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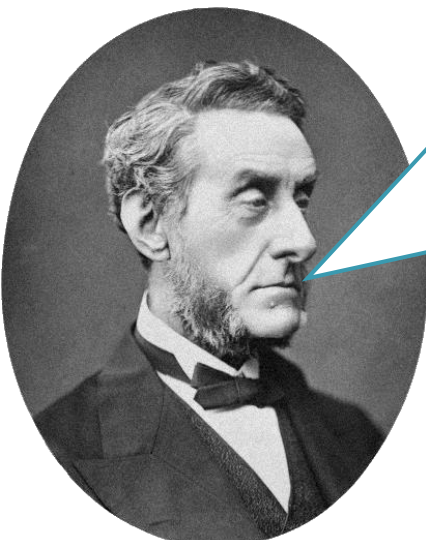
Richard Oastler

Robert Owen



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Lord Shaftesbury



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## Role-play 1

It is 1836. Richard Oastler, a famous reformer, is being interviewed.

**Interviewer** Today we welcome Richard Oastler, a famous reformer, to talk about himself and his campaign.

**Richard Oastler** Thank you. I'm happy to be here - I am always pleased to raise the profile of my work!

**Interviewer** Can you tell us a bit about your background?

**Richard Oastler** I'm the son of a clothing merchant and was born in Leeds. I worked as a farm bailiff but now spend most of my time campaigning against child labour in the mills.

**Interviewer** What have you done to help the campaign against child labour?

**Richard Oastler** I originally wrote to my local paper, the *Leeds Mercury* about the issue of children in the mills and their terrible working conditions. An MP then read my letter and took up the issue in Parliament. I now give a lot of speeches trying to get more people to support my campaign to improve child workers' conditions.

**Interviewer** What do you think the law should be?

**Richard Oastler** I think the best way to protect children would be to limit the hours they can work to 10 hours per day, not just in the mills but all areas of manufacturing where children are employed, like the mines. I also think that children under the age of nine should not have to work at all.

**Interviewer** How do you think conditions can be changed?

**Richard Oastler** I originally worked with MPs to change the law in Parliament, but they keep compromising under pressure from the employers. For instance, originally the Factory Act was meant to apply to all manufacturing areas, but they changed it to only apply to the mills. Also, they are only going to have four inspectors to check that the law is not broken, so I don't think it is going to be very effective. I now think workers should strike and sabotage factories - only that will get the attention of the greedy employers!

**Interviewer** That would certainly make an impact! Thank you for talking to us today.

## Role-play 2

It is 1816 and Robert Owen, a factory owner, is being interviewed.

**Interviewer** Who are you and what's your background?

**Robert Owen** My name is Robert Owen, I am from Wales and I'm the son of a saddler and ironmonger. When I was 10 I started work at a drapery shop in London, but when I was 16 I moved to Manchester to work in a wholesale drapery business.

**Interviewer** What did you think of Manchester when you arrived?

**Robert Owen** It's a great town and business is really taking off there. Richard Arkwright's new factory at Cromford was nearby and I heard about his new way of manufacturing cloth. I thought it had great potential, so I eventually found work in a large spinning factory myself as a manager, even though I was only 20 years old.

**Interviewer** That sounds interesting. Did you enjoy it?

**Robert Owen** Yes, I met really great people who were also involved in the textile business, including a man called David Dale. He is now my father in law, since I married his lovely daughter, Caroline. I managed to buy four factories of my own from Dale in a place called New Lanark in Scotland.

**Interviewer** What did you think of the conditions for children in the factories you worked in?

**Robert Owen** Dale's factories were actually some of the best around and his apprentices did go to school for two hours a day, but when I took over I realised that conditions needed to improve. I believe that the place that you work affects your character, so if you work in harsh and violent environment you will end up harsh and violent yourself, and that is not the sort of society I want to live in.

**Interviewer** That is an interesting point of view! What changes did you make at New Lanark then?

**Robert Owen** I immediately banned all physical punishment and stopped the employment of children under the age of 10. Instead I provided education free of charge at the factory, where children were taught reading, writing and arithmetic. I also set up shops where people could buy everything they wanted, but I charged fair prices, so people on average saved about 25 per cent. All in all the changes I made meant that people were much happier AND more hardworking as a result.

**Interviewer** Wow, impressive. Thank you for talking to us today.

### Role-play 3

It is 1824, and Robert Owen is being interviewed about his latest venture.

**Interviewer** So, Robert, tell me about what you have been up to since the last time we talked.

**Robert Owen** Well I toured the country making speeches about how I ran my factories. I also published some of my speeches and sent them to influential people. I spent a lot of my own money publishing because I passionately believe that if we treat people with more respect the world will be a better place.

**Interviewer** That's a praiseworthy idea, but why then have some people started criticising you?

**Robert Owen** Well, I believe that religion can be a divisive force in society. My view is that we would be better off if we could free society of the bitterness over religion that sometimes divides people. This point of view has upset the Church of England, and some of my fellow reformers, which is a shame.

**Interviewer** So, what are your plans now?

**Robert Owen** I have decided to go to America to set up a new community based on mutual respect. It is called New Harmony, and I am putting £40,000 into the project. I believe that co-operation is better than competition, and we should all just work together.

**Interviewer** Well, I hope it works out for you. Thanks for talking to me today.

## Role-play 4

It is 1857. Robert Owen, now quite an old man, is being interviewed again.

**Interviewer** Welcome Robert Owen! It is great to talk to you after such a long time.

**Robert Owen** Thank you. It's good to be back!

**Interviewer** So, what have you been doing lately?

**Robert Owen** Well, New Harmony, my co-operative community in America, didn't work out, but I really enjoyed my five years there. When I got back to England I discovered my efforts had not gone to waste because my ideas have gained much support amongst working people here.

**Interviewer** That is interesting. So, what did you do next?

**Robert Owen** I set up a union called the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union, or GNCTU for short! Its aim was to fight for better pay for workers - 800,000 people joined up! Unfortunately there was so much opposition to it that it eventually collapsed.

**Interviewer** What have you done since then?

**Robert Owen** Now I spend my time writing and lecturing on my ideas. I am no longer a rich man, but I am happy that I have made a small difference to some people's lives.

**Interviewer** So, how would you sum up your life?

**Robert Owen** I have had such a busy life campaigning for a new moral order, but I hope I will be remembered for treating my workers fairly. I also hope the idea that co-operation is better than competition will live on.

**Interviewer** I am sure you will be remembered as a great man, and hero of the workers. Thank you.

## Role-play 5

It is 1833 and Lord Shaftesbury is being interviewed about factory reforms.

- Interviewer** Can you introduce yourself?
- Lord Shaftesbury** My name is Anthony Ashley Cooper but I am better known as Lord Shaftesbury.
- Interviewer** What is your background?
- Lord Shaftesbury** I was born on April 28 1801. I became a Lord at the age of 10 and at the age of 25 I was elected as MP for Woodstock.
- Interviewer** How did you become interested in the issue of child labour?
- Lord Shaftesbury** My interest was triggered by reports in *The Times*. These were about the accounts given to Michael Sadler's Committee who were investigating child labour. I decided to support Michael Sadler in his quest to improve child labour. When he was defeated in the 1832 General Election I became the new leader of the factory reform movement in the House of Commons.
- Interviewer** Was this the only factor that influenced you to support the reform of child labour?
- Lord Shaftesbury** Well, some may say that my upbringing influenced me. I had a very strict upbringing from my father, and I feel that this may have also led to me sympathising with the suffering of others when I grew up.
- Interviewer** What ideas did you want to introduce to prevent the abuse of child workers?
- Lord Shaftesbury** I proposed a bill which I hoped would restrict children to a maximum ten-hour working day.
- Interviewer** Was this bill successful in achieving its objective?
- Lord Shaftesbury** Unfortunately my original bill was turned down in the House of Commons on 18 July 1833. However, it was not a total failure. The government accepted that children did need protecting and decided to put forward its own proposals. Thus, in August 29 1833 they passed the Factory Act.
- Interviewer** What were the main reforms of the Factory Act?
- Lord Shaftesbury** It became illegal for children under nine to work in textile factories. Children aged between nine and thirteen could not be employed for more than eight hours a day.
- Interviewer** Were you pleased with these terms in the Act?

- Lord Shaftesbury** It was definitely a step in the right direction. However, children over 13 were still allowed to work for up to 12 hours a day. Furthermore, I was unhappy with the employment of only four inspectors to monitor this legislation, as factory owners continued to employ very young children.
- Interviewer** Well, thank you for having time out to talk to us. I hope the Factory Act you worked so hard for is a success.

## Role-play 6

It is 1842. Lord Shaftesbury is being interviewed about Coalmine Reform.

**Interviewer** Can you tell me why you are campaigning for mine reforms?

**Lord Shaftesbury** I was disgusted by the state of the mines. Half-naked women and children were forced to work in virtual darkness, and often were not allowed above ground at all. Thus, I had to raise public awareness of this issue if it was to be solved. Therefore, I helped set up the Children's Employment Commission in 1840. Its first report on mines and collieries was published earlier in the year.

**Interviewer** What has the response been?

**Lord Shaftesbury** It has had a significant impact on the British public, as they were mostly unaware that women and children were employed as miners.

**Interviewer** Once you raised public awareness what did you do next?

**Lord Shaftesbury** I put forward legislation for a Coal Mines Act in the House of Commons. The legislation was successful, and women, girls and all boys under 10 were banned from working in the mines.

**Interviewer** Well done! That is a great achievement.



## Remembering the reformers

Each of the reformers has had a statue/memorial made to commemorate his achievements. Imagine you have been asked to write an information board to accompany one of these memorials. What would you write to explain how, and why, we should remember this reformer?



**Richard Oastler**

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**Robert Owen**

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**Shaftesbury memorial**

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We should remember \_\_\_\_\_ because ...

## Teaching notes

### Role-plays

There are six role-plays in this resource in which reformers (Oastler, Owen and Shaftesbury) are interviewed. The suggestion is that you select your more dramatically-inclined students to act out each character interview. The rest of the class complete the speech boxes from each reformer to record their key ideas and actions.

### Why remember them?

You could follow up with a discussion about historical significance. You could use Christine Counsel's 5 'R's as a starting point to talk with your class about why an individual might be seen as historically significant.

#### Christine Counsel's five 'R's

**Remarkable:** the event or person was remarkable. They were remarked on at the time and by people since. They were considered to be important by their contemporaries and by following generations.

**Remembered:** the person or event has been remembered by groups who consider it an important part of the nation's past.

**Results:** the event or person resulted in change; there were important consequences for the future.

**Resonant:** people can link their experiences, beliefs or situations in the present to this person or event.

**Revealing:** it tells us something about the lives of ordinary people normally hidden from our view.

Ask your students to select one reformer and to write an explanation of their achievements for an information board to accompany the memorial statues which commemorate the reformers: Richard Oastler is remembered with a memorial in Bradford, Robert Owen has a statue in Manchester and the 'Eros' fountain in London's Piccadilly Circus is a memorial to Lord Shaftesbury.