

Background: In the late 1800s a new breed of American, the entrepreneur, was becoming America's newest favorite hero. This is especially true when he (or less frequently she) was a true "rags to riches" story similar to someone right out of a Horatio Alger novel. However, the richest of the richest of these entrepreneurs (men like Carnegie, Rockefeller, Gould, and Vanderbilt among others) were not always seen in a completely positive light. Although many American citizens looked at them as "captains of industry" who should be the object of national worship, many others viewed them as "robber barons" who exploited workers, crushed competition in their industries ruthlessly, and pursued immoral business practices (trusts, received kickbacks, monopoly, cutthroat pricing, etc.) all for their greedy pursuit of the "almighty \$\$\$". Unquestionably, the American entrepreneur who today comes closed to evoking contrasting viewpoints such as these is none other than controversial Microsoft founder Bill Gates. Who is the real Bill Gates, "Captain of Industry" or "Robber Baron"?

Assignment: Research the history of anti-trust legislation that has been directed, over the past decade, toward Bill Gates and Microsoft. You will also want to learn about his philanthropy (his charitable giving based on the "Gospel of Wealth"). There is a great deal of good information online, for instance, check out the following links for starters:

http://www.brainyencyclopedia.com/encyclopedia/m/mi/microsoft_antitrust_case.html

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/business/2000/microsoft/635257.stm

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/default.htm>

1. Print, read and underline major points from your sources.
2. Write a 1.5 to 2 page (double spaced, size 10-12 font, one inch margins) editorial letter which gives your well-argued opinion on whether Mr. Gates and Microsoft are more accurately represented as a "captain of industry" or as a "robber baron". You should use as many specific examples as you can from your sources in support of your position. You should summarize the anti-trust case that existed against Microsoft. It has, for the most part, been settled in the past few years. There were, however, a few individual states, that did not "sign on" to the Department of Justice settlement. In addition, there are also some foreign companies that still feel that Mr. Gates and the company he founded are guilty of "restraint of trade". You must summarize the case against Microsoft even if you take the position that it was not a proper use of the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890. You may ultimately decide that both labels, C of I and RB, can be accurately applied to Mr. Gates.
3. Draw an editorial (political) cartoon which expresses position you have taken on Mr. Gates and his company
OR
Make a mini-poster (on 8.5 X 11 paper) that has visual content and a slogan which supports your position.



GOOD LUCK AND SEE ME WITH ANY QUESTIONS YOU HAVE CONCERNING THE ASSIGNMENT.