. He owns the houses, the schoolhouses, and the churches of God in the town he gave his once humble name. The revenue he derives from these wages he pay out with one hand—the Pullman Palace Car Company—he takes back with the other—the Pullman Land Association. He is able by this to bid under any contract car shop in this country. His competitors in business, to meet this, must reduce the wages of their men. This gives him the excuse to reduce ours to conform to the market, His business rivals must in turn scale down, so must he. And thus the merry war—the dance of skeletons bathed in human tears—goes on; and it will go on, brothers, forever unless you, the American Railway Union, stop it.

Document 7

Source: Major gifts by John D. Rockefeller before his death (1937)

American Baptist Foreign Mission Society New York City	\$6,845,688.52
American Baptist Home Mission Society, New York City	6,994,831.62
American Baptist Missionary Society, Dayton, Ohio	1,902,132.58
General Education Board	129,209,167.10
Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, New York	73,985,313.77
Minister and Missionaries Benefit Board of Northern Baptist Convention	7,090,579.06
Rockefeller Foundation, New York	182,851,480.90
Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research	59,931,891.60
University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois	34,708,375.28
Yale University, New Haven	1,001,000.00
Y.M.C.A., International Committee	2,295,580.73
TOTAL	\$506,816,041.18