Name_____

The Father of Public Libraries

Few "rags to riches" stories compare to that of Andrew Carnegie, a Scottish immigrant who later became one of the most famous and wealthy industrialists of his time. He was born in Scotland in 1835. The son of a weaver, his family expected him to follow in his father's steps. However, the Industrial Revolution changed their plans. Mechanized looms replaced weavers, and Andrew's father had to beg for work. Carnegie vowed that when he was older, he would rise up out of poverty. At the same time, Carnegie learned from relatives about equality in the workforce and the rights of common workers.

Carnegie's family fled to America to seek better opportunities. Carnegie began his career among the working class, taking jobs in factories and the telegraph industry. In each job he held, Carnegie did his best. He embraced new and greater responsibilities. In time, he followed a coworker from the telegraph office into the railroad business. He worked for the railroads throughout the Civil War. After the war, Carnegie realized the potential of iron and steel. He resigned from the railroad to work for a bridge company before investing in the steel industry. Carnegie was willing to take incredible risks for the ideas and technology in which he believed. He said workers should form unions to protect their rights. However, Carnegie pushed his employees to work long hours for low wages. After working in the steel business for several years, he sold his company to J.P. Morgan.

Carnegie believed it was a disgrace to die rich. He turned his efforts to giving away his millions. Acting on his opinions that people should help themselves, he supported institutions of higher learning. Carnegie also established over two thousand libraries. He valued peace and built a "palace of peace" in the Netherlands that would later become an international court. Before he died, Carnegie gave away over 350 million dollars, a fortune even by today's standards.

Text Questions

1. What is one thing that might be said of Andrew Carnegie?
   a. He wasn't willing to put forth the effort.
   b. Sometimes his actions didn't match his words.
   c. He was too short-sighted and didn't make wise investments.
   d. He supported slavery during the Civil War.
2. From the passage, you can infer that . . .
   a. Carnegie's investment in the steel industry was a risk.
   b. Carnegie didn't support unions.
   c. Carnegie made most of his money working in a factory as a laborer.
   d. Carnegie supported charities.
3. What is the main idea of the third paragraph?
   a. It introduces Carnegie's background and family life.
   b. It explains why Carnegie was a successful businessman.
   c. It describes Carnegie's business career.
   d. It describes the ways in which Carnegie invested his money in helping people.
4. What do you think Carnegie meant when he said it was a *disgrace* to die rich?
   a. A person loses the respect of others if he has wealth and doesn't help others with it.
   b. People who are rich often behave poorly.
   c. People who die rich are typically dishonest.
   d. Their family would be unworthy of receiving the inheritance.
5. What can you apply to your own life from reading biographies about people such as Andrew Carnegie?

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LIVEWORKSHEETS