

The Men Who Built America

Episode 1: A New War Begins

As the nation attempts to rebuild following the destruction of the Civil War, Cornelius Vanderbilt is the first to see the need for unity to regain America's stature in the world. Vanderbilt makes his mark in shipping and then the railroad industry. Railroads stitch together the nation, stimulating the economy by making it easier to move goods across the country. But Vanderbilt faces intense competition early on, showing that captains of industry will always be challenged by new innovators and mavericks.

Key terms to define:

Archetype:

Entrepreneur:

Infrastructure:

Ingenuity:

Innovation:

Discussion Questions

1. Some may have called the United States a "failed experiment" after the Civil War. Why?
2. What role did Vanderbilt play in helping the country rebuild after the Civil War?
3. What is a hostile takeover? How did Vanderbilt deal with this kind of competition?
4. What major industries emerged in the decades after the Civil War?