

Opinions About Arkwright and His Work

SOURCE A

Arkwright was a severe economist of time; that he might not waste a moment Arkwright generally travelled with four horses, at rapid speed.

His businesses in Derbyshire Lancashire and Scotland were so extensive as to show at once his all-grasping spirit. In many of the businesses he generally managed in such a way that whoever lost, he himself was a gainer.

So unbounded was his confidence in the success of his machinery and the national wealth to be produced by it he would say that he could 'pay the National Debt!'

*Edward Baines, 1835
Historian*

SOURCE B

'Arkwright swears he will take the cotton spinning abroad, and that he will ruin those Manchester Rascals, who used his invention without his permission. It is agreed by all who know him that he is a Tyrant.'

*Boulton Letter to Watt
1781*

SOURCE C

'However much Arkwright may have used the ideas of others two essential features are to be found in his spinning machine which did not appear on earlier ones'

*R S Fitton, Historian,
The Arkwrights, Spinners
of Fortune, 1989*

SOURCE D

'Arkwright by his conduct appears to be a man of great understanding & to know the way of making his people do their best. He not only distributes monetary rewards, but gives fine clothes to the most deserving men and women. He also gives two Balls at the Greyhound to the workmen & their wives & families with a week's jubilee.'

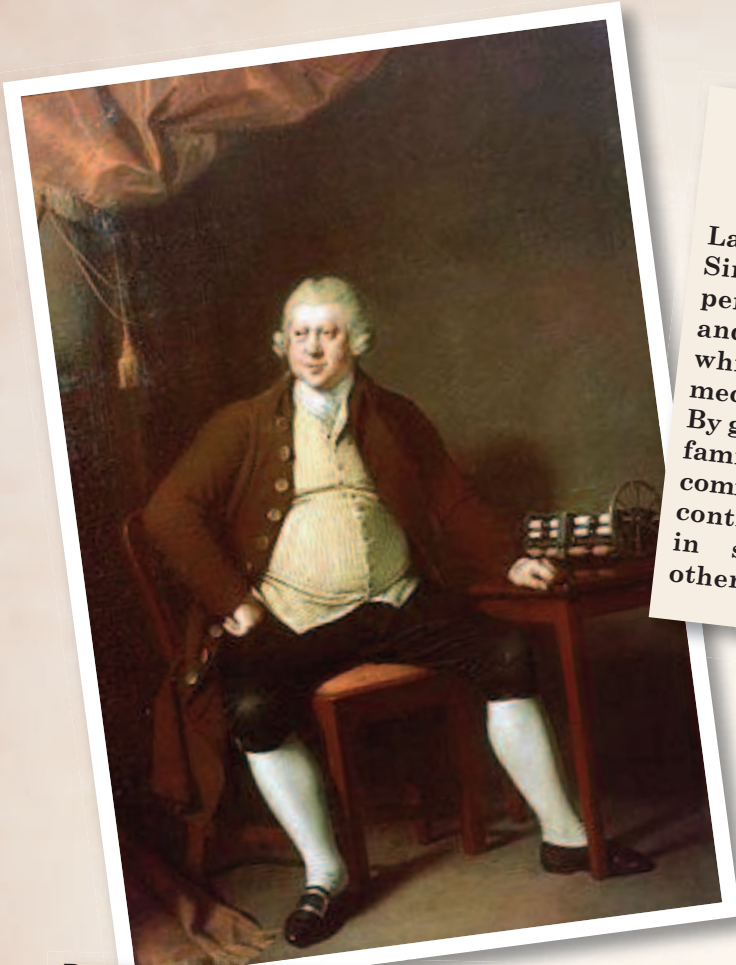
*The Diary of Syllas Neville
1767 - 1788*

SOURCE E

'By borrowing his (Thomas Highs) ingenious invention the late Sir Richard Arkwright lived to acquire a princely fortune, and died with the reputation of being one of the most eminent of those individuals, who have made her manufactories and machinery the wonders of surrounding nations. While the man to whose painful labours and ingenious contrivances Sir Richard was indebted for these honours, lived in obscurity and died in indigence... he not only reaped the harvest himself but assumed the reputation of having sown the grain.'

Richard Guest 1823.

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*Portrait of Sir Richard Arkwright
by Joseph Wright of Derby, 1790*

SOURCE F

Derby Mercury - Arkwright's Death 9th August 1792

Last Friday, at his house in Cromford, Sir Richard Arkwright, Knight died; Through persistence and industrious activity, he invented and perfected a system of spinning machinery; which was unsuccessfully attempted by many other mechanics of the last and present centuries. By giving continuous employment to many thousand families, the population increased and greater commercial strength was gained for this country, contributing more to the benefit of mankind, in so short a period of time, than any other single effort of human ingenuity.

SOURCE G

Every rural sound is sunk in the clamours of the cotton works. These cotton mills seven stories high and filled with inhabitants remind me of a first rate man of war and when they are lighted up on a dark night look most luminously beautiful.

*The Torrington Diaries
Viscount Torrington 1790*



*Cromford Mills by Night,
Joseph Wright of Derby c1780s*