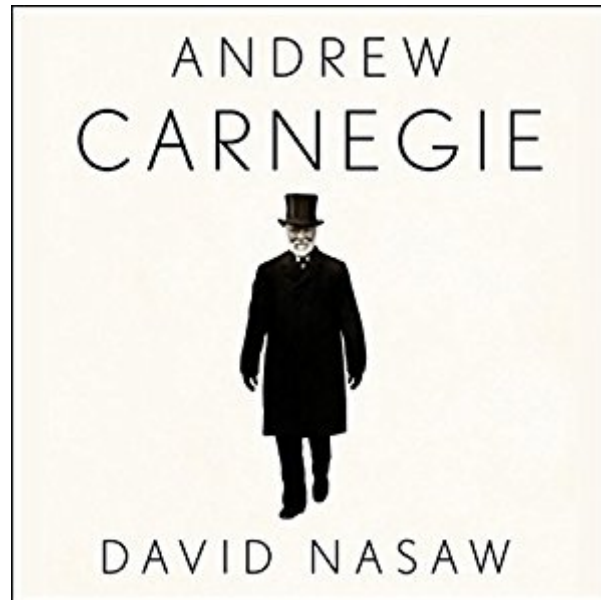




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# Andrew Carnegie



## Synopsis

Andrew Carnegie, whose lifetime spanned the era from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to the First World War was America's first modern titan. In this magnificent biography, celebrated historian David Nasaw brings to life this period of unprecedented transition - a time of self-made millionaires, scabs, strikes, and a new kind of philanthropy - through the fascinating rags-to-riches story of one of our most iconic business legends. The Scottish-born son of a failed weaver and a mother who supported the family by binding shoes, Andrew Carnegie was the embodiment of the American dream. In his rise from a job as a bobbin boy in a cotton factory to being the richest man in the world, he was single-minded, relentless, and a major player in some of the most violent and notorious labor strikes of the time. The prototype of today's billionaire, he was a visionary in the way he earned his money and in the way he gave it away. Nasaw explains how Carnegie made his fortune and how he tried to pull the world back from a war he predicted. Brimming with new material, personal letters, diaries, prenuptial agreements, letters to and from presidents and prime ministers, Nasaw plumbs the core of this fascinating man, fixing him in his place as one of the most compelling, elusive, and multifaceted personalities of the 20th century. --This text refers to the MP3 CD edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book provides insights into Andrew Carnegie's character, personality, his ambitions, flaws,

faults, and weaknesses as a man and empire builder the way view other books have. It gives us a vivid picture of the contradictions and opposing forces that were at work inside of him and the factors that affected him and drove him to be so relentless and some would say ruthless in his drive for wealth, power, and mastery of the steel industry.

Carnegie was a really, really, really loooooong book and took a while to get through but given the life that Andrew "The Star-Spangled Scotchman" Carnegie lived I imagine this book could have been twice as long. He was all over the place and never seemed to be in a constant state. We can all learn a great deal from him especially in the domains of business and philanthropy. Carnegie was a master delegator and watched as his steel empire grew in Pittsburgh while he lived the sweet life and traveled most of the world. One interesting facet of Carnegie was that early on in his life he planned to donate his estate instead passing it on to his heirs. However this didn't stop him from making as much money as possible it actually fueled him to make more so he could give more away. This isn't a how to guide on becoming the richest man in America and possibly the World but stealing a few tidbits and traits and implementing them in your life will surely be profitable.

While Mr. Nasaw writes with authority and verve, and has done considerable research that indicates he knows his subject, it is also apparent he doesn't much like Mr Carnegie. He uses numerous unnecessarily disparaging adjectives in describing his subject that got tiresome. He makes judgments that, unless he is a psychologist, seemed to me to be leaps of conjecture about Carnegie's motives driven by his assessment of Carnegie's presumed psychological make-up. While he occasionally tries to show some objectivity by giving Carnegie a benefit of doubt, generally he portrays his subject with too much of his personal disdain for his subject. He is certainly free to do this as the author, but I personally prefer a more measured approach to biography.

Very thorough account of the life of Andrew Carnegie from early days in Dunfermline through to his final days in Lenox, MA. Carefully researched narrative of Carnegie's business associates and powerful friends from his brother Tom, H. C. Frick, Phipps and Scott to J. D. Rockefeller and Theodore Roosevelt. Light coverage of the development and evolution of the integrated steelmaking business in which he invested so heavily throughout his life but an excellent historical piece nonetheless. Mr. Nasaw provides critical insight into the little known and rarely commented upon strike and subsequent breaking of the labor unions in 1888 at the Carnegie Bros. Edgar Thomson Works, which set the stage for the infamous Pinkerton - Homestead gun battle of 1892 that has

since defined the struggle between labor and private ownership of the means of production. A scholarly and well referenced account of one of the most important capitalists of late 19th and early 20th century.

Great book. I learned a tremendous amount of knowledge about the early U.S. business Titans by studying this book.

A fascinating biography of the exuberant Scottish-American tycoon and philanthropist. Nasaw covers all of Carnegie's life from early boyhood in 1830's Scotland, to ambitious telegraph boy in Pittsburgh, to iron and steel magnate, to philanthropist and finally to international peace advocate. Most of the 800 pages go swiftly. Nasaw writes well and I generally found his very detailed account valuable, especially for Carnegie's business adventures and for his final peace activities, although perhaps rather less so for all the details of his family life. In Nasaw's account Carnegie comes across as much more of a "businessman" than an "industrialist". His initial fortune was made in his twenties through insider dealings from his role as a key aide to railroad magnates who were making their own fortunes by tricks such as awarding lucrative contracts to companies that they themselves owned. But starting in his late twenties Carnegie did build a mighty iron and steel empire, with remorseless business logic. Carnegie in his middle age inevitably comes across as a great hypocrite. He had given speeches extolling the virtues of unions and of the need for employers to treat workers fairly, but he went on to mercilessly repress workers at his own plants, including cutting wages, extending hours, and suppressing all unions. He denied responsibility for the climactic Homestead lockout which was designed to break the steel unions, but Nasaw shows that he was kept fully informed and must have either made or supported the key decisions. Nasaw explains how Carnegie rationalized this harshness to himself, as a necessary part of business and of social evolution, but still his deeds fit poorly with his words. However in his later life, especially after selling Carnegie Steel, Carnegie became indisputably a genuine exuberant philanthropist. He lived well (very well indeed!) but he also gave away a vast fortune, founding an astounding 2500 libraries, plus many Institutions, the Carnegie Hall, various Hero funds, and many peace organizations. In his latter years, Carnegie's incessant lobbying for international peace is truly striking. Nasaw sometimes deprecates Carnegie's endless expressions of optimism in the face of repeated failures and his ceaseless lobbying of presidents, monarchs, and statesmen. But given that Carnegie believed war would be a disaster (as WWI proved all too well) and was committed to doing whatever he could for peace, then his behavior seems both entirely rationale and

commendable. Yes, he was often grasping at straws and he did aggressively pester and "name drop" to try to move things forward, but given the stakes it is difficult to condemn his donning of a bold face and his trying again and again in the face of failures and cynicism. Alas, his efforts were probably inevitably doomed, but given his beliefs and commitment, it seems hard to criticize him for trying as hard as he did. Overall, Carnegie's life is a fascinating one, involving many contrasts and apparent contradictions. Nasaw captures it well and succeeds in making Carnegie a surprisingly sympathetic character, without concealing his flaws.

The book itself is interesting. If you are interested in biographies about entrepreneurs its worth reading. It seems to be reasonably objective. Its certainly better than most self edited autobiographies. I would have preferred more information about the early years in the U.S. The reasons I didn't give it 5 stars was because there were some misspellings and parts of the book became a little repetitive.

This is a must read for the serious student of American History. All the important men in America and on the Continent were involved with Carnegie. We see how a Scotch emigrant rise from a boy to the most wealthy and most influential man of his time. I cannot recommend this book too much.

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