

Factory Owner: William Pierce (1793-1853)

It is an exciting time to be alive in Great Britain! Much has changed since the days of my father. Papa, as I called him, lost his cattle farm at age 30 and was forced to move to Lancashire to find work. Papa was fortunate to find a job in a small textile shop where he earned an adequate wage. Throughout his years of labor, Papa kept smiling, always thankful for the opportunity to work. Using his own experience as a guide, Papa taught me and my brothers the value of hard work. He instilled optimism and eagerness in each of us. I have tried to instill these same qualities in my own children.

When I reached adulthood, my brothers and I pooled our resources in order to set up our own textile shop using the knowledge we had gained from our father. After only a few short years, my brothers chose to pursue other avenues but I remained dedicated to growing the business we had started and to using all of my strength to improve it. As sole owner of the business, I willingly moved my business several times in order to find the location that proved most profitable. Each move proved very difficult for my family as we had to uproot ourselves and move to places that often seemed strange at best. I asked my family to make such sacrifices because I recognized the tremendous opportunities afforded by machines. More opportunity was on the horizon. I chose not to live solely in the moment as so many of the impoverished do today; instead, I always planned for the future by saving and by investing for future growth. So many people today just want to fill their present appetites only to starve the next day. It is time for more people to cease their complaining, to work hard, and to plan for their futures.

- 1. What values did William learn while growing up?**
- 2. Who or what does William blame for poverty? How does his life experience confirm these beliefs?**

After several years of moving around, I was fortunate to buy large factory space in a city called Ramsbottom. This was an expensive decision and one that was incredibly risky. In fact, I had to borrow additional money from several associates in order to cover the cost of equipping the factory with the latest machines. With each loan, I had to agree to hand over all of my possessions including the factory if I proved unable to pay my debts in a timely manner. My plans, however, were well conceived and my investments paid off. Within a few short years, the factory in Ramsbottom became the city's largest employer.

After paying off my creditors, I continued to reinvest my profits into the factory in Ramsbottom but I also began opening several new factories in other cities. I equipped each new factory with the latest machinery which often required the expansion of the factory building itself. During the years of my business' greatest expansion, most of my money had to be spent in equipping and upgrading the factories. On one occasion, I had to spend £20,000 to equip a factory. While the stress of managing my accounts and factories is often more than I can handle, I am encouraged by the material and moral improvements that such hard work brings. I have seen countless individuals improve their station in life through hard work and determination. I have seen people go from having nothing to living a life without fear of creditors. I have seen lazy, impoverished individuals grow in character and strength. I have always tried to instill the same optimism and

eagerness in my workers that my mentors instilled in me. If there is one thing that my experience has taught me, it is that God helps those who help themselves.

3. What business risks did William have to take to establish his factories? How does this risk-taking impact William's view of the Industrial Revolution and of factory workers?

I have been criticized by radicals like the socialists and the communarians who argue that I have exploited my workers for my own personal gain. Nothing could be further from the truth. I do not dispute that I have grown wealthy over the years but one must not forget the years of sacrifice and determination that brought me to that wealth. Likewise, we must not forget that many of my employees would have no work if it were not for my factories. If you consider the factories and everything it takes to build them, I have employed many hundreds of people who might not otherwise have had a job. Construction workers, transportation engineers, factory laborers, industrial designers, and many others benefited from my factories. Obviously though, the people I impacted most were the factory workers themselves. With their best interest in mind, I have always tried to publicly reward hard work and initiative. In this way, my laborers learn that if they work hard, they too can reap the rewards of machine production. Times have changed. The socialists and communarians don't seem to realize this. No longer does a worker have to waste large amounts of time and energy producing hand crafted tools. With factories like my own, the work is brought to the laborer where they manage machines which continually produce inexpensive but efficient products.

4. How does William respond to his critics? In what ways does he believe the socialists and communarians have misjudged present working conditions?

Never before have people had so many opportunities. It is up to them to seize them! The government cannot legislate moral uprightness. Every time parliament has tried to enact laws regulating the economy or providing for the poor, they have only made things worse. You can not give people everything they want and then expect them to work hard. The poverty of today has resulted from ignorance and self-indulgence. Progress in society will only occur as people embrace work in order to overcome their own ignorance. The best thing that the government can do is nothing.

5. Considering all that William says, what does he think of British society? What, if anything, might he argue should be done to improve British society?