



## What Makes a Senator? The Life and Legacy of Robert L. Owen

Compelling Question	How do life experiences shape decisions and attitudes about one's beliefs?
Standards and Practices	<p><b>1.B.9-12.4</b> Analyze how various governmental powers, responsibilities, and limitations are enacted and have changed over time.</p> <p><b>2.A.9-12.1</b> Develop, investigate and evaluate plausible answers to essential questions that reflect enduring understandings across time and all disciplines.</p>
Staging the Question	<p>The Teacher will begin by asking the students if they know who Robert L. Owen is. Explain that Robert L. Owen was one of the primary sponsors of the Federal Reserve Act of 1913 that established a central bank in the United States. He was appointed as one of the first senators of the state of Oklahoma during the progressive era of the United States. Explain that the progressive era was a historical time period in the late 1800s where many people sought to reform the policies and morals of U.S. citizens through legislation. Use this article by the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City and Oklahoma History Center to either give a brief synopsis of his life or to introduce each formative performance task throughout the lesson.</p> <p><a href="https://www.okhistory.org/historycenter/federalreserve/owenbio.html">https://www.okhistory.org/historycenter/federalreserve/owenbio.html</a></p>
<b>Supporting Question 1</b>	
<b>What political and economic events in his life led Robert L. Owen to the Oklahoma Territory?</b>	
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	
<p><b>Students will gain knowledge on Robert L. Owen's career as the editor of <i>The Daily Chieftain</i> and the contents of the newspaper.</b></p> <p>The teacher will review the primary sources with the class in order to give the students historical and geographic context to the Oklahoma territory during this time period. Students will then have time to study a primary source of the <i>Daily Chieftain</i>, taking notes about its contents as they read. Students will then compare <i>The Daily Chieftain</i> to a modern newspaper of the teacher's choosing in order to ask and illustrate contemporary questions about the influence of political topics on the media. Students will discuss whether or not they believe that media has become more or less influenced by politics over time and what factors they believe have contributed to that. Have students team up in pairs to debate, or form teams of their own, to take either side of the argument and implement your choice of discussion protocols to ensure that the topic is handled appropriately.</p>	

### Featured Sources

P. *Portrait of Robert Owen*, W.P. Campbell Photograph Collection, 1907  
<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc962709/?q=robert%20Owen>

P. Map of major trails used by settlers moving west, 1840-1880  
<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/photo/trails-west/>

P. *Guthrie, Oklahoma Territory 1889*, The Robert E. Cunningham Photograph Collection  
<https://nationalcowboymuseum.org/explore/robert-e-cunningham-oklahoma-photographer/>

P. Map of Indian territory, 1850  
<https://www.okhistory.org/images/research/IT.3.1855.pdf>

P. *The Indian Chieftain*. (Vinita, Indian Terr.), Vol. 11, No. 45, Ed. 1, Thursday, July 13, 1893  
<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc71289/?q=Vinita%201893>

P. A Wreath of Cherokee Rose Buds. (Female Seminary, Cherokee Nation), Vol. 2, No. 1, Ed. 1 Wednesday, August 1, 1855  
<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc99291/>

### Supporting Question 2

**What unique experiences did Robert L. Owen have as a lawyer in the Cherokee Nation that prepared him for his eventual career as a senator?**

### Formative Performance Task

**Students will understand the landscape of the Oklahoma Territory and the Cherokee Nation during the time that Robert Owen began his many careers before becoming a senator of the state.**

The teacher will have students brainstorm what they know about being a lawyer and the responsibilities they associate with being a lawyer. Then, the teacher will display the two primary source photographs that depict courtrooms in Oklahoma during the late 1800s. Students will then read the secondary source passage on Robert L. Owen's career as a lawyer (have students begin at the third paragraph of page 27 and continue up to the middle of page 29 with the paragraph about Owen gaining the respect of Isaac Parker) and debate the more 'rough and tumble' aspects of Robert L. Owen's career as a lawyer and how this might have made him a bit more ready for the (much less physical) fights on the senate floor of the U.S. Government. Questions to help guide the debate could include, but are not limited to: Do Robert L. Owen's experiences as a lawyer match up to their initial thoughts on what a lawyer's responsibilities are? Given this passage on Owen's career as a lawyer, do you believe these types of incidents made him more effective as a lawyer or discouraged him? What can this story and the primary resources tell us about what the Oklahoma territory was like when Owen was running his law practice there?

### Featured Sources

P. *"Court of Appeals, McAlester, Indian Territory."*, Unknown,  
<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc1473176/>

P. "Photograph of the trial of accused prisoners for burning Seminole Indians inside the Federal Court Room of Judge John R. Thomas, Muskogee, Indian Territory", Unknown, 1899.

<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc1590773>

S. *Robert Latham Owen, Jr.: His Careers as Indian Attorney and Progressive Senator*, pages 28-29, Kenny Lee Brown, 1985.

<https://shareok.org/handle/11244/17617>

### Supporting Question 3

**As he advanced his career as a politician, how did Robert Owen's political beliefs both align and differ from the attitudes of the time?**

### Formative Performance Task

The teacher will then explain to students that at the time, Robert L. Owen was seen by many as a progressive politician. Explain that beginning in the 1870s and continuing through the 1920s, the 'progressives' were known as politicians who wanted to change the more traditional aspects of American life. Many progressive politicians were in favor of policies such as taking the United States money off of its dependence on gold (otherwise known as the gold standard), and the establishment of more governmental agencies that would help provide oversight over the growing U.S. Explain that while Robert L. Owen did not agree with every policy that was considered a 'progressive' policy, his thoughts on money and notably a central bank to help regulate the flow of money were similar to those held by notable progressive politicians of his era. Students will then engage with the featured primary sources (a collection of pro-gold standard political cartoons) and read the section of a biography on Owen in order to determine how Owen both fit in with and differed from other politicians of his day. After having students engage with the primary sources and reading the Secondary source dissertation with the class (read from the third paragraph on page 106 on his thriving law practice to the comment about his 'confession of weakness' on the top of page 110). Have students use a Venn Diagram chart or make their own to compare Robert Owen's beliefs on things like free silver and bank regulation with the positions of other progressive politicians listed in the secondary source. Once students are finished and if there is time left, read the secondary source about Robert Owen and the beginnings of the Federal Reserve (read the section entitled 'Owen's Push for the Third Central Bank' on the bottom of page 99).

### Featured Sources

P. Judge. New York: Judge Publishing Company, 1896;

[http://fraser.stlouisfed.org/docs/historical/brookings/16818\\_06\\_0001.pdf](http://fraser.stlouisfed.org/docs/historical/brookings/16818_06_0001.pdf).

S. *Serious Cartooning: The Survival of the Fittest*, Grant Carlson, 2014.

<https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Blog/Item/Serious%20Cartooning%20The%20Survival%20of%20the%20Fittest>

S. *Robert Latham Owen, Jr.: His Careers as Indian Attorney and Progressive Senator*, pages 106-110, Kenny Lee Brown, 1985.

<https://shareok.org/handle/11244/17617>

S. "Senator Robert Owen of Oklahoma and the Federal Reserve's Formative Years", Pages 99-101, Chad Wilkerson, 2013.

### Summative Performance Task

#### Argument

Students will work together in groups in order to determine two to three of the events depicted within the lesson that they believed had an influence on Robert Owen's beliefs and attitudes. Students will use resources previously discussed in class to inform their answer to the central compelling question. Answers should be in the form of full sentences, but not exceed more than 2-3 paragraphs.

#### Extension

Students will conduct research to determine how the Federal Reserve Act was written and what economic events it was created to help deter. Topics discussed will range from monetary panic to central banking. Use the video in order to introduce these concepts.

#### Taking Informed Action

Students will research the structure of the Federal Reserve Act and how it is used to help prevent future money panics and economic crises, how this has been done in the history of the Federal Reserve and share their findings with the class.



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**Rubric for Summative Assessment**

Did student answer the question with a clearly stated thesis?

Complex	
Yes	<b>Thesis Section</b>
No	Points Possible
Embedded but not clearly stated	Points Awarded

Did student provide at least three major points that support the thesis?

Insightful	
Yes	<b>Main Points Section</b>
No	Points Possible
Incomplete	Points Awarded

Did student include at least three specific pieces of historical information as evidence to support the major points?

Comprehensive	
Yes	<b>Evidence Section</b>
No	Points Possible
Incomplete	Points Awarded

Did student explain how the historical information demonstrated the major points?

Complex	
Yes	<b>Analysis Section</b>
No	Points Possible
Partial Analysis	Points Awarded

Did the student show care in the creation of this assignment, minimizing errors and working to make a strong, positive impression of scholarship?

Excellent	
Yes	<b>Professionalism Section</b>
No	Points Possible
Partial	Points Awarded

