



Robert Owen Museum-Short Quiz

The following text may serve as a brief introduction or as an aid to the quiz

Robert Owen's Life and Importance.

Early Life: Robert Owen was born here in Newtown in 1771. He came from a large family and attended a local school, where he eventually became a teacher's helper or "monitor". He also worked at a local draper's shop. When he was ten he was sent to London and then Stamford to become a draper's apprentice. Eventually he moved to Manchester and started working in the new cotton industry. He was very interested in the new spinning machines and borrowed £100 from his brother to set up a new factory. He became very successful and quite wealthy, but he was worried about one aspect of the new factory system. Children as young as five worked from six in the morning up to eight or nine in the evening. He was worried that these children looked physically ill from exhaustion and overwork. They were also undersized and their communication skills and behaviour were poor.

New Lanark: In 1799 Robert and his partners bought a large factory in Scotland from a good employer called David Dale. This was New Lanark. He also married David Dale's daughter Caroline. He decided to make New Lanark a "model" factory and community. He built a school for the younger children (the first infant school). No child would work before they were 10 and the school would give the children an enjoyable education with nature study, geography, dance and music on the curriculum, as well as the 3Rs. To fund this school he opened an excellent shop, which sold good quality local food. All the profits from the shop were used to run the school. People visited the school from all over the world - even kings and princes. Owen believed that education would make the children healthier, happier and more informed individuals. He improved the housing in the village and even provided an adult education centre.

Co-operation: In his book "A New View of Society" (1812 - 13) he put forward further reforms to improve everyone's life. He wanted to set up co-operative communities where people would work together, would share the profits, would give their children excellent schooling and provide entertainment and education for all the community. He believed that in this fair society everyone would be happy and all children would be guaranteed a safe and secure future.

In 1824 he bought a village in America called New Harmony in Indiana, but this co-operative experiment soon faced difficulties. He returned to Britain, but his family continued to live there. His daughter set up an infants' school and his son became a Congressman.

Later Life: Robert Owen continued to write books and give lectures about his ideas, in Britain and America. He had many followers, including the Rochdale Pioneers who set up the first successful co-operative store, which was quickly copied. He died in Newtown in 1858.



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- 1 When was Robert Owen born and where? -----
- 2 What kind of shop was owned by his father and what did it sell? -----

- 3 How old was Robert when he left Newtown? -----
- 4 What kind of shop was he apprenticed to? -----
- 5 How much did Robert borrow from his brother to build his first factory? -----
- 6 In 1799 Robert moved to a new factory, what was it called? -----
- 7 Who did Robert buy this factory from? -----
- 8 Who did Robert Marry? -----
- 9 What did the factory make? -----
- 10 At what age did children start to work in these factories and how long did they work? -----
- 11 Why did Robert Owen think this was bad for the children? -----

- 12 Robert Owen built the first infants school. What kinds of subjects were taught at this school? -----

- 13 How did Robert think going to school would help the children? -----

- 14 What was the name of Robert's book which contained all his ideas about education and improved living and working conditions? -----

- 15 Where did Robert try to build a perfect community in America? -----

- 16 Owen wanted people to work and live together and help each other, what is this called? -----
- 17 Which shops today are based on Robert Owens's ideas from 200 years ago? -----

- 18 Where did Robert Owen die and how old was he? -----

- 19 How far was it from where he was born? -----
- 20 What is your own favourite exhibit in the Museum and why? -----

