

## Debating the 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 first-hand 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.



## ★ *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.

### **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.



## ★ *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*

### 1. **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

1839

• • • John Davison Rockefeller is born in Richford, New York, on July 8.

1859

• • • Edwin Drake drills the first oil well in Titusville, Pennsylvania, launching the oil industry.

1860–1869

• • • In 1863, Rockefeller and his partners build an oil refinery in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1868 Rockefeller reaches a deal with Jay Gould's Erie Railroad to get discounts, or rebates, on large-volume oil shipments.

1870–1879

• • • 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 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.

1880–1889

• • • 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 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.

1890–1899

• • • 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, 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.

1900–1909

• • • 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 South for all races. In that same year, *McClure's Magazine* begins publishing muckraker Ida Tarbell's highly critical history of Standard Oil.

1910–1919

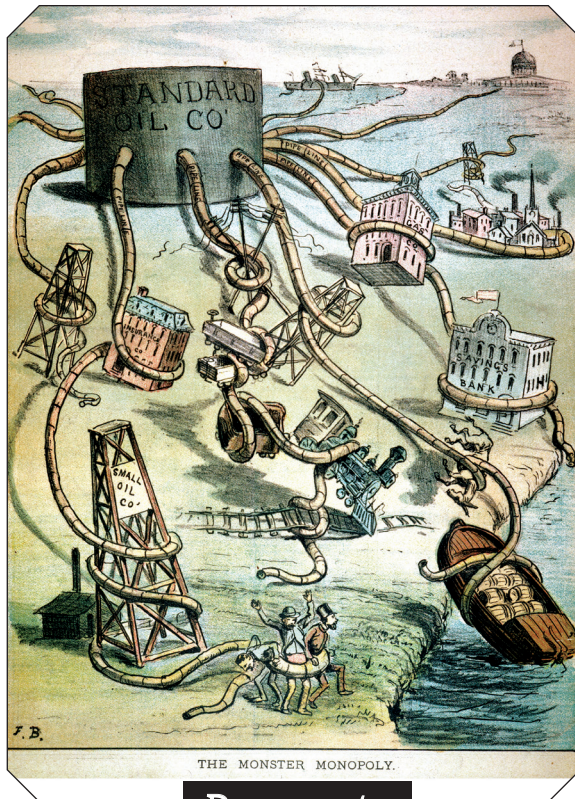
• • • By 1911, Standard Oil's share of the refined oil market has fallen to 64%. That year, the Supreme Court upholds a lower court and forces Standard Oil to split up into 34 companies. In 1913, the Rockefeller Foundation is founded. Rockefeller gives the foundation \$100 million in its first year. In 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.

1937

• • • John D. Rockefeller dies.



## Visual Primary Source Documents 1 & 2



**Document 1**

The Granger Collection, New York



**Document 2**

The Granger Collection, New York

### 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.

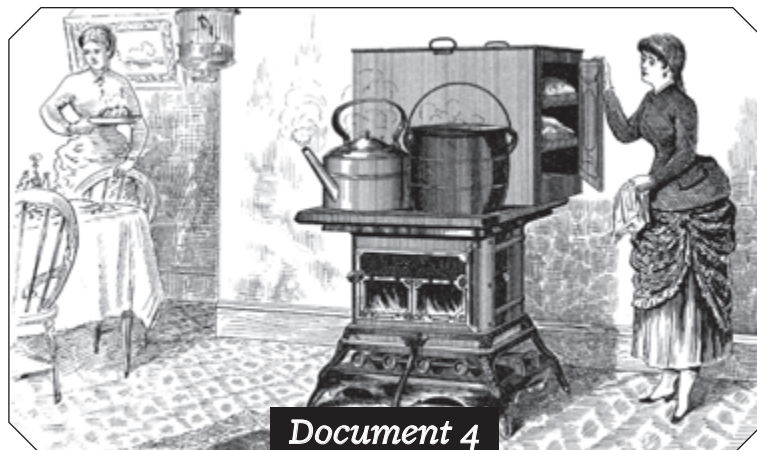
**Document 2** is a 1905 cartoon commenting on Rockefeller's charitable giving. The cartoon shows that his hundreds of millions of dollars of charitable donations were based on the fortune his powerful oil company gave him. As the cartoon suggests, Rockefeller gave his money for various religious and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

## Visual Primary Source Documents 3-5



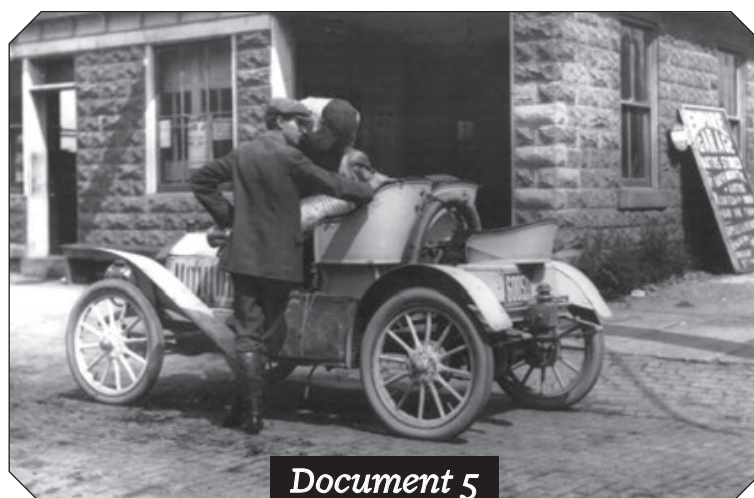
**Document 3**

The Granger Collection, New York



**Document 4**

The Granger Collection, New York



**Document 5**

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-69195

### Information on Documents 3-5

All of these visual primary sources show items fueled by the refined oil products that John D. Rockefeller's company did so much to supply.

**Document 3** is a page from an 1895 mail-order catalog of Montgomery Ward & Co. It shows a large number of oil lamps. During Standard Oil's early decades, much of the demand for oil was for kerosene to be used as a lighting fuel.

**Document 4** is an 1878 drawing of an American patent oil stove.

**Document 5** is a 1909 photo showing a man putting gasoline in his Buick roadster in upstate New York. By the turn of the century, this new oil byproduct began to replace kerosene as the number-one oil-based commodity. Gasoline was used as a fuel for automobiles and other internal combustion engines.



## **Study the Documents: Visual Sources 1 & 2**

*Instructions:* Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

### **1 Main Idea or Topic** \_\_\_\_\_

Write a brief caption (one or two sentences) to better explain the point each of these cartoons makes about John D. Rockefeller.

### **2 Visual Features—Doc 1** \_\_\_\_\_

Many cartoons in the late 1800s used the octopus as a metaphor for big business and other forces in society. What is a metaphor? Why do you think the octopus metaphor was so popular in those years?

### **3 Visual Features—Doc 2** \_\_\_\_\_

Charitable giving is usually something people admire. This cartoon uses both words and images to criticize Rockefeller's charitable giving. How do both the words and the images help to do this?

### **4 Background Information** \_\_\_\_\_

Study the octopus cartoon (Document 1) closely. Use the introductory essay and time line for this lesson to understand why the octopus is grasping each object. Write a one-sentence explanation of this for at least three of these objects.

## **Study the Documents: Visual Sources 3–5**

*Instructions:* Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

### **1 Main Idea or Topic**

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Write a brief paragraph describing the effect of the oil industry on American life in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Use these three images as your evidence.

### **2 Background Information**

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These sources could be evidence for more than just oil. That is, they show how technology was changing life in many ways. Make a list of all the big technological changes you know about in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Discuss how many of them are suggested by features in these illustrations.

### **3 What Else Can You Infer?**

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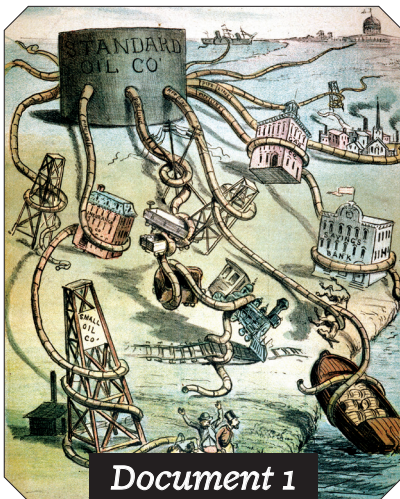
What is suggested or implied in these three documents? For example, what do they suggest about life for the ordinary man or woman in America in these decades? Rockefeller once said, “We are refining oil for the poor man and he must have it cheap and good.” Do these sources back up Rockefeller's claim? Why or why not?

# Comparing the Documents

## ★ *The Visual Sources*

Answer the question by checking one box below. Then complete the statements on the Comparison Essay worksheet. Use all your notes to help you take part in an all-class debate about these documents—and to answer the final DBQ for the lesson.

**Which of these primary source documents would be most useful to a historian trying to understand the impact of Rockefeller and his Standard Oil company on the nation in the late 1800s?**



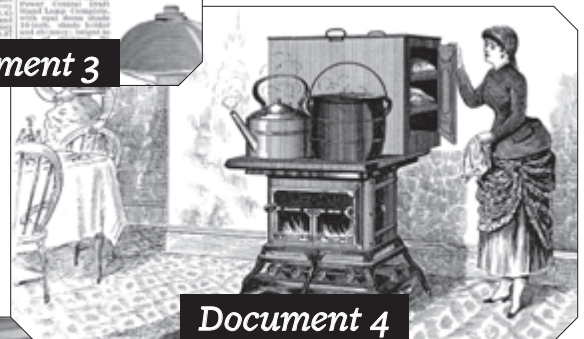
**Document 1**



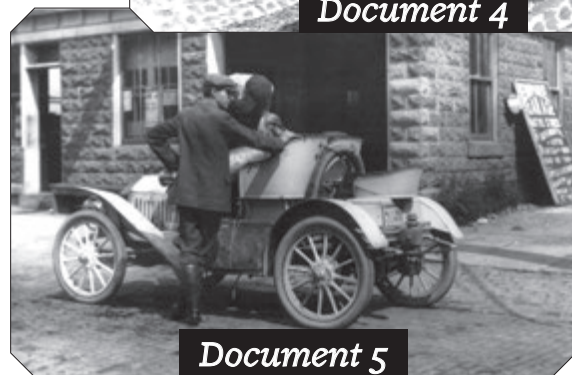
**Document 3**



**Document 2**



**Document 4**



**Document 5**

*Documents 1 & 2*

☐

*Documents 3–5*

☐

# Comparison Essay

*I chose Documents \_\_\_\_\_ because:*

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*I did **not** choose Documents \_\_\_\_\_.*

*However, a historian still might use the documents in the following way:*

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**Keep this in mind:** Some sources are very biased. A biased source is one that shows you only one side of an issue. That is, it takes a clear stand or expresses a very strong opinion about something. A biased source may be one-sided, but it can still help you to understand its time period. For example, a biased editorial cartoon may show how people felt about an issue at the time. The usefulness of a source depends most of all on what questions you ask about that time in the past.

## Written Primary Source Documents 1 & 2

### Information on Documents 1 & 2

**Document 1.** Ida Tarbell was born in Erie County, Pennsylvania, in 1857. Her father was an oil producer who blamed the failure of his business on Rockefeller's Standard Oil company. Her brother was treasurer of Pure Oil, another Rockefeller competitor. As a journalist for *McClure's Magazine*, Ida Tarbell wrote articles about Rockefeller and his business. These were published as a book, *The History of the Standard Oil Company* (1904), which became a famous example of the so-called "muckraking" social reform journalism of the early 1900s. This passage is from the chapter in Tarbell's book called "The Rise of the Standard Oil Company."

**Document 2** is a passage from "John D. Rockefeller: A Character Study," a different article by Ida Tarbell that appeared in *McClure's Magazine*, July 1905.

#### Document 1

*In the fall of 1871, [Rockefeller and some other oil refiners developed] a remarkable scheme, the gist of which was to bring together secretly a large enough body of refiners and shippers to persuade all the railroads handling oil to give to the company formed special rebates on its oil, and drawbacks on that of other people. If they could get such rates it was evident that those outside of their combination could not compete with them long and that they would become eventually the only refiners. They could then limit their output to actual demand, and so keep up prices. This done, they could easily persuade the railroads to transport no crude for exportation, so that the foreigners would be forced to buy American refined. They believed that the price of oil thus exported could easily be advanced fifty per cent. The control of the refining interests would also enable them to fix their own price on crude. As they would be the only buyers and sellers, the speculative character of the business would be done away with.*

#### Document 2

*But when a man deliberately decides to build up his fortune by taking advantage of practices against which the moral sense of his day has pronounced, as in 1872 it had loudly pronounced against railroad discriminations, of practices to which he knows the moral law is opposed, he must have the courage of his decision, he must be prepared to sustain his determination by any or all of those practices which are essential in supporting a deed which society declares contrary to her good. He must be prepared to conceal, to spy, to threaten, to bribe, to perjure himself, and he must be prepared to harden his heart to the sufferings of those who fall in his path. This is what it has always cost to do a thing of which the moral sense of the world disapproves. This is what it always will cost. There is no evidence whatever that Mr. Rockefeller has ever hesitated once, in thirty-two years, at the price demanded. He has faced the need with unwavering courage. He has paid, like a man who has weighed the price of wrong-doing and decided to pay it.*

## Written Primary Source Documents 3 & 4

### Information on Documents 3 & 4

**Document 3.** While Ida Tarbell's book presented a very harsh view of Rockefeller and Standard Oil's business practices, even she at times expressed admiration for the company's efficient and modern production techniques. This passage is from Tarbell's book in a chapter called "The Legitimate Greatness of the Standard Oil Company."

**Document 4.** A key criticism of monopolies in general is that they use their power to keep prices artificially high. These charts may lead you to question how great Standard Oil's power to do this actually was. The top chart is based on figures in Tarbell's book, pp. 384–385. The second chart is from *Historical Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975).

### Document 3

Not far away from the canning works, on Newtown Creek, is an oil refinery. This oil runs to the canning works, and as the newmade cans come down by a chute from the works above, where they have just been finished, they are filled, twelve at a time, with the oil made a few miles away. The filling apparatus is admirable. As the newmade cans come down the chute they are distributed, twelve in a row, along one side of a turn-table. The turn-table is revolved, and the cans come directly under twelve measures, each holding five gallons of oil—a turn of a valve, and the cans are full. The table is turned a quarter, and while twelve more cans are filled and twelve fresh ones are distributed, four men with soldering cappers put the caps on the first set. Another quarter turn, and men stand ready to take the cans from the filler, and while they do this, twelve more are having caps put on, twelve are filling, and twelve are coming to their place from the chute. The cans are placed at once in wooden boxes standing ready, and, after a twenty-four-hour wait for discovering leaks, are nailed up and carted to a nearby door. This door opens on the river, and there at anchor by the side of the factory is a vessel chartered for South America or China or where not—waiting to receive the cans which a little more than twenty-four hours before were tin sheets lying in flat boxes. It is a marvelous example of economy, not only in materials, but in time and in footsteps.

### Document 4

#### Price of a Gallon of Refined Oil (kerosene)

1872	22.0 ¢
1880	9.3 ¢
1885	8.1 ¢
1890	7.4 ¢
1897	5.9 ¢

#### Consumer Prices\*

1870	100
1880	76
1885	71
1890	71
1895	66

\* This chart shows the overall average prices for several years in the form of an "index." A price index of this sort sets a given year's overall price level at 100 and then lists the price level for other years as percentages of 100. A figure over 100, that is, shows a rise in prices. A figure under 100 shows a fall in prices.



## **Study the Documents: Written Sources 1 & 2**

*Instructions:* Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

### **1 Main Idea or Topic—Doc 1** \_\_\_\_\_

Write a brief paragraph explaining how Tarbell thinks Rockefeller was able to win monopoly power in the oil industry.

### **2 Main Idea or Topic—Doc 2** \_\_\_\_\_

Tarbell says Rockefeller has acted against “the moral sense of his day” or against “the moral law.” In what way does she say he has done this? Do you think she is right? Why or why not?

### **3 Author, Audience, Purpose** \_\_\_\_\_

What was Tarbell’s purpose in writing about Rockefeller? From the information given, do you think she was able to be completely objective and fair in writing about Rockefeller? Why or why not?

## Study the Documents: Written Sources 3 & 4

*Instructions:* Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

### **1 Main Idea or Topic—Doc 3**

What can you learn from this passage about Standard Oil and the causes of its great success in the oil industry?

### **2 Main Idea or Topic—Doc 4**

Summarize the overall pattern these two charts reveal. Do these two charts together support the idea that Standard Oil was able to use monopoly power in the oil industry in these years? Why or why not?

### **3 What Else Can You Infer?**

For example, what does Document 3 suggest about the causes of industrial growth in general in the late 1800s? What do the two charts making up Document 4 suggest about the impact of monopoly power in this same period in American history?

# Comparing the Documents



## *The Written Sources*

Answer the question by checking one box below. Then complete the statements on the Comparison Essay worksheet. Use all your notes to help you take part in an all-class debate about these documents—and to answer the final DBQ for the lesson.

**Which of these primary source documents would be most useful to a historian trying to understand the impact of Rockefeller and his Standard Oil company on the nation in the late 1800s?**

*A passage from Ida Tarbell's The History of the Standard Oil Company, on tactics John D. Rockefeller used to expand his Standard Oil Company, and a passage from an article on Rockefeller in McClure's Magazine, July 1905.*

*Documents 1 & 2*

☐

*A different passage from Ida Tarbell's The History of the Standard Oil Company on Standard Oil's efficient production techniques, and two charts on oil prices and prices in general in the late 1800s.*

*Documents 3 & 4*

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## Comparison Essay

*I chose Documents \_\_\_\_\_ because:*

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*I did **not** choose Documents \_\_\_\_\_.*

*However, a historian still might use the documents in the following way:*

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**Keep this in mind:** Some sources are very biased. A biased source is one that shows you only one side of an issue. That is, it takes a clear stand or expresses a very strong opinion about something. A biased source may be one-sided, but it can still help you to understand its time period. For example, a biased editorial cartoon may show how people felt about an issue at the time. The usefulness of a source depends most of all on what questions you ask about that time in the past.

# Document-Based Question

Your task is to answer a document-based question (DBQ) on John D. Rockefeller and his Standard Oil Company. In a DBQ, you use your analysis of primary source documents and your knowledge of history to write a brief essay answering the question. Using all four sets of documents, answer this question.

## *Document-Based Question*

**“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?**

Below is a checklist of key suggestions for writing a DBQ essay. Next to each item, jot down a few notes to guide you in writing the DBQ. Use extra sheets to write a four- or five-paragraph essay.

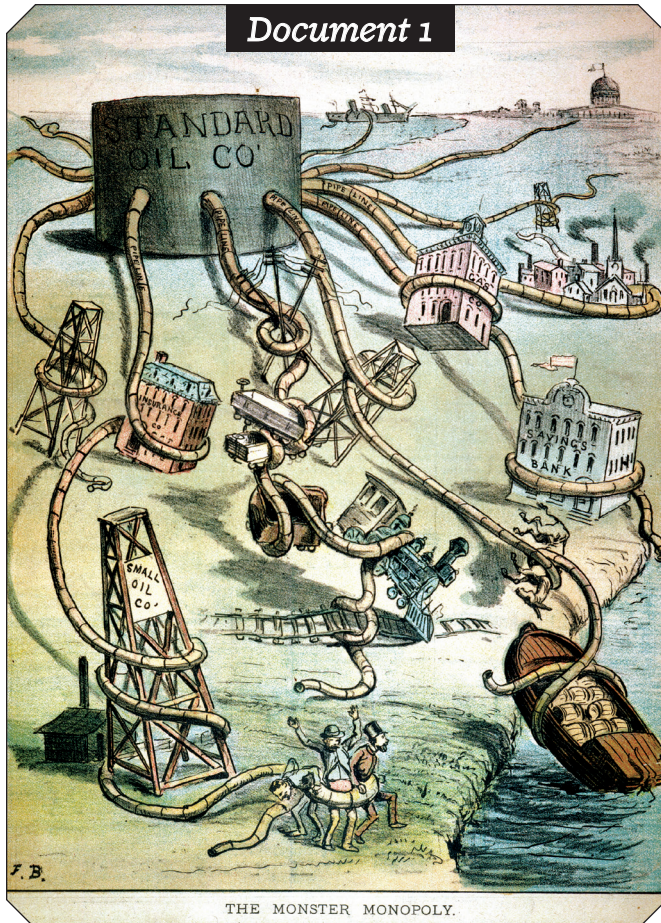
- *Introductory Paragraph*  
Does the paragraph clarify the DBQ itself? Does it present a clear thesis, or overall answer, to that DBQ?
- *The Internal Paragraphs—1*  
Are these paragraphs organized around main points with details supporting those main ideas? Do all these main ideas support the thesis in the introductory paragraph?
- *The Internal Paragraphs—2*  
Are all of your main ideas and key points linked in a logical way? That is, does each idea follow clearly from those that went before? Does it add something new and helpful in clarifying your thesis?
- *Use of Primary Source Documents*  
Are they simply mentioned in a “laundry list” fashion? Or are they used thoughtfully to support main ideas and the thesis?
- *Concluding Paragraph*  
Does it restate the DBQ and thesis in a way that sums up the main ideas without repeating old information or going into new details?

# **Visual Primary Sources**





## First Group—Documents 1 & 2



The Granger Collection, New York



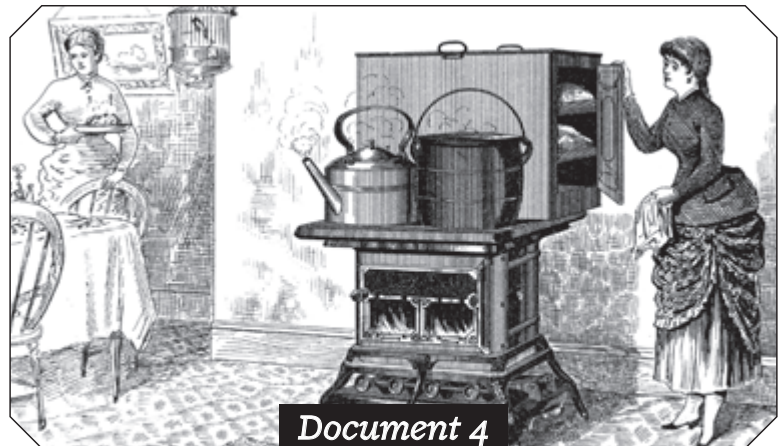
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## First Group—Documents 3-5



**Document 3**

The Granger Collection, New York



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