Chapter 2: The Progressive Era

Chapter Outline

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2.8 Roots of the Progressive Movement
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2.10 Progressive Achievements During the Teddy Roosevelt Administration
2.11 Progressive Achievements During the Woodrow Wilson Administration
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2.13 American Imperialism?: Causes and Consequences
2.14 Interventionists and Non-Interventionists
2.15 Diplomacy
2.16 America in the First World War
2.17 World War I: Over There
2.18 Woodrow Wilson: Fourteen Points and the League of Nations
2.19 World War I: Homefront

Students analyze the changing landscape, including the growth of cities and the demand for political, economic, and social reforms. Students trace the rise of the United States to its role as a world power in the twentieth century.

US.10 ... Analyze the similarities and differences between the ideologies of Social Darwinism and Social Gospel. (C, E, P)

US.11 ... Using textual evidence, compare and contrast the ideas and philosophies of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. (C, P)

US.12 ... Explain the characteristics and impact of the Granger Movement and Populism, including the problems between farmers and the railroads, the call for banking reform, support for a graduated income tax, and regulation of public utilities. (E, H, P)

US.13 ... Describe the rise of trusts and monopolies, their subsequent impact on consumers and workers, and the
government’s response, including the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890. (E, P)

US.14 ... Describe working conditions in industries, including the use of labor by women and children. (C, E)

US.15 ... Analyze the rise of the labor movement, including its leaders, major tactics, and the response of management and the government: (C, E, H, P, TN)

- Samuel Gompers
- Eugene Debs
- Haymarket Affair
- Pullman Strike
- Coal Creek Labor Saga
- Collective bargaining
- Blacklisting
- Open vs. closed shops

US.16 ... Citing textual evidence as appropriate, explain the significant roles played by muckrakers and progressive idealists, including Robert La Follette, Theodore Roosevelt, Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, and Upton Sinclair. (C, E, P)

US.17 ... Analyze the goals and achievements of the Progressive movement, including the following: (C, E, H, P)

- Adoption of the initiative, referendum, and recall
- Adoption of the primary system
- 16th Amendment
- 17th Amendment
- impact on the relationship between the citizen and the government

US.18 ... Describe the movement to achieve suffrage for women, including its leaders, the activities of suffragettes, the passage of the 19th Amendment, and the role of Tennessee in the suffrage effort (Anne Dallas Dudley, Harry Burn, Josephine Pearson, “Perfect 36”). (C, H, P, TN)

US.19 ... Analyze the significant progressive achievements during the administration of Theodore Roosevelt including the Square Deal, “trust-busting,” the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act, the Meat Inspection Act, and support for conservation. (E, H, P)

US.20 ... Analyze the significant progressive achievements during the administration of Woodrow Wilson, including his New Freedom, the Underwood Tariff, the Federal Reserve Act, and the Clayton Anti-Trust Act. (E, H, P)

US.21 ... Analyze the impact of the Great Migration of African Americans that began in the early 1900s from the rural South to the industrial regions of the Northeast and Midwest. (C, E, G, H)

US.22 Assess the causes of American imperialism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including the desire for raw materials and new markets, yellow journalism, and the desire to spread American democratic and moral ideals. (E, G, P)

US.23 ... Evaluate the arguments of interventionists and non-interventionists of the period, including Alfred T. Mahan, Senator Albert Beveridge, Mark Twain, and Theodore Roosevelt. (C, E, P).

US.24 ... Describe the consequences of American imperialism of the period, including the following events: (E, G, H, P)

- annexation of Hawaii
- Spanish-American War (Teller, Platt, and Foraker Acts)
• Philippine Insurrection
• Roosevelt Corollary
• Panama Canal

US.25 ... Draw evidence from informational texts to compare and contrast Theodore Roosevelt’s Big Stick diplomacy, William Taft’s Dollar Diplomacy, and Woodrow Wilson’s Moral Diplomacy. (G, H, P)

US.26 ... Explain the causes of World War I in 1914 and the reasons for the initial declaration of United States’ neutrality. (G, H, P)

US.27 ... Justify with supporting detail from text, the reasons for American entry into World War I, including the use of unrestricted submarine warfare by the Germans, the Zimmerman Note, the defense of democracy, and economic motivations. (E, H, P).

US.28 ... Identify and explain the impact of the following events and people during World War I: (G, H, P, TN)

• Major turning points
• Impact of trench warfare
• Use of new weapons and technologies
• Herbert Hoover
• John J. Pershing and the American Expeditionary Force
• Doughboys
• Alvin C. York

US.29 ... Analyze the aims and negotiating roles of world leaders, including Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points, and the causes and effects of the United States’ rejection of the League of Nations on world politics. (H, P)

US.30 ... Analyze the political, economic, and social ramifications of World War I on the home front, including the role played by women and minorities, voluntary rationing, the Creel Committee, opposition by conscientious objectors, and the case of Schenck v. United States. (C, E, H, P)

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Read: excerpts from “Atlanta Exposition” speech, Booker T. Washington; excerpts from The Souls of Black Folks, W.E.B. Dubois; “The New Nationalism” speech, Theodore Roosevelt; excerpts from The Jungle, Upton Sinclair; excerpts from “The March of the Flag” speech, Albert Beveridge; excerpts from antiimperialism speeches and writings, Mark Twain

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Consider: excerpts from The History of Standard Oil, Ida Tarbell; excerpts from The Shame of the Cities, Lincoln Steffens; “Peace Without Victory” speech, Woodrow Wilson; Fourteen Points, Woodrow Wilson
2.1 Social Darwinism and Social Gospel

SOCIAL DARWINISM

FIGURE 2.1
Social Darwinism fueled the popularity of "Friendly visitors" in the field of social work. These upper class women believed it was their Christian duty to help poverty stricken by providing positive moral role models.

Not everybody was getting rich. The new wealthy class, although more prominent, larger, and richer than any class in American history, was still rather small.

People soon began to ask fundamental questions. How did one get rich in America? Was it because of a combination of hard work and intelligence? Was it because of inheritance? Did education and skill play a role? Or was it simply luck?

Old attitudes about the importance of inheritance were still prevalent, but new ideas also emerged. Among the most popular were Social Darwinism, the Gospel of Wealth, and Algerism.

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

When a popular conception of "SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST" grew from CHARLES DARWIN's idea of the process of NATURAL SELECTION in the wild, the world was forever changed. Church leaders condemned him as a heretic, and ordinary people everywhere cringed at the idea that humans may have evolved from apes. It was inevitable that intellectuals would soon point Darwin’s concepts at human society.

These SOCIAL DARWINISTS, led by HERBERT SPENCER and WILLIAM GRAHAM SUMNER, believed that the humans who were the most fit became the most successful. Whatever people had the necessary skills to prosper — perhaps talent, brains, or hard work — would be the ones who would rise to the top. Why were some people poor? To the Social Darwinist, the answer was obvious. They simply did not have the required skills.

Social Darwinists went further in their application of Darwin. Darwin stated that the weaker members of a species in nature would die and that over time only the stronger genes would be passed on. Social Darwinists believed the
same should happen with humans. They opposed government handouts, or safety regulations, or laws restricting child labor. Such actions would coddle the weak, and the unfit would be allowed to survive.

**GOSPEL OF WEALTH**

Some Americans tried to reconcile their Christian beliefs with Social Darwinism. Because the Church had been such an opponent of Darwin’s ideas, it was difficult for religious folks to accept Social Darwinism.

Andrew Carnegie and John Rockefeller both agreed that the most successful people were the ones with the necessary skills. But they each believed that God played a role in deciding who got the skills.

Because God granted a select few with the talent to be successful, Christian virtue demanded that some of that money be shared. This is where the difference lies between the hardcore Social Darwinist and the proponent of the **GOSPEL OF WEALTH**. Carnegie and Rockefeller became philanthropists — wealthy citizens who donated large sums of money for the public good.

**HORATIO ALGER’S AMERICAN DREAM**

A third influence American thinking was **HORATIO ALGER**. Alger was not an intellectual; rather, he wrote **DIME NOVELS** for the hordes of immigrant masses rushing to America’s shores. Although he penned many stories, each book answered the question of how to get rich in America. Alger believed that a combination of hard work and good fortune — pluck and luck, in his words — was the key.

A typical Alger story would revolve around a hardworking immigrant who served on the bottom rung of the corporate ladder, perhaps as a stock boy. One day he would be walking down the street and see a safe falling from a tall building. Our hero would bravely push aside the hapless young woman walking below and save her life. Of course, she was the boss’s daughter. The two would get married, and he would become vice-president of the corporation.

This is what the masses wished to believe. Success would not come to a select few based on nature or divine intervention. Anyone who worked hard could make it in America if they caught a lucky break. This idea is the basis for the "**AMERICAN DREAM**."

Is Alger’s dream a reality or just folklore? There simply is no answer. Thousands of Americans have found this idyllic path, but as many or more have not.
FIGURE 2.3
Horatio Alger wrote popular rags-to-riches novels, such as Ragged Dick; or, Street Life in New York. Many of these books were written as an example to young boys, teaching that the virtues of hard work would eventually pay off.

SOCIAL GOSPEL

The Protestant churches of America feared the worst. Although the population of America was growing by leaps and bounds, there were many empty seats in the pews of urban Protestant churches. Middle-class churchgoers were ever faithful, but large numbers of workers were starting to lose faith in the local church. The old-style heaven and hell sermons just seemed irrelevant to those who toiled long, long hours for small, small wages.

Immigration swelled the ranks of Roman Catholic churches. Eastern Orthodox churches and Jewish synagogues were sprouting up everywhere. At the same time, many cities reported the loss of Protestant congregations. They would have to face this challenge or perish.

PREACHING FOR POLITICS

Out of this concern grew the social gospel movement. Progressive-minded preachers began to tie the teachings of the church with contemporary problems. Christian virtue, they declared, demanded a redress of poverty and despair on earth.

Many ministers became politically active. Washington Gladden, the most prominent of the social gospel ministers, supported the workers’ right to strike in the wake of the Great Upheaval of 1877. Ministers called for an end to child labor, the enactment of temperance laws, and civil service reform.

Liberal churches such as the Congregationalists and the Unitarians led the way, but the movement spread to many sects. Middle class women became particularly active in the arena of social reform.

At the same time, a wave of Urban Revivalist Preachers swept the nation’s cities. The most renowned, Dwight Lyman Moody, was a shoe salesman who took his fiery oratory on the road. As he traveled from city to city, he attracted crowds large enough to affect local traffic patterns.

The Young Men’s Christian Association and the Young Women’s Christian Association were formed to address the problems of urban youth. Two new sects formed. Mary Baker Eddy founded the Christian Science denomination. She tried to reconcile religion and science by preaching that faith was a means to cure evils such as disease. The Salvation Army crossed the Atlantic from England and provided free soup for the hungry.
THE THIRD GREAT AWAKENING

The changes were profound. Many historians call this period in the history of American religion the THIRD GREAT AWAKENING. Like the first two awakenings, it was characterized by revival and reform. The temperance movement and the settlement house movement were both affected by church activism. The chief difference between this movement and those of an earlier era was location. These changes in religion transpired because of urban realities, underscoring the social impact of the new American city.
At the dawn of the 20th century, nine out of ten African Americans lived in the South. Jim Crow laws of segregation ruled the land. The Supreme Court upheld the power of the Southern states to create two "SEPARATE BUT EQUAL" societies with its 1896 *Plessy V. Ferguson* opinion. It would be for a later Supreme Court to judge that they fell short of the "equal" requirement.

Although empowered to vote by the Fifteenth Amendment, POLL TAXES, LITERACY TESTS, and outright violence and intimidation reduced the voting black population to almost zero. Economically, African Americans were primarily poor sharecroppers trapped in an endless cycle of debt. Socially, few whites had come to accept blacks as equals. While progressive reformers ambitiously attacked injustices, it would take great work and great
people before change was felt. One man who took up the challenge was **BOOKER T. WASHINGTON**.

### Founding Tuskegee Institute

Born into slavery in 1856, Washington had experienced racism his entire life. When emancipated after the Civil War, he became one of the few African Americans to complete school, whereupon he became a teacher.

Believing in practical education, Washington established a **TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE** in Alabama at the age of twenty-five. Washington believed that Southern racism was so entrenched that to demand immediate social equality would be unproductive. His school aimed to train African Americans in the skills that would help the most.

Tuskegee Institute became a center for agricultural research. The most famous product of Tuskegee was **GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER**. Carver concluded that much more productive use could be made of agricultural lands by diversifying crops. He discovered hundreds of new uses for sweet potatoes, pecans, and peanuts. Peanut butter was one such example. Washington saw a future in this new type of agriculture as a means of raising the economic status of African Americans.

### The Atlanta "Compromise"

In 1895, Washington delivered a speech at the **ATLANTA EXPOSITION**. He declared that African Americans should focus on **VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**. Learning Latin and Greek served no purpose in the day-to-day realities of Southern life.

African Americans should abandon their short-term hopes of social and political equality. Washington argued that when whites saw African Americans contributing as productive members of society, equality would naturally follow. For those dreaming of a black utopia of freedom, Washington declared, "Cast down your bucket where you are." Many whites approved of this moderate stance, while African Americans were split. Critics called his speech the Atlanta Compromise and accused Washington of coddling Southern racism.

Despite his accomplishments, he was challenged within the black community until his death in 1915. His most outspoken critic was W. E. B. DuBois. Still, by 1900, Washington was seen as the leader of the African American community. In 1901, he published his autobiography, **UP FROM SLAVERY**. He was a self-made man and a role model to thousands. In 1906, he was summoned to the White House by President Theodore Roosevelt. This marked the first time in American history that an African American leader received such a prestigious invitation.

- Booker T. Washington Delivers the 1895 Atlanta Speech at the Atlanta Exposition, 1895
- Speech to the Atlanta Cotton States and International

### W. E. B. DUBOIS

**WILLIAM EDWARD BURGHARDT DUBOIS** was very angry with Booker T. Washington. Although he admired Washington’s intellect and accomplishments, he strongly opposed the position set forth by Washington in his Atlanta Exposition Address. He saw little future in agriculture as the nation rapidly industrialized. DuBois felt that renouncing the goal of complete integration and social equality, even in the short run, was counterproductive and exactly the opposite strategy from what best suited African Americans.

### Early Life and Core Beliefs

The childhood of W. E. B. DuBois could not have been more different from that of Booker T. Washington. He was born in Massachusetts in 1868 as a free black. DuBois attended **FISK UNIVERSITY** and later became the first
2.2. Booker T. Washington and W.E.B DuBois

African American to receive a Ph. D. from Harvard. He secured a teaching job at Atlanta University, where he believed he learned a great deal about the African American experience in the South.

DuBois was a staunch proponent of a classical education and condemned Washington’s suggestion that blacks focus only on vocational skills. Without an educated class of leadership, whatever gains were made by blacks could be stripped away by legal loopholes. He believed that every class of people in history had a "TALENTED TENTH." The downtrodden masses would rely on their guidance to improve their status in society.

Political and social equality must come first before blacks could hope to have their fair share of the economic pie. He vociferously attacked the Jim Crow laws and practices that inhibited black suffrage. In 1903, he published THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK, a series of essays assailing Washington’s strategy of accommodation.

The Niagara Movement and the NAACP

In 1905, DuBois met with a group of 30 men at Niagara Falls, Canada. They drafted a series of demands essentially calling for an immediate end to all forms of discrimination. The NIAGARA MOVEMENT was denounced as radical by most whites at the time. Educated African Americans, however, supported the resolutions.

Four years later, members of the Niagara Movement formed the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE (NAACP). This organization sought to fight for equality on the national front. It also intended to improve the self-image of African Americans. After centuries of slavery and decades of second-class status, DuBois and others believed that many African Americans had come to accept their position in American society.
DuBois became the editor of the organization’s periodical called THE CRISIS, a job he performed for 20 years. The Crisis contained the expected political essays, but also poems and stories glorifying African American culture and accomplishments. Later, DuBois was invited to attend the organizational meeting for the United Nations in 1946.

As time passed, DuBois began to lose hope that African Americans would ever see full equality in the United States. In 1961, he moved to Ghana. He died at the age of 96 just before Martin Luther King Jr. led the historical civil rights march on Washington.

- Summary of The Souls of Black Folk; Essays and Sketches
- The Souls of Black Folk by W. E. B. DuBois
- The Souls of Black Folk
- The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow . Jim Crow Stories . The ...
CONFLICT ARISES BETWEEN FARMERS AND THE RAILROADS

A homestead at last! Many eastern families who longed for the opportunity to own and farm a plot of land of their own were able to realize their dreams when Congress passed the **Homestead Act** in 1862. That landmark piece of legislation provided 160 acres free to any family who lived on the land for five years and made improvements. The same amount could be obtained instantly for the paltry sum of $1.25 per acre.

Combined with the completed transcontinental railroad, it was now possible for an easterner yearning for the open space of the West to make it happen. Unfortunately, the lives they found were fraught with hardship.

![Figure 2.6](image-url)
Money Problems

There were tremendous economic difficulties associated with Western farm life. First and foremost was overproduction. Because the amount of land under cultivation increased dramatically and new farming techniques produced greater and greater yields, the food market became so flooded with goods that prices fell sharply. While this might be great for the consumer, the farmer had to grow a tremendous amount of food to recoup enough profits to survive the winter.

New machinery and fertilizer was needed to farm on a large scale. Often farmers borrowed money to purchase this equipment, leaving themselves hopelessly in debt when the harvest came. The high tariff forced them to pay higher prices for household goods for their families, while the goods they themselves sold were unprotected.

The railroads also fleeced the small farmer. Farmers were often charged higher rates to ship their goods a short distance than a manufacturer would pay to transport wares a great distance.

A Harsh and Isolating Environment

The woes faced by farmers transcended economics. Nature was unkind in many parts of the Great Plains. Blistering summers and cruel winters were commonplace. Frequent drought spells made farming even more difficult. Insect blights raged through some regions, eating further into the farmers’ profits.

Farmers lacked political power. Washington was a long way from the Great Plains, and politicians seemed to turn deaf ears to the farmers’ cries. Social problems were also prevalent. With each neighbor on 160-acre plots of land, communication was difficult and loneliness was widespread.

Farm life proved monotonous compared with the bustling cities of the East. Although rural families were now able to purchase MAIL-ORDER PRODUCTS through catalogs such as SEARS AND ROEBUCK’S and MONTGOMERY WARD, there was simply no comparison with what the Eastern market could provide.

THE GRANGER MOVEMENT AND GROWTH OF POPULISM

These conditions could not last. Out of this social and economic unrest, farmers began to organize and make demands that would rock the Eastern establishment.

Organization was inevitable. Like the oppressed laboring classes of the East, it was only a matter of time before Western farmers would attempt to use their numbers to effect positive change.

Farmers Organize

In 1867, the first such national organization was formed. Led by OLIVER KELLEY, the PATRONS OF HUSBANDRY, also known as the GRANGE, organized to address the social isolation of farm life. Like other SECRET SOCIETIES, such as the MASONs, GRANGERS had local chapters with secret passwords and rituals.

The local Grange sponsored dances and gatherings to attack the doldrums of daily life. It was only natural that politics and economics were discussed in these settings, and the Grangers soon realized that their individual problems were common.

Identifying the railroads as the chief villains, Grangers lobbied state legislatures for regulation of the industry. By 1874, several states passed the GRANGER LAWS, establishing maximum shipping rates. Grangers also pooled their resources to buy grain elevators of their own so that members could enjoy a break on grain storage.

FARMERS’ ALLIANCES went one step further. Beginning in 1889, NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN FARMERS’ ALLIANCES championed the same issues as the Grangers, but also entered the political arena. Members of these alliances won seats in state legislatures across the Great Plains to strengthen the agrarian voice in politics.
Creating Inflation

What did all the farmers seem to have in common? The answer was simple: debt. Looking for solutions to this condition, farmers began to attack the nation’s monetary system. As of 1873, Congress declared that all federal money must be backed by gold. This limited the nation’s money supply and benefited the wealthy.

The farmers wanted to create **inflation**. Inflation actually helps debtors. If a farmer owes $3,000 and can earn $1 for every bushel of wheat sold at harvest, he needs to sell 3,000 bushels to pay off the debt. If inflation could push the price of a bushel of wheat up to $3, he needs to sell only 1,000 bushels. The economics are simple.

To create inflation, farmers suggested that the money supply be expanded to include dollars not backed by gold. The first strategy farmers attempted was to encourage Congress to print **greenback dollars** like the ones issued during the Civil War. Since the greenbacks were not backed by gold, more dollars could be printed, creating an inflationary effect.

The **greenback party** and the **greenback-labor party** each ran candidates for President in 1876, 1880, and 1884 under this platform. No candidate was able to muster national support for the idea, and soon farmers chose another strategy.

Inflation could also be created by printing money that was backed by silver as well as gold. This idea was more popular because people were more confident in their money if they knew it was backed by something of value. Also, America had a tradition of coining **silver money** until 1873.
Birth of the Populists

Out of the ashes of the Greenback-Labor Party grew the **POPULIST PARTY**. In addition to demanding the free coinage of silver, the **POPULISTS** called for a host of other reforms. They demanded a graduated income tax, whereby individuals earning a higher income paid a higher percentage in taxes.

They wanted political reforms as well. At this point, United States Senators were still not elected by the people directly; they were instead chosen by state legislatures. The Populists demanded a constitutional amendment allowing for the direct election of Senators.

They demanded democratic reforms such as the initiative, where citizens could directly introduce debate on a topic in the legislatures. The referendum would allow citizens — rather than their representatives — to vote a bill. Recall would allow the people to end an elected official’s term before it expired. They also called for the secret ballot and a one-term limit for the President.

In 1892, the Populists ran **JAMES WEAVER** for President on this ambitious platform. He polled over a million popular votes and 22 electoral votes. Although he came far short of victory, Populist ideas were now being discussed at the national level. When the Panic of 1893 hit the following year, an increased number of unemployed and dispossessed Americans gave momentum to the Populist movement. A great showdown was in place for 1896.

**THE ELECTION OF 1896**

Everything seemed to be falling into place for the Populists. James Weaver made an impressive showing in 1892, and now Populist ideas were being discussed across the nation. The Panic of 1893 was the worst financial crisis to date in American history. As the soup lines grew larger, so did voters’ anger at the present system.

When **JACOB S. COXEY** of Ohio marched his 200 supporters into the nation’s capital to demand reforms in the spring of 1894, many thought a revolution was brewing. The climate seemed to ache for change. All that the Populists needed was a winning Presidential candidate in 1896.
2.3. Conflict Arises Between Farmers and the Railroads

**FIGURE 2.9**

*The Presidential Election of 1896*

**FIGURE 2.10**
The Boy Orator

Ironically, the person who defended the Populist platform that year came from the Democratic Party. **WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN** was the unlikely candidate. An attorney from Lincoln, Nebraska, Bryan’s speaking skills were among the best of his generation. Known as the "**GREAT COMMONER**," Bryan quickly developed a reputation as defender of the farmer.

When Populist ideas began to spread, Democratic voters of the South and West gave enthusiastic endorsement. At the Chicago Democratic convention in 1896, Bryan delivered a speech that made his career. Demanding the free coinage of silver, Bryan shouted, “You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold!” Thousands of delegates roared their approval, and at the age of thirty-six, the "**BOY ORATOR**" received the Democratic nomination.

Faced with a difficult choice between surrendering their identity and hurting their own cause, the Populist Party also nominated Bryan as their candidate.

The Stay-at-Home Candidate

The Republican competitor was **WILLIAM MCKINLEY**, the governor of Ohio. He had the support of the moneyed eastern establishment. Behind the scenes, a wealthy Cleveland industrialist named **MARC HANNA** was determined to see McKinley elected. He, like many of his class, believed that the free coinage of silver would bring financial ruin to America.

Using his vast wealth and power, Hanna directed a campaign based on fear of a Bryan victory. McKinley campaigned from his home, leaving the politicking for the party hacks. Bryan revolutionized campaign politics by launching a nationwide **WHISTLE-STOP** effort, making twenty to thirty speeches per day.
When the results were finally tallied, McKinley had beaten Bryan by an electoral vote margin of 271 to 176.

**Understanding 1896**

Many factors led to Bryan’s defeat. He was unable to win a single state in the populous Northeast. Laborers feared the free silver idea as much as their bosses. While inflation would help the debt-ridden, mortgage-paying farmers, it could hurt the wage-earning, rent-paying factory workers. In a sense, the election came down to city versus country. By 1896, the urban forces won. Bryan’s campaign marked the last time a major party attempted to win the White House by exclusively courting the rural vote.

The economy of 1896 was also on the upswing. Had the election occurred in the heart of the Panic of 1893, the results may have differed. Farm prices were rising in 1896, albeit slowly. The Populist Party fell apart with Bryan’s loss. Although they continued to nominate candidates, most of their membership had reverted to the major parties.

The ideas, however, did endure. Although the free silver issue died, the graduated income tax, direct election of senators, initiative, referendum, recall, and the secret ballot were all later enacted. These issues were kept alive by the next standard bearers of reform — the PROGRESSIVES.
THE RISE OF TRUSTS AND MONOPOLIES: BUSINESSES ATTEMPT TO ELIMINATE COMPETITION

The expansion of big business allowed natural predatory instincts to emerge as companies sought to eliminate competition. It was survival of the fittest in an economy which did not regulate business. Laissez faire, social Darwinism, and rugged individualism were the themes of the day. When a corporation eliminated its competition it became what is known as a "monopoly."

Monopolies consisted of several organizational forms, including what were known as trusts:

- Trust: Stockholders of several competing corporations turn in their stock to trustees in exchange for a trust certificate which entitled them to a dividend. Trustees ran the companies as if they were one.

This political cartoon published in The Verdict on July 10, 1899 by C. Gordon Moffat shows an America controlled by the trusts.
To the public all monopolies were known simply as "trusts." These trusts had an enormous impact on the American economy. They became huge economic and political forces. They were able to manipulate price and quality without regard for the laws of supply and demand. Basic economic principles no longer applied. They also wielded great political power. Trusts were extremely influential in Congress and in the Senate. Some citizens even accused the trusts of "buying" votes. Although many Americans still regarded men like John D. Rockefeller as "Captains of Industry," more and more people began to publicly question the tactics of the "Robber Barons." As trusts grew ever more powerful and wealth became concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, animosity towards the new businessmen and the new methods of doing business increased tremendously.

- Monopolies and Trusts
- The Trusts

THE IMPACT OF TRUSTS ON WORKERS AND CONSUMERS

In the mid-19th century, the vast majority of American work was still done on the farm. By the turn of the 20th century, the United States economy revolved around the FACTORY.

Most Americans living in the Gilded Age knew nothing of the millions of Rockefeller, Carnegie and Morgan. They worked 10 hour shifts, 6 days a week, for wages barely enough to survive. Children as young as eight years old worked hours that kept them out of school. Men and women worked until their bodies could stand no more, only to be released from employment without retirement benefits. Medical coverage did not exist. Women who became pregnant were often fired. Compensation for being hurt while on the job was zero.

![FIGURE 2.13](This 1899 political cartoon, published in The Verdict, represents the growing disparity between the rich and poor classes in America. This disproportion fomented the formation of anti-trust laws in the following decade.)

**Come Together**

Soon laborers realized that they must unite to demand change. Even though they lacked money, education, or political power, they knew one critical thing. There were simply more workers than there were owners.

UNIONS did not emerge overnight. Despite their legal rights to exist, bosses often took extreme measures, including intimidation and violence, to prevent a union from taking hold. Workers, too, often chose the sword when peaceful measures failed.

Many Americans believed that a violent revolution would take place in America. How long would so many stand to be poor? Industrial titans including John Rockefeller arranged for mighty castles to be built as fortresses to stand
against the upheaval they were sure was coming.
Slowly but surely unions did grow. Efforts to form nationwide organizations faced even greater difficulties. Federal troops were sometimes called to block their efforts. Judges almost always ruled in favor of the bosses.
The workers often could not agree on common goals. Some flirted with extreme ideas like Marxism. Others simply wanted a nickel more per hour. Fights erupted over whether or not to admit women or African Americans. Immigrants were often viewed with hostile eyes. Most did agree on one major issue — the eight-hour day. But even that agreement was often not strong enough glue to hold the group together.
Organized labor has brought tremendous positive change to working Americans. Today, many workers enjoy higher wages, better hours, and safer working conditions. Employers often pay for medical coverage and several weeks vacation. Jobs and lives were lost in the epic struggle for a fair share. The fight sprouted during the Gilded Age, when labor took its first steps toward unity.

- **Effect of Industrial Revolution on Factory Workers**

**TRUST BUSTING**
Teddy Roosevelt was one American who believed a revolution was coming.
He believed WALL STREET FINANCIERS and powerful trust titans to be acting foolishly. While they were eating off fancy china on mahogany tables in marble dining rooms, the masses were roughing it. There seemed to be no limit to greed. If docking wages would increase profits, it was done. If higher railroad rates put more gold in their coffers, it was done. How much was enough, Roosevelt wondered?

**The Sherman Anti-Trust Act**
Although he himself was a man of means, he criticized the wealthy class of Americans on two counts. First, continued exploitation of the public could result in a violent uprising that could destroy the whole system. Second, the captains of industry were arrogant enough to believe themselves superior to the elected government. Now that he was President, Roosevelt went on the attack.
The President’s weapon was the SHERMAN ANTITRUST ACT, passed by Congress in 1890. This law declared illegal all combinations "in restraint of trade." For the first twelve years of its existence, the Sherman Act was a paper tiger. United States courts routinely sided with business when any enforcement of the Act was attempted.
For example, the AMERICAN SUGAR REFINING COMPANY controlled 98 percent of the sugar industry. Despite this virtual monopoly, the Supreme Court refused to dissolve the corporation in an 1895 ruling. The only time an organization was deemed in restraint of trade was when the court ruled against a labor union.
Roosevelt knew that no new legislation was necessary. When he sensed that he had a sympathetic Court, he sprung into action.

**Teddy vs. J.P.**

Theodore Roosevelt was not the type to initiate major changes timidly. The first trust giant to fall victim to Roosevelt’s assault was none other than the most powerful industrialist in the country — J. Pierpont Morgan.
Morgan controlled a railroad company known as Northern Securities. In combination with railroad MOGULS JAMES J. HILL and E. H. HARRIMAN, Morgan controlled the bulk of railroad shipping across the northern United States.
Morgan was enjoying a peaceful dinner at his New York home on February 19, 1902, when his telephone rang. He was furious to learn that Roosevelt’s Attorney General was bringing suit against the Northern Securities Company.
Stunned, he muttered to his equally shocked dinner guests about how rude it was to file such a suit without warning.

Four days later, Morgan was at the White House with the President. Morgan bellowed that he was being treated like a common criminal. The President informed Morgan that no compromise could be reached, and the matter would be settled by the courts. Morgan inquired if his other interests were at risk, too. Roosevelt told him only the ones that had done anything wrong would be prosecuted.

**The Good, the Bad, and the Bully**

This was the core of Theodore Roosevelt’s leadership. He boiled everything down to a case of right versus wrong and good versus bad. If a trust controlled an entire industry but provided good service at reasonable rates, it was a "good" trust to be left alone. Only the "bad" trusts that jacked up rates and exploited consumers would come under attack. Who would decide the difference between right and wrong? The occupant of the White House trusted only himself to make this decision in the interests of the people.

The American public cheered Roosevelt’s new offensive. The Supreme Court, in a narrow 5 to 4 decision, agreed and dissolved the Northern Securities Company. Roosevelt said confidently that no man, no matter how powerful, was above the law. As he landed blows on other "bad" trusts, his popularity grew and grew.

- Theodore Roosevelt and the Trusts
- Monopolies and Antitrust Law - Further Readings
AMERICA AT WORK

In the mid-19th century, the vast majority of American work was still done on the farm. By the turn of the 20th century, the United States economy revolved around the FACTORY.

Most Americans living in the Gilded Age knew nothing of the millions of Rockefeller, Carnegie and Morgan. They worked 10 hour shifts, 6 days a week, for wages barely enough to survive. Children as young as eight years old worked hours that kept them out of school. Men and women worked until their bodies could stand no more, only to be released from employment without retirement benefits. Medical coverage did not exist. Women who became pregnant were often fired. Compensation for being hurt while on the job was zero.

The period from 1894 to 1915 was a period of change, unrest, and economic uncertainty for the workers of the United States. Industrialism was growing largely unchecked in the United States after the Civil War, creating new jobs and new problems simultaneously. Immigration was continuing in unprecedented numbers, especially from eastern and southern Europe, forever altering the makeup of the workforce. A depression had begun in 1893 (following two others in the previous twenty years), forcing some plants to close and many workers into the ranks of the unemployed. Disputes between labor and management were rife. But from these tumultuous years grew many of the initiatives that have continued today, including the increased presence of women in the workforce, workers’ benefits, the prevalence of white-collar and retail jobs, and the need for reasonable work hours, vacations, and safe working conditions.

In the 1890s, cities grew as more Americans took urban industrial work. As one of the leading industrial powers of the period, the United States had a variety of enterprises, including the manufacture of iron, steel, crude oil, and textiles. This trend marked a shift from a more agrarian way of life to that of labor for wages. Immigrants would
generally arrive in the cities and take up factory work there to make a living. Working-class and immigrant families often needed to have many family members, including women and children, work in factories to survive.

The working conditions in factories were often harsh. Hours were long, typically ten to twelve hours a day. Working conditions were frequently unsafe and led to deadly accidents. Tasks tended to be divided for efficiency’s sake which led to repetitive and monotonous work for employees.

Workers fought their often demeaning work conditions by uniting together into collective groups and unions. The American Federation of Labor (AFL), for example, was created in 1886 for skilled craftsmen under the leadership of Samuel Gompers. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), formed in 1905, also included unskilled workers in its ranks. In this period of labor unrest, many members in these groups were politically radical, supporting anarchism, communism, and socialism as tools of change. Groups such as these would organize strikes and boycotts in order to get management to acquiesce to their demands. In their early years, however, these labor groups were rarely successful, as the capitalists often resorted to government support to enforce their policies on laborers. The Pullman Strike was one such instance where the government squelched a railway workers’ strike by attaching mail cars to all the trains and then invoking the law that made it illegal to impede the movement of mail.

Instances such as this caused many to see the excesses of American business and the need for reform. In what was known as the Progressive Era, roughly from 1900 to World War I, reformers sought to improve the lot of the underprivileged of America by rectifying perceived wrongs. President Theodore Roosevelt supported regulation of big business and sometimes supported workers’ rights against the interests of industry. During Woodrow Wilson’s presidency, Progressive principles were furthered when statutes were passed for an eight-hour workday for railroad workers, workers’ compensation, and regulation of child labor.

In response to criticisms aimed at industry, some companies instituted "welfare capitalism," giving employees special benefits to secure loyalty and to prevent the creation of unions. Some of the benefits included subsidized housing, libraries, and employee social clubs. The Westinghouse Works used such initiatives, which ultimately failed as a whole when unionism became more powerful in the United States. Films of Westinghouse made in 1904 are included in this collection.

This period also saw the rapid growth of white-collar jobs as industrial capitalism led to the need for more administrative and clerical workers. Such workers began to be classified with managers in the census as opposed to being classified with skilled craftsmen and unskilled labor. The white-collar workers were further distinguished by earning salaries instead of wages by the hour or piece of work. White-collar jobs required at least a high-school education and certain conventions of deportment and dress that the blue-collar jobs did not. A social stratification began to emerge that made white-collar jobs seem more prestigious to many than blue-collar ones. Children of immigrants would aspire to such jobs to increase their social standing in a society that was often prejudiced against newcomers.

Although industry was the primary force of this period, many people still maintained farms across the country. Farming was likely to be subject to periods of financial instability since profits relied on the unpredictability of crops and the marketplace. Still, the number of farms increased in the West, especially in the Great Plains area, and many formed cooperatives to sell their produce and to buy goods. In the South, small farmers were even more economically insecure since the Civil War had left the region largely in debt. Many, especially African Americans, were sharecroppers who had to give part of what they produced to the owner of the land.

In the West, cities sprang up around the massive cattle trade. The economy there was largely focused on grain farming, cattle ranching, lumber, and the mining of metal and coal.

This era also saw the development of department stores and retail jobs in urban areas. Industrial capitalism had succeeded in producing more goods for the consumer to buy, which led to the increased need for salespeople. Retail jobs were seen by many as more respectable than factory work, especially for women, who were finding increasing opportunities in this venue.

One development of this period was the increase of women working outside their homes. Still, society dictated limited choices for them. The most frequent occupations that were considered respectable for women at the time included factory work, frequently in the garment or textile industries, teaching, nursing, domestic service, work
in department stores, or clerical work in offices. Women were paid less than men, even for doing the same jobs, because men were perceived as the family breadwinners and women were thought to be better suited to domesticity (even though many women worked outside the home throughout their lives). There was a perceived hierarchy to jobs that women could obtain which mirrored the stratification occurring with men’s jobs. Factory jobs were considered superior to domestic service since a woman had more control over her free time in such jobs than as a live-in servant. Jobs in department stores were thought to be a cut above factory jobs and occasionally offered women management or buying opportunities. Clerical work was a field readily open to women, and more prestigious than some jobs because of the education and deportment associated with it.

African Americans were also generally limited in their work opportunities. In the South, most were sharecroppers, agricultural wage laborers, or small landowners. Others worked in industrial jobs, mining, and forestry. In cities, many performed unskilled labor tasks such as loading freight. African-American women frequently worked as domestic servants and laundresses. Additionally, there were skilled African Americans who worked as blacksmiths and carpenters or railway workers. In Northern cities, African Americans generally held a better economic position than did their Southern peers. Still, their options were limited, also, as the majority performed labor or service work. Common occupations for men were janitors, servants, and waiters. Women were housekeepers, servants, laundresses, and waitresses.

THE USE OF LABOR BY WOMEN AND CHILDREN

![Indiana Glass Works factory at 9 p.m.](image)

FIGURE 2.15
Indiana Glass Works factory at 9 p.m. None of the children are provided with protective gear.

- Child labor in Factories During the Industrial Revolution
- America at Work
- Childhood Lost - Child Labor During the Industrial Revolution

LABOR REFORM FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

In 1901, Jane Addams founded the Juvenile Protective Association, a non-profit agency dedicated to protecting children from abuse. In 1903, Mary Harris Jones organized the Children’s Crusade, a march of child workers from Kensington, Pennsylvania to the home of President Theodore Roosevelt in Oyster Bay, New York, bringing national attention to the issue of child labor.
In 1909, President Roosevelt hosted the first White House Conference on Children, which was continually held every decade through the 1970s. In 1912, the United States Children’s Bureau was created in order to investigate "all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life among all classes of our people." At the instigation of middle class coalitions, many states enacted factory inspection laws, and by 1916 two-thirds of the states required compensation for victims of industrial accidents. An alliance of labor and humanitarian groups induced some legislatures to grant aid to mothers with dependent children. Under pressure from the National Child Labor to Committee, nearly every state set a minimum age for employment and limited hours that employers could make children work. Families that needed extra income evaded child labor restrictions by falsifying their children’s ages to employers.

States also regulated female labor by setting maximum work hours, especially when an accident at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory resulted in the deaths of more than 100 women. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of regulated work hours for women in "Muller v. Oregon". Finally, some minimum wage provisions were introduced (for men and women).
It started with a 10% pay cut. When leaders of the BALTIMORE AND OHIO RAILROAD COMPANY ordered this second reduction in less than eight months, railroad workers in MARTINSBURG, WEST VIRGINIA decided they had had enough. On July 16, 1877, workers in that town drove all the engines into the roundhouse and boldly declared that no train would leave until the owners restored their pay. The local townspeople gathered at the railyard to show their support for the STRIKERS. A great showdown was on.

Strikes or other actions seen as disturbances are usually handled at the local level. The mayor of Martinsburg tried in vain to threaten the striking workers, but the crowd merely laughed and booed. The local police were far too insubstantial to match the numbers of the rabble. In desperation, the mayor turned to the governor of West Virginia for support. The governor sent units of the National Guard to Martinsburg to accompany the trains out of town by force of arms. There was little support for the effort among the Guardsmen, however, because a majority of them were railroad workers themselves. After two people were killed in the standoff, the Guard simply lay down their weapons and began chatting with members of the crowd.

Only when federal troops sent by President Hayes arrived did the trains leave the station. Even then they were sabotaged and harassed along their routes. Only one train reached its destination.

The Strike Spreads

The MARTINSBURG STRIKE might have gone down in history as one of many small local strikes put down by force, but this time the strike spread. Soon other B O units joined the Martinsburg strike. The movement spread into Pennsylvania, when workers on the PENNSYLVANIA AND READING RAILROADS joined their compatriots. Pittsburgh is the gateway to the Midwest, and so the strike widened to that region.

The police, the National Guard, and the United States Army clashed with angry mobs throughout America. Throughout the land, wealthy individuals feared that the worst had finally come. A violent revolution seemed to be sweeping the nation.
2.6. The Great Upheaval

But then it stopped. In some cases the strikes were ended by force. In others, the strikers simply gave up. After all, most workers were not trying to overthrow the government or the social order. They simply wanted higher wages and more time to spend with their families. The **GREAT UPHEAVAL** was not the first strike in American History; it was the first mass strike to involve so many different workers separated by so much space.

**What Did This Mean for America?**

Was it successful? From a distance, it seems to have failed. However, in many cases, workers did have their demands met. There is no telling how many future pay cuts were avoided because of fear of reprisal from the laborers. The Great Upheaval was spontaneous. There was absolutely no advanced planning, showing how many rank and file workers had the same concerns about quality of life, as well as the same anger at those who controlled the wealth. More than 100,000 workers had gone on strike, shutting down nearly half of the nation’s rail systems.

When the strike ended in the first week in August, over 100 people were killed and a thousand more were imprisoned. Untold millions of dollars of damage was caused to rail lines, cars, and roundhouses. The fight was over, but America had not seen the last of the **MASS STRIKE**.
LABOR VS. MANAGEMENT

The battle lines were clearly drawn. People were either workers or bosses, and with that strong identity often came an equally strong dislike for those who were on the other side. As the number of self-employed Americans dwindled in the Gilded Age, workers began to feel strength in their numbers and ask greater and greater demands of their bosses. When those demands were rejected, they plotted schemes to win their cases.

Those who managed factories developed strategies to counteract those of labor. At times the relationship between the camps was as intellectual and tense as a tough chess match. Other times it was as ugly as a schoolyard fight.

**Strikes, Boycotts, and Sabotage**

The most frequently employed technique of workers was the **STRIKE**. Withholding labor from management would, in theory, force the company to suffer great enough financial losses that they would agree to worker terms. Strikes have been known in America since the colonial age, but their numbers grew larger in the Gilded Age.

Most 19th century strikes were not successful, so unions thought of other means. If the workers at a shoe factory could garner enough sympathy from the local townspeople, a **BOYCOTT** could achieve desirable results. The union would make its case to the town in the hope that no one would buy any shoes from the factory until the owners agreed to a pay raise. Boycotts could be successful in a small community where the factory was dependent upon the business of a group of people in close proximity.

In desperate times, workers would also resort to illegal means if necessary. For example, **SABOTAGE** of factory equipment was not unknown. Occasionally, the foreman or the owner might even be the victims of worker-sponsored violence.

**Management Strikes Back**

Owners had strategies of their own. If a company found itself with a high inventory, the boss might afford to enact a **LOCKOUT**, which is a reverse strike. In this case, the owner tells the employees not to bother showing up until they
agree to a pay cut. Sometimes when a new worker was hired the employee was forced to sign a **YELLOW-DOG CONTRACT**, or an ironclad oath swearing that the employee would never join a union.

Strikes could be countered in a variety of ways. The first measure was usually to hire strikebreakers, or **SCABS**, to take the place of the regular labor force. Here things often turned violent. The crowded cities always seemed to have someone hopeless enough to "**CROSS THE PICKET LINE**" during a strike. The striking workers often responded with fists, occasionally even leading to death.

Prior to the 20th century the government never sided with the union in a labor dispute. Bosses persuaded the courts to issue injunctions to declare a strike illegal. If the strike continued, the participants would be thrown into prison. When all these efforts failed to break a strike, the government at all levels would be willing to send a militia to regulate as in the case of the Great Upheaval.

What was at stake? Each side felt they were fighting literally for survival. The owners felt if they could not keep costs down to beat the competition, they would be forced to close the factory altogether. They said they could not meet the workers’ unreasonable demands.

What were the employees demanding? In the entire history of labor strife, most goals of labor can be reduced to two overarching issues: higher wages and better working conditions. In the beginning, management would have the upper hand. But the sheer numbers of the American workforce was gaining momentum as the century neared its conclusion.

**EARLY NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Divide and conquer. That simple strategy gave the owners the advantage over labor until the dawn of the 20th century. Laborers did not all have the same goals. By favoring one group over another, the bosses could create internal dissent in any union. Unions were spread from town to town. Unity among them might make a more effective boycott or strike, but bringing diverse groups together across a large area was extremely difficult.

Owners were smart enough to circulate **BLACKLISTS**. These lists contained the names of any workers active in the union. If anyone on the list would show up in another town trying to get hired (or to start another union), the employers would be wise. Still, the ratio of labor to management was so large that national organization was inevitable. The first group to clear the hurdles was the National Labor Union.
William Sylvis and the NLU

By 1866, there were about 200,000 workers in local unions across the United States. WILLIAM SYLVIS seized the opportunity presented by these numbers and established the first nationwide labor organization, named the NATIONAL LABOR UNION. Sylvis had very ambitious goals. Not only did the NLU fight for higher wages and shorter hours, Sylvis took labor activity into the political arena. The NLU supported legislation banning PRISON LABOR, land reform laws to keep public holdings out of the hands of speculators, and national currency reform to raise farm prices.

It brought together skilled and unskilled workers, as well as farmers. The National Labor Union stopped short of admitting African Americans. RACIST tendencies of the times prevailed, despite the wisdom of bringing as many workers as possible into the fold. Unfortunately for the NLU, it tried to represent too many different groups. Farmers had their own agenda, and skilled workers often had different realities than the unskilled. When the Panic of 1873 hit America, the union was severely disabled. Soon after, the National Labor Union withered away.

The Knights of Labor

The KNIGHTS OF LABOR soon inherited the mantle of organized labor. Begun by URIAH STEPHENS as a secret society in 1869, the Knights admitted all wage earners into their ranks, including women and African Americans. The philosophy was simple: class was more important than race or gender. For such a group to influence the federal government, complete solidarity would be required.

The Knights supported the entire political agenda of the NLU and more. They advocated limits on immigration, restrictions on child labor, and government ownership of railroads, telegraphs, and telephone. At the height of its membership in 1886, the Knights boasted 750,000 workers. But then disaster struck.
2.6. The Great Upheaval

FIGURE 2.23
William Sylvis worked in many trades in his life, from wagon making to canal boat building. Later, he became a pioneer in organizing and motivating labor unions.

William Sylvis

Tragedy in Haymarket Square

On May 1, 1886, INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY, local chapters of the Knights went on strike demanding an eight-hour day for all laborers. At a rally in HAYMARKET SQUARE in Chicago on May 4, someone threw a bomb into the crowd. One police officer died and several crowd members sustained injuries.

Who was responsible? No one was really sure, but the American press, government, and general public blamed the Knights of Labor. Leader TERENCE POWDERLY condemned the bombing to no avail. Americans associated labor activity with anarchists and mob violence. Membership began to fall. Soon the Knights were merely a shadow of their former size. But labor leaders had learned some valuable lessons. The next national organization of workers would endure.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

Keep it simple. That was the mantra of labor leader SAMUEL GOMPERS. He was a die hard capitalist and saw no need for a radical restructuring of America. Gompers quickly learned that the issues that workers cared about most deeply were personal. They wanted higher wages and better working conditions. These "BREAD AND BUTTER" issues would always unite the labor class. By keeping it simple, unions could avoid the pitfalls that had drawn the life from the National Labor Union and the Knights of Labor.

Samuel Gompers was born in London in 1850 to a family of Jewish cigar makers. Coming to Manhattan at the
height of the American Civil War, the Gompers family maintained that trade. An effective organizer and speaker, Gompers became the head of the local cigar makers’ union at the age of only twenty-seven.

A Union for the Skilled

In December of 1886, the same year the Knights of Labor was dealt its fatal blow at Haymarket Square, Gompers met with the leaders of other craft unions to form the AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR. The A.F. of L. was a loose grouping of smaller craft unions, such as the masons’ union, the hatmakers’ union or Gompers’s own cigar makers’ union. Every member of the A.F. of L. was therefore a skilled worker.

Gompers had no visions of uniting the entire working class. Tradespeople were in greater demand and already earned higher wages than their unskilled counterparts. Gompers knew that the A.F. of L. would have more political and economic power if unskilled workers were excluded. He served as president of the union every year except one until his death in 1924.

Although conservative in nature, Gompers was not afraid to call for a strike or a boycott. The larger A.F. of L. could be used to support these actions, as well as provide relief for members engaged in a work stoppage. By refusing to pursue a radical program for political change, Gompers maintained the support of the American government and public. By 1900, the ranks of the A.F. of L. swelled to over 500,000 tradespeople. Gompers was seen as the unofficial leader of the labor world in America.

Simplicity worked. Although the bosses still had the upper hand with the government, unions were growing in size and status. There were over 20,000 strikes in America in the last two decades of the 19th century. Workers lost about half, but in many cases their demands were completely or partially met. The A.F. of L. served as the preeminent national labor organization until the Great Depression when unskilled workers finally came together. Smart leadership, patience, and realistic goals made life better for the hundreds of thousands of working Americans it served.
EUGENE V. DEBS AND AMERICAN SOCIALISM

Despite the success of the American Federation of Labor, American **RADICALISM** was not dead. The number of those who felt the American capitalist system was fundamentally flawed was in fact growing fast.

American **SOCIALISTS** based their beliefs on the writings of **KARL MARX**, the German philosopher. Many asked why so many working Americans should have so little while a few owners grew incredibly wealthy. No wealth could exist without the sweat and blood of its workforce. They suggested that the government should own all industries and divide the profits among those who actually created the products. While the current management class would stand to lose, many more people would gain. These radicals grew in number as industries spread. But their enemies were legion.

The Father of American Socialism

**EUGENE V. DEBS** was born in Terre Haute, Indiana in 1855 to a family of French Alsatian immigrants. Making his way in the railroad industry, Debs formed the **AMERICAN RAILWAY UNION** in 1892.

Two years later he found himself leading one of the largest strikes in American history — the great **PULLMAN STRIKE**. When its workers refused to accept a pay cut, The **PULLMAN CAR COMPANY** fired 5000 employees. To show support, Debs called for the members of the American Railway Union to refrain from operating any trains that used Pullman cars. When the strike was declared illegal by a court injunction, chaos erupted. President Cleveland ordered federal troops to quell the strikers and Debs was arrested. Soon order was restored and the strike failed.

Debs was not originally a socialist, but his experience with the Pullman Strike and his subsequent six-month jail term led him to believe that drastic action was necessary. Debs chose to confine his activity to the political arena. In 1900 he ran for President as a socialist and garnered some 87,000 votes.
Your honor, years ago I recognized my kinship with all living things, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on the earth. I said then and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free.

– Eugene V. Debs, Statement to the Court, while being convicted of violating the Sedition Act (Sept. 18, 1918)

The following year, leading sympathizers joined with him to form the **SOCIALIST PARTY**. At its height, the party numbered over 100,000 active members. Debs ran for President four more times. In the election of 1912 he received over 900,000 votes. After being arrested for anti war activities during World War I, he ran for President from his jail cell and polled 919,000 votes. Debs died in 1926 having never won an election, but over one thousand Socialist Party members were elected to state and city governments.

**The Wobblies**

Even more radical than the Socialists were the members of the **INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD**. This union believed that compromise with owners was no solution. Founded in 1905 and led by **WILLIAM "BIG BILL" HAYWOOD**, the "**WOBBLIES**," as they were called, encouraged their members to fight for justice directly against their employers. Although small in number, they led hundreds of strikes across America, calling for the overthrow of the capitalist system. The I.W.W. won few battles, but their efforts sent a strong message across America that workers were being mistreated.

When the United States entered World War I, the "Wobblies" launched an active **ANTI WAR MOVEMENT**. Many were arrested or beaten. One unlucky member in Oregon was tied to the front end of an automobile with his knees touching the ground and driven until his flesh was torn to the bone. Membership declined after the war, but for two decades the I.W.W. was the anchor of radical American activism.

**SAMUEL GOMPERS**

- [Samuel Gompers (1850 - 1924)](#)
- [The Samuel Gompers Papers](#)

**EUGENE DEBS**

- [Eugene V. Debs - Facts & Summary - HISTORY.com](#)
- [Eugene V. Debs, 1904](#)

**HAYMARKET AFFAIR**

- [Haymarket Square Riot - Facts & Summary - HISTORY.com](#)
- [The Story of the Haymarket Affair](#)
- [The Haymarket Affair Narrative](#)
- [Haymarket Affair Chronology](#)

**PULLMAN STRIKE**

- [The Pullman Strike](#)
2.6. The Great Upheaval

- Pullman Strike
- Pullman Strike
- Pullman Lesson Plan

COAL CREEK LABOR SAGA

- HISTORY LESSON -- Miners went to war against state . . .
- Lesson Plan Idea on Coal Creek, see p. 3

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

- Collective bargaining
- Collective Bargaining
- Who Rules America: The Rise and Fall of Labor Unionsin . . .

OPEN VS. CLOSED SHOPS

- Unions: Right-to-Work States vs. Non Right-to-Work States
- US Department of Labor -- History -- Glossary
Conservatives beware! Whether they liked it or not, the turn of the 20th century was an age of reform. Urban reformers and Populists had already done much to raise attention to the nation’s most pressing problems.

America in 1900 looked nothing like America in 1850, yet those in power seemed to be applying the same old strategies to complex new problems. The Populists had tried to effect change by capturing the government. The Progressives would succeed where the Populists had failed.

The Progressives were urban, Northeast, educated, middle-class, Protestant reform-minded men and women. There was no official PROGRESSIVE PARTY until 1912, but progressivism had already swept the nation.

It was more of a movement than a political party, and there were adherents to the philosophy in each major party. There were three PROGRESSIVE PRESIDENTS — Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson. Roosevelt and Taft were Republicans and Wilson was a Democrat. What united the movement was a belief that the laissez faire, Social Darwinist outlook of the Gilded Age was morally and intellectually wrong. Progressives believed that people and government had the power to correct abuses produced by nature and the free market.

The results were astonishing. Seemingly every aspect of society was touched by progressive reform. Worker and consumer issues were addressed, conservation of natural resources was initiated, and the plight of the urban poor was confronted. National political movements such as temperance and women’s suffrage found allies in the progressive movement. The era produced a host of national and state regulations, plus four amendments to the Constitution.

When the United States became involved in the First World War, attention was diverted from domestic issues and progressivism went into decline. While unable to solve the problems of every American, the PROGRESSIVE ERA set the stage for the 20th century trend of an activist government trying to assist its people.
2.7. Progressivism Sweeps the Nation

**FIGURE 2.27**
Official program of Woman suffrage procession, Washington, D.C., March 3, 1913

**FIGURE 2.28**
Upton Sinclair published The Jungle in 1905 to expose labor abuses in the meat packing industry. But it was food, not labor, that most concerned the public. Sinclair’s horrific descriptions of the industry led to the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act, not to labor legislation.

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**MUCKRAKERS**

The pen is sometimes mightier than the sword. It may be a cliché, but it was all too true for journalists at the turn of the century. The print revolution enabled publications to increase their subscriptions dramatically. What appeared in print was now more powerful than ever. Writing to Congress in hopes of correcting abuses was slow and often produced zero results. Publishing a series of articles had a much more immediate impact. Collectively called **MUCKRAKERS**, a brave cadre of reporters exposed injustices so grave they made the blood of the average American run cold.

**Steffens Takes on Corruption**

The first to strike was **LINCOLN STEFFENS**. In 1902, he published an article in **MCCLURE’S** magazine called "**TWEED DAYS IN ST. LOUIS**." Steffens exposed how city officials worked in league with big business to maintain power while corrupting the public treasury.
More and more articles followed, and soon Steffens published the collection as a book entitled *THE SHAME OF THE CITIES*. Soon public outcry demanded reform of city government and gave strength to the progressive ideas of a city commission or city manager system.

**Tarbell vs. Standard Oil**

IDA TARBELL struck next. One month after Lincoln Steffens launched his assault on urban politics, Tarbell began her *McClure’s* series entitled "**HISTORY OF THE STANDARD OIL COMPANY**." She outlined and documented the cutthroat business practices behind John Rockefeller’s meteoric rise. Tarbell’s motives may also have been personal: her own father had been driven out of business by Rockefeller.

Once other publications saw how profitable these exposés had been, they courted muckrakers of their own. In 1905, Thomas Lawson brought the inner workings of the stock market to light in *Frenzied Finance*. John Spargo unearthed the horrors of child labor in *The Bitter Cry of the Children* in 1906. That same year, David Phillips linked 75 senators to big business interests in *The Treason of the Senate*. In 1907, William Hard went public with industrial accidents in the steel industry in the blistering *Making Steel and Killing Men*. Ray Stannard Baker revealed the oppression of Southern blacks in *Following the Color Line* in 1908.

**The Meatpacking Jungle**

Perhaps no muckraker caused as great a stir as UPTON SINCLAIR. An avowed Socialist, Sinclair hoped to illustrate the horrible effects of capitalism on workers in the Chicago meatpacking industry. His bone-chilling account, *THE JUNGLE*, detailed workers sacrificing their fingers and nails by working with acid, losing limbs, catching diseases, and toiling long hours in cold, cramped conditions. He hoped the public outcry would be so fierce that reforms would soon follow.

The clamor that rang throughout America was not, however, a response to the workers’ plight. Sinclair also uncovered the contents of the products being sold to the general public. Spoiled meat was covered with chemicals.
to hide the smell. Skin, hair, stomach, ears, and nose were ground up and packaged as head cheese. Rats climbed over warehouse meat, leaving piles of excrement behind.

Sinclair said that he aimed for America’s heart and instead hit its stomach. Even President Roosevelt, who coined the derisive term “muckraker,” was propelled to act. Within months, Congress passed the **PURE FOOD AND DRUG ACT** and the **MEAT INSPECTION ACT** to curb these sickening abuses.

**THEODORE ROOSEVELT**

**Hiding Teddy**

THEODORE ROOSEVELT was never intended to be President. He was seen as a reckless cowboy by many in the Republican Party leadership. As his popularity soared, he became more and more of a threat. His success with the Rough Riders in Cuba made him a war hero in the eyes of many Americans. Riding this wave, he was elected as governor of New York.

During the campaign of 1900, it was decided that nominating Roosevelt for the Vice-Presidency would serve two purposes. First, his popularity would surely help President McKinley’s reelection bid. Second, moving him to the
Vice-Presidency might decrease his power.

Vice-Presidents had gone on to the White House only if the sitting President died in office. The last Vice-President elected in his own right had been Martin Van Buren in 1837. Many believed Roosevelt could do less harm as Vice-President than as governor of New York.

McKinley and Roosevelt won the election, and all was proceeding according to plan until an assassin’s bullet ended McKinley’s life in September 1901.

The Bully Pulpit

Roosevelt did not wait long to act. Before long he lashed out against the trusts and sided with American labor. The Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act protected consumers. Steps were taken to protect America’s wilderness lands that went beyond any previous President.

The worst fears of conservatives were realized as Roosevelt used the White House as a "BULLY PULPIT" to promote an active government that protected the interests of the people over big business. The Progressive movement finally had an ally in the White House.

The Progressive lock on the Presidency did not end with Theodore Roosevelt. His popularity secured the election in 1908 of his hand-picked successor, William Howard Taft. Although Taft continued busting America’s trusts, his inability to control the conservative wing of the party led to a Republican versus Republican war.
A Progressive Democrat

Teddy Roosevelt challenged Taft for the Republican nomination in 1912, splitting the party wide open. Although the Republicans lost the election, it was not necessarily a loss for Progressives. The winning Democrat, Woodrow Wilson, embraced much of the Progressive agenda himself.

Before his two terms came to a close, the federal government passed legislation further restricting trusts, banning child labor, and requiring worker compensation. The Progressive causes of temperance and women’s suffrage were embedded into the Constitution.

Between 1901 and 1921, the Presidents were more active and powerful than any since the days of Abraham Lincoln.

Teddy Roosevelt: The Rough Rider in the White House

There had never been a President like him. He was only forty-two years old when his predecessor William McKinley was assassinated, the youngest age ever for the chief executive.

He was graduated with the highest honors from Harvard, wrote 23 books, and was considered the world’s foremost authority on North American wildlife. He was a prizefighting championship finalist, leader of the Rough Riders, a cowboy, a socialite, a police commissioner, a governor, and a Vice-President.
All this was accomplished before he entered the White House. His energy was contagious, and the whole country was electrified by their new leader.

**Early Obstacles**

Roosevelt was born in 1858 to a wealthy New York banker and the daughter of a prosperous Georgia planter. He was anything but the model physical specimen. His eyesight was poor. He wore thick glasses his entire life. As a child he was small and weak. He suffered from acute asthma, which contributed to his frailty.

Taking his father's advice, he dedicated himself to physical fitness, without which he believed there could be no mental fitness. His hard work paid off, and as he entered Harvard with a muscular frame, his condition bothered him less and less.

Soon he met ALICE HATHAWAY LEE. Although he believed her to be the most unobtainable woman around, he was determined to marry her. Again, he was successful, but his life with Alice was short-lived. In 1884, four years after his graduation, Alice delivered a daughter. Owing to complications, she died in childbirth on the very same day as the death of his mother.

**A Rising Star**

Devastated, he withdrew to North Dakota Territory, but could not live without the New York pace for long. Returning to New York in 1886, Roosevelt remarried and dedicated his life to public service. By 1898, he compiled an impressive résumé including

- Member of the Civil Service Commission
- Police Commissioner of New York City
- Assistant Secretary to the Navy.

When the SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR erupted, he helped form a volunteer regiment called the ROUGH RIDERS. His success in the war led to the governor’s office and then the Vice-Presidency.

Up to this point, the Vice-President had little power, and few had gone on to the White House unless a tragedy befell the President. Many Republican leaders supported Roosevelt in the number-two job for this very reason. They feared his headstrong style and maverick attitude. Their greatest fears were realized when a bullet ended President McKinley’s life on September 13, 1901.
A New Kind of President

Soon it was clear that a new type of President was in town. The Presidency had been dormant since Lincoln’s time. Congress seemed to be running the government, and big business seemed to be running Congress.

Philosophically, Roosevelt was outraged by these realities. Although he himself hailed from the wealthy classes, he strongly believed that no individual, no matter how rich and powerful, should control the people’s representatives.

Furthermore, Roosevelt was convinced that if abuse of workers continued to go unchecked, a violent revolution would sweep the nation. An outspoken foe of socialism, Roosevelt believed that capitalism would be preserved with a little restraint and common sense. Within months he began to wield his newfound power.

Roosevelt changed the office in other important ways. He never went anywhere without his photographer. He wanted Americans to see a rough and tumble leader who was unafraid to get his hands dirty. He became the first President to travel out of the country while in office and the first to win the NOBEL PRIZE.

Unlike his quieter predecessors, Roosevelt knew that if the Washington politicians resisted change, he would have to take his case to the people directly. He traveled often and spoke with confidence and enthusiasm. Americans received him warmly.

The country was thirsting for leadership and Roosevelt became a political and popular hero. Merchandise was sold in his likeness, paintings and lithographs created in his honor, and even a film was produced portraying him as a fairy-tale hero. The White House was finally back in business.

ROBERT LA FOLLETTE

A leader in the 20th-century Progressive movement, Robert Marion La Follette was a U.S. representative, governor, and U.S. senator from Wisconsin, and an unsuccessful candidate for the presidency. La Follette was born in the town of Primrose, Wisconsin, the son of settlers from Kentucky. Admitted to the bar in 1880, he entered the U.S. House of Representatives in 1885. After three terms in the House, he was elected governor of Wisconsin and served from 1901 to 1906. As governor, La Follette pushed for a direct primary system, tax reform legislation, railroad rate control, and other measures known as the "Wisconsin idea," collectively aimed at weakening the control of party bosses and turning over public administration to popularly elected leaders.
Nicknamed "Fighting Bob," La Follette continued to champion Progressive causes during a Senate career extending from 1906 until his death in 1925. He strongly supported the 17th Amendment, which provided for the direct election of senators, as well as domestic measures advocated by President Woodrow Wilson's administration, including federal railroad regulation and laws protecting workers rights. La Follette worked to generate wider public accountability for the Senate. He advocated more frequent and better publicized roll call votes and the publication of information about campaign expenditures.

Early in his Senate career, the Wisconsin Republican broke with leaders of the Grand Old Party and rarely voted along party lines thereafter. In 1911 he helped found the National Progressive Republican League, whose members rallied around him as the logical candidate to wrest the Republican presidential nomination from President William Howard Taft. However, La Follette lost his bid when many supporters switched their allegiance to Theodore Roosevelt who, after failing to win the Republican nomination, ran unsuccessfully on the third-party Progressive, or Bull Moose, ticket in 1912.

La Follette led a small but influential group of Progressives in the Senate. As a result of the close margin between the two major parties, the Progressives held power out of proportion to their small numbers. Also the leader of the pacifist block in the Senate, La Follette opposed American involvement in World War I. In 1924 he was nominated for president by the League for Progressive Political Action and polled five million votes. Exhausted by the rigors of the campaign, La Follette died the following year in Washington, D.C. His son, Robert M. La Follette, Jr., succeeded him in the Senate, thus carrying on the reform tradition.
The single greatest factor that fueled the progressive movement in America was urbanization. For years, educated, middle-class women had begun the work of reform in the nation’s cities.

Jane Addams was a progressive before the movement had such a name. The settlement house movement embodied the very ideals of progressivism. Temperance was a progressive movement in its philosophy of improving family life. "SOCIAL GOSPEL" preachers had already begun to address the needs of city dwellers.

**Progressive Writing**

Urban intellectuals had ready stirred consciences with their controversial treatises. **HENRY GEORGE** attracted many followers by blaming inequalities in wealth on land ownership. In his 1879 work, *PROGRESS AND POVERTY*, he suggested that profits made from land sales be taxed at a rate of 100 percent.

**EDWARD BELLAMY** peered into the future in his 1888 novel, *LOOKING BACKWARD*. The hero of the story wakes up in the year 2000 and looks back to see that all the hardships of the Gilded Age have withered away thanks to an activist, utopian socialist government.

In *THE THEORY OF THE LEISURE CLASS* (1899), **THORSTEIN VEBLEN** cited countless cases of "CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION." Wealthy families spent their riches on acquiring European works of art or fountains that flowed with champagne. Surely, he argued, those resources could be put to better use.

**Pragmatic Solutions**

Underlying this new era of reform was a fundamental shift in philosophy away from Social Darwinism. Why accept hardship and suffering as simply the result of natural selection? Humans can and have adapted their physical environments to suit their purposes. Individuals need not accept injustices as the "law of nature" if they can think of a better way.
Philosopher **WILLIAM JAMES** called this new way of thinking, "**PRAGMATISM**." His followers came to believe that an activist government could be the agent of the public to pursue the betterment of social ills.

The most prolific disciple of James was **JOHN DEWEY**. Dewey applied pragmatic thinking to education. Rather than having students memorize facts or formulas, Dewey proposed "**LEARNING BY DOING**." The progressive education movement begun by Dewey dominated educational debate the entire 20th century.

**The Populist Influence**

The Populist movement also influenced progressivism. While rejecting the call for free silver, the progressives embraced the political reforms of **SECRET BALLOT**, **INITIATIVE**, **REFERENDUM**, and **RECALL**. Most of these reforms were on the state level. Under the governorship of **ROBERT LAFOLLETTE**, Wisconsin became a laboratory for many of these political reforms.

The Populist ideas of an income tax and direct election of senators became the **SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH AMENDMENTS** to the United States Constitution under progressive direction.

Reforms went further by trying to root out urban corruption by introducing new models of city government. The city commission and the city manager systems removed important decision making from politicians and placed it in the hands of skilled technicians. The labor movement contributed the calls for workers’ compensation and child labor
regulation. Progressivism came from so many sources from every region of America. The national frame of mind was fixed. Reform would occur. It was only a matter of how much and what type.

A HELPING HAND FOR LABOR IS FOUND IN GOVERNMENT

Workers rarely found a helping hand in the White House. President Hayes ordered the army to break the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. President Cleveland ordered federal troops to disrupt the Pullman Strike of 1894. Governors and mayors used the National Guard and police to confront workers on strike.

When Pennsylvania coal miners went on strike in 1902, there was no reason to believe anything had changed. But this time things were different. Teddy Roosevelt was in the White House.

Miners and Owners at Loggerheads

JOHN MITCHELL, president of the UNITED MINE WORKERS, represented the miners. He was soft-spoken, yet determined. Many compared his manner to Abraham Lincoln’s. In the spring of 1902, Mitchell placed a demand on the coal operators for better wages, shorter hours, and recognition of the union. The owners, led by GEORGE BAER, flatly refused. On May 12, 1902, 140,000 miners walked off the job, and the strike was on.
Mitchell worked diligently behind the scenes to negotiate with Baer, but his efforts were rejected. According to Baer, there would be no compromise. Even luminaries such as Mark Hanna and J.P. Morgan prevailed in vain on the owners to open talks. As the days passed, the workers began to feel the pinch of the strike, and violence began to erupt.

Soon summer melted into fall, and President Roosevelt wondered what the angry workers and a colder public would do if the strike lasted into the bitter days of winter. He decided to lend a hand in settling the strike.

**Teddy the Arbitrator**

No President had ever tried to negotiate a strike settlement before. Roosevelt invited Mitchell and Baer to the White House on October 3 to hammer out a compromise. Mitchell proposed to submit to an arbitration commission and abide by the results if Baer would do the same. Baer resented the summons by the President to meet a "common criminal" like Mitchell, and refused any sort of concession.

Roosevelt despaired that the violence would increase and spiral dangerously toward a class-based civil war. After the mine operators left Washington, he vowed to end the strike. He was impressed by Mitchell’s gentlemanly demeanor and irritated by Baer’s insolence. Roosevelt remarked that if he weren’t president, he would have thrown Baer out of a White House window.

He summoned his War Secretary, ELIHU ROOT, and ordered him to prepare the army. This time, however, the army would not be used against the strikers. The coal operators were informed that if no settlement were reached, the army would seize the mines and make coal available to the public. Roosevelt did not seem to mind that he had no constitutional authority to do any such thing.

**Compromise**

J.P. Morgan finally convinced Baer and the other owners to submit the dispute to a commission. On October 15, the strike ended. The following March, a decision was reached by the mediators. The miners were awarded a 10 percent pay increase, and their workday was reduced to eight or nine hours. The owners were not forced to recognize the United Mine Workers.

Workers across America cheered Roosevelt for standing up to the mine operators. It surely seemed like the White House would lend a helping hand to the labor movement.
2.9 Suffrage for Women

THE STRUGGLE TO ACHIEVE SUFFRAGE FOR WOMEN

The beginning of the fight for women’s suffrage in the United States, which predates Jeannette Rankin’s entry into Congress by nearly 70 years, grew out of a larger women’s rights movement. That reform effort evolved during the 19th century, initially emphasizing a broad spectrum of goals before focusing solely on securing the franchise for women. Women’s suffrage leaders, moreover, often disagreed about the tactics for and the emphasis (federal versus state) of their reform efforts. Ultimately, the suffrage movement provided political training for some of the early women pioneers in Congress, but its internal divisions foreshadowed the persistent disagreements among women in Congress and among women’s rights activists after the passage of the 19th Amendment.

The first gathering devoted to women’s rights in the United States was held July 19–20, 1848, in Seneca Falls, New York. The principal organizers of the Seneca Falls Convention were Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a mother of four from upstate New York, and the Quaker abolitionist Lucretia Mott. About 100 people attended the convention; two-thirds were women. Stanton drafted a “Declaration of Sentiments, Grievances, and Resolutions,” that echoed the preamble of the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal.” Among the 13 resolutions set forth in Stanton’s “Declaration” was the goal of achieving the “sacred right of franchise.”

The sometimes-fractious suffrage movement that grew out of the Seneca Falls meeting proceeded in successive waves. Initially, women reformers addressed social and institutional barriers that limited women’s rights; including family responsibilities, a lack of educational and economic opportunities, and the absence of a voice in political debates. Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, a Massachusetts teacher, met in 1850 and forged a lifetime alliance as women’s rights activists. For much of the 1850s they agitated against the denial of basic economic freedoms to women. Later, they unsuccessfully lobbied Congress to include women in the provisions of the 14th and 15th Amendments (extending citizenship rights and granting voting rights to freedmen, respectively).
In the wake of the Civil War, however, reformers sought to avoid marginalization as “social issues” zealots by focusing their message exclusively on the right to vote. In 1869 two distinct factions of the suffrage movement emerged. Stanton and Anthony created the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), which directed its efforts toward changing federal law and opposed the 15th Amendment because it excluded women. Lucy Stone, a one-time Massachusetts anti-slavery advocate and a prominent lobbyist for women’s rights, formed the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA). Leaders of the AWSA rejected the NWSA’s agenda as being racially divisive and organized with the aim to continue a national reform effort at the state level. Although California Senator Aaron Sargent introduced in Congress a women’s suffrage amendment in 1878, the overall campaign stalled. Eventually, the NWSA also shifted its efforts to the individual states where reformers hoped to start a ripple effect to win voting rights at the federal level.

During the 1880s, the two wings of the women’s rights movement struggled to maintain momentum. The AWSA was better funded and the larger of the two groups, but it had only a regional reach. The NWSA, which was based in New York, relied on its statewide network but also drew recruits from around the nation, largely on the basis of the extensive speaking circuit of Stanton and Anthony. Neither group attracted broad support from women, or persuaded male politicians or voters to adopt its cause. Susan B. Anthony and Ida H. Harper cowrote, “In the indifference, the inertia, the apathy of women, lies the greatest obstacle to their enfranchisement.” Historian Nancy Woloch described early suffragists’ efforts as “a crusade in political education by women and for women, and for most of its existence, a crusade in search of a constituency.”

The turning point came in the late 1880s and early 1890s, when the nation experienced a surge of volunteerism among middle-class women—activists in progressive causes, members of women’s clubs and professional societies, temperance advocates, and participants in local civic and charity organizations. The determination of these women to expand their sphere of activities further outside the home helped legitimate the suffrage movement and provided new momentum for the NWSA and the AWSA. By 1890, seeking to capitalize on their newfound “constituency,” the two groups united to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Led initially by Stanton and then by Anthony, the NAWSA began to draw on the support of women activists in organizations as diverse as the Women’s Trade Union League, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), and the National Consumer’s League.

For the next two decades, the NAWSA worked as a nonpartisan organization focused on gaining the vote in states, though managerial problems and a lack of coordination initially limited its success. The first state to grant women
complete voting rights was Wyoming in 1869. Three other western states—Colorado (1893), Utah (1896), and Idaho (1896)—followed shortly after NAWSA was founded. But prior to 1910, only these four states allowed women to vote. Between 1910 and 1914, the NAWSA intensified its lobbying efforts and additional states extended the franchise to women: Washington, California, Arizona, Kansas, and Oregon. In Illinois, future Congresswoman Ruth Hanna McCormick helped lead the fight for suffrage as a lobbyist in Springfield, when the state legislature granted women the right to vote in 1913; this marked the first such victory for women in a state east of the Mississippi River. A year later, Montana granted women the right to vote, thanks in part to the efforts of another future Congresswoman, Jeannette Rankin.

Despite the new momentum, however, some reformers were impatient with the pace of change. In 1913, Alice Paul, a young Quaker activist who had experience in the English suffrage movement, formed the rival Congressional Union (later named the National Woman’s Party). 7 Paul’s group freely adopted the more militant tactics of its English counterparts, picketing and conducting mass rallies and marches to raise public awareness and support. Embracing a more confrontational style, Paul drew a younger generation of women to her movement, helped resuscitate the push for a federal equal rights amendment, and relentlessly attacked the Democratic administration of President Woodrow Wilson for obstructing the extension of the vote to women.

In 1915, Carrie Chapman Catt, a veteran suffragist since the mid-1880s and a former president of the NAWSA, again secured the organization’s top leadership post. Catt proved an adept administrator and organizer, whose “Winning Plan” strategy called for disciplined and relentless efforts to achieve state referenda on the vote, especially in non-Western states. 8 Key victories—the first in the South and East—followed in 1917 when Arkansas and New York granted partial and full voting rights, respectively. Beginning in 1917, President Wilson (a convert to the suffrage cause) urged Congress to pass a voting rights amendment. Another crowning achievement also occurred that year when Montana’s Jeannette Rankin (elected two years after her state enfranchised women) was sworn into the 65th Congress on April 2, as the first woman to serve in the national legislature.

Catt’s steady strategy of securing voting rights state by state and Paul’s vocal and partisan protest campaign coincided with the Wilson administration’s decision to intervene in the First World War—a development that provided powerful rhetoric for and a measure of expediency for granting the vote. The NAWSA publicly embraced the war cause, despite the fact that many women suffragists, including Rankin, were pacifists. Suffrage leaders suggested that the effort to “make the world safe for democracy” ought to begin at home, by extending the franchise. Moreover, they insisted, the failure to extend the vote to women might impede their participation in the war effort just when they
were most needed to play a greater role as workers and volunteers outside the home. Responding to these overtures, the House of Representatives initially passed a voting rights amendment on January 10, 1918, but the Senate did not follow suit before the end of the 65th Congress. It was not until after the war, however, that the measure finally cleared Congress with the House again voting its approval by a wide margin on May 21, 1919, and the Senate concurring on June 14, 1919. A year later, on August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment, providing full voting rights for women nationally, was ratified when Tennessee became the 36th state to approve it.

**Continued Challenges**

But achieving the right to vote, while ending one phase of the women’s rights movement, set the stage for the equally arduous process of securing women a measure of power in local and national political office. Scholars have debated whether the women’s movement underwent fundamental change or sustained continuity in the years before and after 1920. However, most agree that Rankin and those who followed her into Congress during the 1920s faced a Herculean task in consolidating their power and in sustaining legislation that was important to women. Several factors contributed to these conditions.

The Progressive Era, in which several waves of activists, moving from the local to national level, pursued democratic reforms within political, social, and cultural contexts, had helped sustain the women’s rights movement. But the Progressive Era waned after the U.S. entered World War I. With its passing, the public enthusiasm for further efforts decreased, contributing to women’s difficulty in the early 1920s to use their new political gain as an instrument for social change.

Just when women gained the vote, voter participation declined nationally. Fewer men and women were attuned to national political issues which, increasingly, were defined by special-interest groups and lobbies.

As Carrie Chapman Catt pointed out, in winning the vote reformers lost the single unifying cause that appealed to a broad constituency of women. The amalgam of the other reform causes tended to splinter the women’s rights movement, because smaller communities of women were investing their energies across a larger field of competing programs.

Women, contrary to the expectations of many on both sides of the suffrage debate, did not vote as a single, unified bloc. They split over party affiliation, key issues, and the vagaries of parochial politics. They also voted in far lower percentages than predicted. Finally, to the consternation of feminist reformers, they did not vote independently;
instead, their voting preferences tended to mirror those of the men in their families.

Complicating these factors was the overarching reality that the political culture would take decades to adjust to the enfranchisement of women. The expectation was that women would be loyal followers under the banner of one or the other major party, with men chartering the course. Emily N. Blair, a Missouri suffragist and the vice president of the Democratic National Committee (beginning in 1924) observed: “Women were welcome to come in as workers but not as co-makers of the world. For all their numbers, they seldom rose to positions of responsibility or power. The few who did fitted into the system as they found it. All standards, all methods, all values, continued to be set by men.” Carrie Chapman Catt made a similar assessment, noting that there was, at least in one sense, continuity between the suffrage struggle and the 1920s: women’s marginalization. She noted that “the unwillingness to give women even a small share of the political positions which would enable them to score advantage to their ideals,” was a condition all too familiar for “any old time suffragist.”

In Congress, particularly, the pioneer Congresswomen, with several notable exceptions, were far outside the party power structure. Not only did they face institutional prejudices, but many of them (nearly three-quarters of the first generation) were dependent on their husbands or their fathers for their positions. Moreover, these first women in Congress would not agree among themselves which form the political participation of American women should take: as public office holders or as participants in nonpartisan reform groups?

Nevertheless, fortified by the constitutional victory of suffrage reformers in 1920, the handful of new women in Congress embarked on what would become a century-long odyssey to broaden women’s role in government, so that
in Catt’s words, they might “score advantage to their ideals.” The profiles in this book about these pioneer women Members and their successors relate the story of that odyssey during the course of the 20th century and into the 21st century.

IMPORTANT INDIVIDUALS OF THE WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

- List of Woman Suffrage Leaders
- Women’s Suffrage: The Early Leaders
- Leaders in US Women’s Suffrage Movement
- Suffrage Biographies

PASSAGE OF THE 19TH AMENDMENT

- Passage of the 19th Amendment 1919-20
- 19th Amendment - Women’s History - HISTORY.com
- The Nineteenth Amendment

THE ROLE OF TENNESSEE IN THE WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE EFFORT

- The Mother Who Saved Suffrage: Passing the 19th...
- Woman Suffrage Movement
- Women Struggle for an Equal Voice
- Showdown in Nashville
- Tennessee Suffrage Leaders

JOSEPHINE PEARSON

- Josephine Anderson Pearson
- Josephine Pearson
I, A. H. Roberts, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Tennessee, and also the authority conferred upon me therein, do certify to the President of the United States, to the Secretary of State of the United States at Washington, District of Columbia, to the President of the Senate of the United States, and to the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States, that the attached paper is a true and perfect copy of Senate Joint Resolution Number 1, ratifying an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, declaring that the rights of the citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex, and that the Congress shall have power to enforce said article by appropriate legislation, as set out in said resolution; and that same was passed and adopted by the first extra session of the Sixty-First General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, constitutionally called to meet and convened at the Capitol, in the city of Nashville on August 9, 1920, thereby ratifying said proposed Nineteenth Amendment to the said Constitution of the United States of America, in manner and form appearing on the Journals of the two houses of the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, true, full and correct transcript of all entries pertaining to which said Resolution Number 1, are attached hereto and made part hereof.

In Witness Whereof, I hereunto signed my name as Governor of the State of Tennessee, and have affixed hereto the Great Seal of the State of Tennessee, at the Capitol, in the city of Nashville, Tennessee, on this the twenty-fourth day of August, 1920, at 10-17 C. E. Stiles.

Governor of the State of Tennessee.
As America grew, Americans were destroying its NATURAL RESOURCES. Farmers were depleting the nutrients of the overworked soil. Miners removed layer after layer of valuable topsoil, leading to catastrophic erosion. Everywhere forests were shrinking and wildlife was becoming more scarce.

The Sierra Club

The growth of cities brought a new interest in preserving the old lands for future generations. Dedicated to saving the wilderness, the SIERRA CLUB formed in 1892. JOHN MUIR, the president of the Sierra Club, worked valiantly to stop the sale of public lands to private developers. At first, most of his efforts fell on deaf ears. Then Theodore Roosevelt inhabited the Oval Office, and his voice was finally heard.

Roosevelt Protects Public Lands

Roosevelt was an avid outdoorsman. He hunted, hiked, and camped whenever possible. He believed that living in nature was good for the body and soul. Although he proved willing to compromise with Republican conservatives on many issues, he was dedicated to protecting the nation’s public lands.

The first measure he backed was the NEWLANDS RECLAMATION ACT OF 1902. This law encouraged developers and homesteaders to inhabit lands that were useless without massive irrigation works. The lands were sold at a cheap price if the buyer assumed the cost of irrigation and lived on the land for at least five years. The government then used the revenue to irrigate additional lands. Over a million barren acres were rejuvenated under this program.

John Muir and Teddy Roosevelt were more than political acquaintances. In 1903, Roosevelt took a vacation by camping with Muir in YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK. The two agreed that making efficient use of public lands was not enough. Certain wilderness areas should simply be left undeveloped.
2.10. Progressive Achievements During the Teddy Roosevelt Administration

Under an 1891 law that empowered the President to declare national forests and withdraw public lands from development, Roosevelt began to preserve wilderness areas. By the time he left office 150,000,000 acres had been deemed national forests, forever safe from the ax and saw. This amounted to three times the total protected lands since the law was enacted.

In 1907, Congress passed a law blocking the President from protecting additional territory in six western states. In typical Roosevelt fashion, he signed the bill into law — but not before protecting 16 million additional acres in those six states.

**Conservation Fever**

Conservation fever spread among urban intellectuals as a result. By 1916, there were sixteen national parks with over 300,000 annual visitors. The BOY SCOUTS and GIRL SCOUTS formed to give urban youths a greater appreciation of nature. Memberships in conservation and wildlife societies soared.

Teddy Roosevelt distinguished himself as the greatest Presidential advocate of the environment since Thomas Jefferson. Much damage had been done, but America’s beautiful, abundant resources were given a new lease on life.

**ROOSEVELT’S SQUARE DEAL**

The Square Deal was Roosevelt’s domestic program formed on three basic ideas: conservation of natural resources, control of corporations, and consumer protection. In general, the Square Deal attacked plutocracy and bad trusts while simultaneously protecting businesses from the most extreme demands of organized labor. In contrast to his predecessor William McKinley, Roosevelt believed that such government action was necessary to mitigate social evil, and as president he denounced "the representatives of predatory wealth" as guilty of "all forms of iniquity from the oppression of wage workers to defrauding the public." Trusts and monopolies became the primary target of Square Deal legislation.

During both his terms, Roosevelt tried to extend the Square Deal by pushing the federal courts and Congress to yield to the wishes of the executive branch on all subsequent anti-trust suits. An example of this was the Elkins Act, which stated that railroads were not allowed to give rebates to favored companies any longer. These rebates had treated small Midwestern farmers unfairly by not allowing them equal access to the services of the railroad. Instead,
the Interstate Commerce Commission controlled the prices that railroads could charge.

More legislation was passed to protect consumers from tainted or mislabeled food and medical products. Guidelines were imposed that specified how meat was to be processed safely and with proper sanitation methods. Foodstuffs and drugs could no longer be mislabeled, nor could consumers be deliberately misled by food and drug companies. Roosevelt also fought strongly for land conservation, and safeguarded millions of hectares of wilderness from commercial exploitation.

In addition to the Elkins Act and Consumer Safety Laws, other Square Deal legislation included:

1. The Antiquities Act of 1906, which gave the president authority to restrict use of particular public land.

2. The Hepburn Act of 1906 strengthened the Interstate Commerce Commission (prior to this law, the commission had minimal resources to carry out its duties)

3. The Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 and the Meat Inspection Act of 1906 were both widely accredited to Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle, which revealed the horrific and unsanitary processes of meat production.

- Theodore Roosevelt: Domestic Affairs
2.10. Progressive Achievements During the Teddy Roosevelt Administration

- The Square Deal: Theodore Roosevelt and the Themes
- Theodore Roosevelt: Famous “Square Deal” Quotation

PURSE FOOD AND DRUG ACT

- Federal Food and Drugs Act of 1906
- Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906

MEAT INSPECTION ACT

- Federal Meat Inspection Act
- Meat Inspection Act
Progressives did not come only in the Republican flavor. THOMAS WOODROW WILSON also saw the need for change.

Born in Staunton, Virginia, Wilson served as president of Princeton University and governor of New Jersey. He combined a southern background with northern sensibilities.

**Attacking the Triple Wall of Privilege**

His 1912 platform for change was called the NEW FREEDOM. Wilson was an admirer of Thomas Jefferson. The agrarian utopia of small, educated farmers envisioned by Jefferson struck a chord with Wilson. Of course, the advent of industry could not be denied, but a nation of small farmers and small businesspeople seemed totally possible. The New Freedom sought to achieve this vision by attacking what Wilson called the TRIPLE WALL OF PRIVILEGE — the tariff, the banks, and the trusts.

Tariffs protected the large industrialists at the expense of small farmers. Wilson signed the UNDERWOOD-SIMMONS ACT into law in 1913, which reduced tariff rates. The banking system also pinched small farmers and entrepreneurs. The gold standard still made currency too tight, and loans were too expensive for the average American. Wilson signed the FEDERAL RESERVE ACT, which made the nation’s currency more flexible.

Unlike Roosevelt, Wilson did not distinguish between "good" trusts and "bad" trusts. Any trust by virtue of its large size was bad in Wilson’s eyes. The CLAYTON ANTITRUST ACT OF 1914 clarified the Sherman Act by specifically naming certain business tactics illegal. This same act also exempted labor unions from antitrust suits, and declared strikes, boycotts, and peaceful picketing perfectly legal.

In two years, he successfully attacked each "wall of privilege." Now his eyes turned to greater concerns, particularly the outbreak of the First World War in Europe.
Appeasing the Bull Moose

When Wilson’s first term expired, he felt he had to do more. The nation was on the brink of entering the bloodiest conflict in human history, and Wilson had definite ideas about how the postwar peace should look. But he would have to survive reelection first.

As an appeal to the Roosevelt progressives, he began to sign many legislative measures suggested by the BULL MOOSE CAMPAIGN. He approved of the creation of a federal trade commission to act as a watchdog over business. A child labor bill and a workers’ compensation act became law. Wilson agreed to limit the workday of interstate railroad workers to 8 hours. He signed a FEDERAL FARM LOAN ACT to ease the pains of life on the farm.

Progressive Republicans in the Congress were pleased by Wilson’s conversion to their brand of progressivism, and the American people showed their approval by electing him to a second term.
2.12 African Americans Exit the South

AFRICAN AMERICANS EXIT THE SOUTH

It was time for a cultural celebration. African Americans had endured centuries of slavery and the struggle for abolition. The end of bondage had not brought the promised land many had envisioned. Instead, white supremacy was quickly, legally, and violently restored to the New South, where ninety percent of African Americans lived. Starting in about 1890, African Americans migrated to the North in great numbers. This GREAT MIGRATION eventually relocated hundreds of thousands of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North. Many discovered they had shared common experiences in their past histories and their uncertain present circumstances. Instead of wallowing in self-pity, the recently dispossessed ignited an explosion of cultural pride. Indeed, African American culture was reborn in the HARLEM RENAISSANCE.

The Great Migration

The Great Migration began because of a "push" and a "pull." Disenfranchisement and Jim Crow laws led many African Americans to hope for a new life up north. Hate groups and hate crimes cast alarm among African American families of the Deep South. The promise of owning land had not materialized. Most blacks toiled as sharecroppers trapped in an endless cycle of debt. In the 1890s, a boll weevil blight damaged the cotton crop throughout the region,
increasing the despair. All these factors served to push African Americans to seek better lives. The booming northern economy forged the pull. Industrial jobs were numerous, and factory owners looked near and far for sources of cheap labor.

Unfortunately, northerners did not welcome African Americans with open arms. While the legal systems of the northern states were not as obstructionist toward African American rights, the prejudice among the populace was as acrimonious. White laborers complained that African Americans were flooding the employment market and lowering wages. Most new migrants found themselves segregated by practice in run down urban slums. The largest of these was Harlem. Writers, actors, artists, and musicians glorified African American traditions, and at the same time created new ones.

Writers and Actors

The most prolific writer of the Harlem Renaissance was LANGSTON HUGHES. Hughes cast off the influences of white poets and wrote with the rhythmic meter of blues and jazz. CLAUDE MCKAY urged African Americans to stand up for their rights in his powerful verses. JEAN TOOMER wrote plays and short stories, as well as poems, to capture the spirit of his times. Book publishers soon took notice and patronized many of these talents. ZORA NEALE HURSTON was noticed quickly with her moving novel, THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD. Music met prose in the form of musical comedy. The 1921 production of SHUFFLE ALONG is sometimes credited with initiating the movement. Actor PAUL ROBESON electrified audiences with his memorable stage performances.

Musicians

No aspect of the Harlem Renaissance shaped America and the entire world as much as jazz. JAZZ flouted many musical conventions with its syncopated rhythms and improvised instrumental solos. Thousands of city dwellers flocked night after night to see the same performers. IMPROVISATION meant that no two performances would ever be the same. Harlem’s COTTON CLUB boasted the talents of DUKE ELLINGTON. Singers such as BESSIE SMITH and BILLIE HOLIDAY popularized blues and jazz vocals. JELLY ROLL MORTON and LOUIS ARMSTRONG drew huge audiences as white Americans as well as African Americans caught jazz fever.

The continuing hardships faced by African Americans in the Deep South and the urban North were severe. It took the environment of the new American city to bring in close proximity some of the greatest minds of the day. Harlem brought notice to great works that might otherwise have been lost or never produced. The results were phenomenal. The artists of the Harlem Renaissance undoubtedly transformed African American culture. But the impact on all American culture was equally strong. For the first time, white America could not look away.
AMERICAN IMPERIALISM?

Since the early days of Jamestown colony, Americans were constantly stretching their boundaries to encompass more territory. When the United States government was formed, the practice continued. The first half of the 19th century was spent defining the nation’s borders through negotiation and war, and the second half was spent populating the fruits of the labor. As the 20th century dawned, many believed that the expansion should continue.

Many different groups pushed for AMERICAN EXPANSION OVERSEAS. Industrialists sought new markets for their products and sources for cheaper resources. Nationalists claimed that colonies were a hallmark of national prestige. The European powers had already claimed much of the globe; America would have to compete or perish. Missionaries continually preached to spread their messages of faith. Social Darwinists such as Josiah Strong believed that American civilization was superior to others and that it was an American’s duty to diffuse its benefits. Alfred Thayer Mahan wrote an influential thesis declaring that throughout history, those that controlled the seas controlled the world. Acquiring naval bases at strategic points around the world was imperative.
Before 1890, American lands consisted of little more than the contiguous states and Alaska. By the end of World War I, America could boast a global empire. American Samoa and Hawaii were added in the 1890s by force. The Spanish-American War brought Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines under the American flag. The ROOSEVELT COROLLARY to the Monroe Doctrine declared the entire western hemisphere an American sphere of influence. Through initial negotiation and eventual intimidation, the United States secured the rights to build and operate an isthmian canal in Panama. The German naval threat in World War I prompted the purchase of the VIRGIN ISLANDS from Denmark in 1917.

The country that had once fought to throw off imperial shackles was now itself an empire. With the economic and strategic benefits came the expected difficulties. Filipinos fought a bloody struggle for independence. America became entangled with distant conflicts to defend the new claims. Regardless of the nobility or self-interest of the intent, the United States was now poised to claim its role as a world power in the 20th century.

**EARLY SIGNS OF IMPERIALISM**

![Capture of Fort San Antonio de Abad, Malate, Philippines, 13 August 1898. First U.S. flag is hoisted over the fort, which had been bombarded by U.S. warships, including USS Olympia, and captured by troops of the U.S. Army First Colorado Volunteer Regiment. Note extensive damage from shellfire.](image)

Manifest destiny did not die when Americans successfully lay claim to the West Coast. The newly won territory was the source of heated argument in the 1850s and a major reason for the War Between the States. Once the Union was patched back together, Americans were mostly content with settling the land already under the United States flag. But as the decades passed and America grew strong with industrial might, the desire to spread the eagle's wings over additional territory came back into vogue. Between 1890 and the start of World War I, the United States earned a seat at the table of imperial powers.

**Purchase of Alaska**

When WILLIAM SEWARD proposed the purchase of ALASKA in 1867, his peers thought he had gone mad. RUSSIAN AMERICA, as it was called, was a vast frozen wasteland surely not worth 7.2 million American dollars. "SEWARD'S FOLLY," some scoffed. "SEWARD'S ICEBOX," others razzed. The Senate saw the potential of its vast natural resources and approved the treaty, but the House stalled the purchase of the "Polar Bear Garden" for over a year. Not too much attention was paid to the new acquisition at first. Americans were too busy mending the fractured Union and then settling the continental West.
Five Near Wars

By the middle of the 1890s, it was clear that Americans were looking outward. Five near wars dotted the first half of the decade. The Samoan Islands of the South Pacific were coveted by Britain, Germany, and the United States. In 1889, the American and German navies almost exchanged gunfire before a settlement dividing the islands among the three powers could be reached. In 1891, when eleven Italians were brutally lynched in New Orleans, the United States approached a state of war with Italy before a compromise was arranged. A similar situation erupted the following year in Chile. This time, two American sailors were killed in a bar in Valparaiso. The United States government forced the Chileans to pay compensation to avoid war. Even our neighbors to the North were not immune. A fracas over seal hunting rights near Alaska caused tempers to flare. In 1895, Great Britain insisted that the boundary of its British Guiana colony included gold-enriched forest land that was also claimed by Venezuela. President Cleveland cited the Monroe Doctrine as a reason to keep the British in their own hemisphere. Threatening war with Britain if they failed to submit their claim to arbitration, the United States defended its influence in the Western Hemisphere.

The signs were clear. It had been fifty years since the United States had waged war with a foreign power, and Americans seemed to be in the mood for a fight. Little disturbances involving the likes of Venezuela, Chile, and American Samoa would not state the desire to expand or prove America’s new strength to the entire world. Soon new territories were seized, and the war that seemed inevitable finally arrived.

ANNEXATION OF HAWAII

FIGURE 2.57
Ali‘iolani Hale, completed in 1874, was the home of the Hawaiian Legislature in the days before annexation.
By the time the United States got serious about looking beyond its own borders to conquer new lands, much of the world had already been claimed. Only a few distant territories in Africa and Asia and remote islands in the Pacific remained free from imperial grasp. Hawaii was one such plum. Led by a hereditary monarch, the inhabitants of the kingdom prevailed as an independent state. American expansionists looked with greed on the strategically located islands and waited patiently to plan their move.

**Foothold in Hawaii**

Interest in **Hawaii** began in America as early as the 1820s, when New England missionaries tried in earnest to spread their faith. Since the 1840s, keeping European powers out of Hawaii became a principal foreign policy goal. Americans acquired a true foothold in Hawaii as a result of the **SUGAR TRADE**. The United States government provided generous terms to Hawaiian sugar growers, and after the Civil War, profits began to swell. A turning point in U.S.-Hawaiian relations occurred in 1890, when Congress approved the **MCKINLEY TARIFF**, which raised import rates on foreign sugar. Hawaiian sugar planters were now being undersold in the American market, and as a result, a depression swept the islands. The sugar growers, mostly white Americans, knew that if Hawaii were to be **ANNEXED** by the United States, the tariff problem would naturally disappear. At the same time, the Hawaiian throne was passed to **QUEEN LILIUOKALANI**, who determined that the root of Hawaii’s problems was foreign interference. A great showdown was about to unfold.

**Annexing Hawaii**

In January 1893, the planters staged an uprising to overthrow the Queen. At the same time, they appealed to the United States armed forces for protection. Without Presidential approval, marines stormed the islands, and the American minister to the islands raised the stars and stripes in **HONOLULU**. The Queen was forced to abdicate, and the matter was left for Washington politicians to settle. By this time, Grover Cleveland had been inaugurated President. Cleveland was an outspoken anti-imperialist and thought Americans had acted shamefully in Hawaii. He withdrew the annexation treaty from the Senate and ordered an investigation into potential wrongdoings. Cleveland aimed to restore Liliuokalani to her throne, but American public sentiment strongly favored annexation.

The matter was prolonged until after Cleveland left office. When war broke out with Spain in 1898, the military significance of Hawaiian naval bases as a way station to the **SPANISH PHILIPPINES** outweighed all other considerations. President William McKinley signed a joint resolution annexing the islands, much like the manner in which Texas joined the Union in 1845. Hawaii remained a territory until granted statehood as the fiftieth state in 1959.

**“REMEMBER THE MAINE!”**

There was more than one way to acquire more land. If the globe had already been claimed by imperial powers, the United States could always seize lands held by others. Americans were feeling proud of their growing industrial and military prowess. The long-dormant Monroe Doctrine could finally be enforced. Good sense suggested that when
treading on the toes of empires, America should start small. In 1898, Spain was weak and Americans knew it. Soon the opportunity to strike arose.

Involvement in Cuba

FIGURE 2.59
The U.S.S. Maine in Havana harbor, January, 1898

CUBA became the nexus of Spanish-American tensions. Since 1895, Cubans had been in open revolt against Spanish rule. The following year, Spain sent GENERAL VALERIANO WEYLER to Cuba to sedate the rebels. Anyone suspected of supporting independence was removed from the general population and sent to concentration camps. Although few were summarily executed, conditions at the camps led over 200,000 to die of disease and malnutrition. The news reached the American mainland through the newspapers of the yellow journalists. William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer were the two most prominent publishers who were willing to use sensational headlines to sell papers. Hearst even sent the renowned painter FREDERICK REMINGTON to Cuba to depict Spanish misdeeds. The American public was appalled.

The Sinks

In February 1898, relations between the United States and Spain deteriorated further. DUPUY DE LÔME, the Spanish minister to the United States had written a stinging letter about President McKinley to a personal friend. The letter was stolen and soon found itself on the desk of Hearst, who promptly published it on February 9. After public outcry, de Lôme was recalled to Spain and the Spanish government apologized. The peace was short-lived, however. On the evening of February 15, a sudden and shocking explosion tore a hole in the hull of the American battleship MAINE, which had been on patrol in HAVANA HARBOR. The immediate assumption was that the sinking of the Maine and the concomitant deaths of 260 sailors was the result of Spanish treachery. Although no conclusive results have ever been proven, many Americans had already made up their minds, demanding an immediate declaration of war.

McKinley proceeded with prudence at first. When the Spanish government agreed to an armistice in Cuba and an end to concentration camps, it seemed as though a compromise was in reach. But the American public, agitated by the yellow press and American imperialists, demanded firm action. "REMEMBER THE MAINE, TO HELL WITH SPAIN!" was the cry. On April 11, 1898, McKinley asked the Congress for permission to use force in Cuba. To send a message to the rest of the world that the United States was interested in Cuban independence instead of American colonization, Congress passed the TELLER AMENDMENT, which promised that America would not annex the precious islands. After that conscience-clearing measure, American leaders threw caution to the wind and declared open warfare on the Spanish throne.
The United States was simply unprepared for war. What Americans had in enthusiastic spirit, they lacked in military strength. The navy, although improved, was simply a shadow of what it would become by World War I. The United States Army was understaffed, underequipped, and undertrained. The most recent action seen by the army was fighting the Native Americans on the frontier. Cuba required summer uniforms; the US troops arrived with heavy woolen coats and pants. The food budget paid for substandard provisions for the soldiers. What made these daunting problems more manageable was one simple reality. Spain was even less ready for war than the United States.

**Battle of Manila Bay**

Prior to the building of the Panama Canal, each nation required a two-ocean navy. The major portion of Spain’s Pacific fleet was located in the Spanish Philippines at MANILA BAY. Under orders from Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt, ADMIRAL GEORGE DEWEY descended upon the Philippines prior to the declaration of war. Dewey was in the perfect position to strike, and when given his orders to attack on May 1, 1898, the American navy was ready. Those who look back with fondness on American military triumphs must count the BATTLE OF MANILA BAY as one of the greatest success stories. The larger, wooden Spanish fleet was no match for the newer American steel navy. After Dewey’s guns stopped firing, the entire Spanish squadron was a hulking
disaster. The only American casualty came from sunstroke. The Philippines remained in Spanish control until the army had been recruited, trained, and transported to the Pacific.

**Invading Cuba**

The situation in Cuba was far less pretty for the Americans. At the outbreak of war the United States was out-numbered 7 to 1 in army personnel. The invading force led by **General William Shafter** landed rather uneventfully near **Santiago**. The real glory of the Cuban campaign was grabbed by the Rough Riders. Comprising cowboys, adventurous college students, and ex-convicts, the Rough Riders were a volunteer regiment commanded by **Leonard Wood**, but organized by Theodore Roosevelt. Supported by two African American regiments, the Rough Riders charged up **San Juan Hill** and helped Shafter bottle the Spanish forces in Santiago harbor. The war was lost when the Spanish Atlantic fleet was destroyed by the pursuing American forces.

**Treaty of Paris**

The **Treaty of Paris** was most generous to the winners. The United States received the Philippines and the islands of **Guam** and **Puerto Rico**. Cuba became independent, and Spain was awarded $20 million dollars for its losses. The treaty prompted a heated debate in the United States. **Anti-imperialists** called the US hypocritical for condemning European empires while pursuing one of its own. The war was supposed to be about freeing Cuba, not seizing the Philippines. Criticism increased when Filipino rebels led by Emilio Aguinaldo waged a 3-year insurrection against their new American colonizers. While the Spanish-American War lasted ten weeks and resulted in 400 battle deaths, the **Philippine Insurrection** lasted nearly three years and claimed 4000 American lives. Nevertheless, President McKinley’s expansionist policies were supported by the American public, who seemed more than willing to accept the blessings and curses of their new expanding empire.

**FORAKER ACT**

On April 2, 1900, **U.S. President McKinley** signed a civil law that established a civilian government in Puerto Rico. This law was known as the Foraker Act for its sponsor, Joseph Benson Foraker (an Ohio statesman), and also as the Organic Act of 1900. The new government had a governor and an executive council appointed by the President, a House of Representatives with 35 elected members, a judicial system with a Supreme Court, and a non-voting Resident Commissioner in Congress. In addition, all federal laws of the United States were to be in effect on the island. The first civil governor of the island under the Foraker Act was Charles H. Allen, inaugurated on May 1, 1900 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

**THE ROOSEVELT COROLLARY AND LATIN AMERICA**

For many years, the Monroe Doctrine was practically a dead letter. The bold proclamation of 1823 that declared the Western Hemisphere forever free from European expansion bemused the imperial powers who knew the United States was simply too weak to enforce its claim. By 1900, the situation had changed. A bold, expanding America was spreading its wings, daring the old world order to challenge its newfound might. When Theodore Roosevelt became President, he decided to reassert Monroe’s old declaration.

**TELLER AMENDMENT**

In April 1898 Senator Henry M. Teller (Colorado) proposed an amendment to the U.S. declaration of war against Spain which proclaimed that the United States would not establish permanent control over Cuba. It stated that the United States "hereby disclaims any disposition of intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction, or control over
said island except for pacification thereof, and asserts its determination, when that is accomplished, to leave the
government and control of the island to its people.” The Senate passed the amendment on April 19. True to the letter
of the Teller Amendment, after Spanish troops left the island in 1898, the United States occupied Cuba until 1902.
The Teller Amendment was succeeded by the Platt Amendment introduced by Senator Orville Platt (R-Connecticut)
in February 1901.

The Platt Amendment

Cuba became the foundation for a new **LATIN AMERICAN POLICY**. Fearful that the new nation would be prey
to the imperial vultures of Europe, United States diplomats sharpened American talons on the island. In the **PLATT
AMENDMENT OF 1901**, Cuba was forbidden from entering any treaty that might endanger their independence.
In addition, to prevent European gunboats from landing on Cuban shores, Cuba was prohibited from incurring a
large debt. If any of these conditions were violated, Cuba agreed to permit American troops to land to restore order.
Lastly, the United States was granted a lease on a naval base at **GUANTANAMO BAY**. Independent in name only,
Cuba became a legal **PROTECTORATE** of the United States.

Roosevelt Corollary

Convinced that all of Latin America was vulnerable to European attack, President Roosevelt dusted off the Monroe
Doctrine and added his own corollary. While the Monroe Doctrine blocked further expansion of Europe in the
Western Hemisphere, the Roosevelt Corollary went one step further. Should any Latin American nation engage in "**CHRONIC WRONGDOING**," a phrase that included large debts or civil unrest, the United States military would intervene. Europe was to remain across the Atlantic, while America would police the Western Hemisphere. The first opportunity to enforce this new policy came in 1905, when the **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC** was in jeopardy
of invasion by European debt collectors. The United States invaded the island nation, seized its customs houses, and
ruled the Dominican Republic as a protectorate until the situation was stabilized.
A Big Stick

The effects of the new policy were enormous. Teddy Roosevelt had a motto: "SPEAK SOFTLY AND CARRY A BIG STICK." To Roosevelt, the big stick was the new American navy. By remaining firm in resolve and possessing the naval might to back its interests, the United States could simultaneously defend its territory and avoid war. Latin Americans did not look upon the corollary favorably. They resented U.S. involvement as YANKEE IMPERIALISM, and animosity against their large neighbor to the North grew dramatically. By the end of the 20th century, the United States would send troops of invasion to Latin America over 35 times, establishing an undisputed sphere of influence throughout the hemisphere.

OPPORTUNITIES IN ASIA CANNOT BE IGNORED

The United States could not ignore the largest continent on earth forever. Since COMMODORE MATTHEW PERRY "opened" Japan in 1854, trade with Asia was a reality, earning millions for American merchants and manufacturers. Slowly but surely the United States acquired holdings in the region, making the ties even stronger. Already Alaska, Hawaii, and American Samoa flew the American flag. The Spanish-American War brought Guam and the Philippines as well. These territories needed supply routes and defense, so ports of trade and naval bases became crucial.

Open Door Policy

The most populous nation on earth was already divided between encroaching European empires. China still had an emperor and system of government, but the foreign powers were truly in control. Although the Chinese Empire was not carved into colonies such as Africa, Europe did establish quasi-colonial entities called SPHERES OF INFLUENCE after 1894. Those enjoying special privileges in this fashion included Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and Japan. Secretary of State John Hay feared that if these nations established trade practices that excluded other nations, American trade would suffer. Britain agreed and Hay devised a strategy to preserve open trade. He
circulated letters among all the powers called **OPEN DOOR NOTES**, requesting that all nations agree to free trade in China. While Britain agreed, all the other powers declined in private responses. Hay, however, lied to the world and declared that all had accepted. The imperial powers, faced with having to admit publicly to greedy designs in China, remained silent and the Open Door went into effect.

**The Boxer Rebellion**

In 1900, foreign occupation of China resulted in disaster. A group of Chinese nationalists called the **FISTS OF RIGHTHEOUS HARMONY** attacked Western property. The **BOXERS**, as they were known in the West, continued to wreak havoc until a multinational force invaded to stop the uprising. The **BOXER REBELLION** marked the first time United States armed forces invaded another continent without aiming to acquire the territory. The rebels were subdued, and China was forced to pay an indemnity of $330 million to the United States.

**Nobel Peace Prize for Roosevelt**

Japan was also a concern for the new imperial America. In 1904, war broke out between **RUSSIA AND JAPAN**. The war was going poorly for the Russians. Theodore Roosevelt offered to mediate the peace process as the war dragged on. The two sides met with Roosevelt in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and before long, a treaty was arranged. Despite agreeing to its terms, the Japanese public felt that Japan should have been awarded more concessions. Anti-American rioting swept the island. Meanwhile, Roosevelt was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts. This marked the first time an American President received such an offer.

Relations with Japan remained icy. In California, **JAPANESE IMMIGRANTS** to America were faced with harsh discrimination, including segregated schooling. In the informal **GENTLEMAN’S AGREEMENT OF 1907**, the United States agreed to end the practice of separate schooling in exchange for a promise to end Japanese immigration. That same year, Roosevelt decided to display his "big stick," the new American navy. He sent the flotilla, known around the world as the **GREAT WHITE FLEET**, on a worldwide tour. Although it was meant to intimidate potential aggressors, particularly Japan, the results of the journey were uncertain. Finally, in 1908, Japan and the United States agreed to respect each other’s holdings on the Pacific Rim in the **ROOT-TAKAHIRA AGREEMENT**. Sending troops overseas, mediating international conflicts, and risking trouble to maintain free trade, the United States began to rapidly shed its **ISOLATIONIST** past.

**THE PANAMA CANAL**

![FIGURE 2.63](image_url)

A view of the Panama Canal in profile, showing the placement of the locks.
A canal was inevitable. A trip by boat from New York to San Francisco forced a luckless crew to sail around the tip of South America — a journey amounting to some 12,000 miles. The new empire might require a fast move from the Atlantic to the Pacific by a naval squadron. Teddy Roosevelt decided that the time for action was at hand. The canal would be his legacy, and he would stop at nothing to get it.

First Obstacles

There were many obstacles to such a project. The first was Great Britain. Fearing that either side would build an isthmian canal and use it for national advantage, the United States and Great Britain agreed in the 1850 CLAYTON-BULWER TREATY that neither side would build such a canal. A half century later, the now dominant United States wanted to nullify this deal. Great Britain, nervous about its SOUTH AFRICAN BOER WAR and an increasingly cloudy Europe, sought to make a friend in the United States. The HAY-PAUNCEFOTE TREATY permitted the United States to build and fortify a Central American canal, so long as the Americans promised to charge the same fares to all nations. One roadblock was clear.

Selecting Panama

The next question was where to build. FERDINAND DE LESSUPS, the same engineer who designed the SUEZ CANAL, had organized a French attempt in Panama in the 1870s. Disease and financial problems left a partially built canal behind. While it made sense that the United States should buy the rights to complete the effort, Panama posed other problems. Despite being the most narrow nation in the region, Panama was very mountainous, and a complex series of locks was necessary to move ships across the isthmus. Nicaragua was another possibility. The canal would be situated closer to the United States. The terrain was flatter, and despite Nicaragua’s width, there were numerous lakes that could be connected. Volcanic activity in Nicaragua prompted the United States to try to buy the territory in Panama.

But Panama was not an independent state. To obtain the rights to the territory, the United States had to negotiate with Colombia. The 1903 HAY-HERRAN TREATY permitted the United States to lease a six-mile wide strip of land at an annual fee. The treaty moved through the United States Senate, but the Colombian Senate held out for more money. Roosevelt was furious. Determined to build his canal, Roosevelt sent a U.S. gunboat to the shores of Colombia. At the same time, a group of “revolutionaries” declared independence in Panama. The Colombians were powerless to stop the uprising. The United States became the first nation in the world to recognize the new government of Panama. Within weeks, the HAY–BUNAU-VARILLA TREATY awarded a 10-mile strip of land to the United States, and the last hurdle was cleared.

Constructing the Canal

Or so it seemed. Construction on the canal was extremely difficult. The world had never known such a feat of engineering. Beginning in 1907, American civilians blasted through tons of mountain stone. Thanks to the work of WALTER REED and WILLIAM GORGAS, the threats of yellow fever and MALARIA were greatly diminished. When Theodore Roosevelt visited the blast area, he became the first sitting American President to travel outside the country. Finally, the deed was done. In 1914, at the cost of $345 million, the PANAMA CANAL was open for business.
2.14 Interventionists and Non-Interventionists

ALFRED T. MAHAN

In 1890, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, a lecturer in naval history and the president of the United States Naval War College, published The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783, a revolutionary analysis of the importance of naval power as a factor in the rise of the British Empire. Two years later, he completed a supplementary volume, The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793–1812.

Mahan argued that British control of the seas, combined with a corresponding decline in the naval strength of its major European rivals, paved the way for Great Britain’s emergence as the world’s dominant military, political, and economic power. Mahan and some leading American politicians believed that these lessons could be applied to U.S. foreign policy, particularly in the quest to expand U.S. markets overseas.

The 1890s were marked by social and economic unrest throughout the United States, which culminated in the onset of an economic depression between 1893 and 1894. The publication of Mahan’s books preceded much of the disorder associated with the 1890s, but his work resonated with many leading intellectuals and politicians concerned by the political and economic challenges of the period and the declining lack of economic opportunity on the American continent.

Mahan’s books complemented the work of one of his contemporaries, Professor Frederick Jackson Turner, who is best known for his seminal essay of 1893, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” An American history professor at the University of Wisconsin, Turner postulated that westward migration across the North American continent and the country’s population growth had finally led to the “closing” of the American frontier, with profound social and economic consequences. While Turner did not explicitly argue for a shift towards commercial expansion overseas, he did note that calls for a “vigorous foreign policy” were signs that Americans were increasingly looking outside the continental United States in order to satiate their desire for new economic opportunities and markets.

Mahan was one of the foremost proponents of the “vigorous foreign policy” referred to by Turner. Mahan believed that the U.S. economy would soon be unable to absorb the massive amounts of industrial and commercial goods being produced domestically, and he argued that the United States should seek new markets abroad. What concerned Mahan most was ensuring that the U.S. Government could guarantee access to these new international markets. Securing such access would require three things: a merchant navy, which could carry American products to new markets across the “great highway” of the high seas; an American battleship navy to deter or destroy rival fleets; and a network of naval bases capable of providing fuel and supplies for the enlarged navy, and maintaining open lines of communications between the United States and its new markets.
Mahan’s emphasis upon the acquisition of naval bases was not completely new. Following the Civil War, Secretary of State William Seward had attempted to expand the U.S. commercial presence in Asia by purchasing Alaska in 1867, and increasing American influence over Hawaii by concluding a reciprocity treaty that would bind the islands’ economy to that of the United States. Seward also attempted to purchase suitable Caribbean naval bases. Finally, he attempted to ratify a treaty with the Colombian Government that would allow the United States to build an isthmian canal through the province of Panama. In the wake of the Civil War, however, Congress became preoccupied with Reconstruction in the South, and the Senate rejected all of Seward’s efforts to create a network of American naval bases.

In the 1890s, Mahan’s ideas resonated with leading politicians, including Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt, and Secretary of the Navy Herbert Tracy. After the outbreak of hostilities with Spain in May 1898, President William McKinley finally secured the annexation of Hawaii by means of joint resolution of Congress. Following the successful conclusion of the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States gained control of territories that could serve as the coaling stations and naval bases that Mahan had discussed, such as Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. Five years later, the United States obtained a perpetual lease for a naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

**SENIOR ALBERT BEVERIDGE**

- Beveridge, “March of the Flag,” Speech Text
- Albert Beveridge: The March of the Flag

**MARK TWAIN**

- Mark Twain
- To the Person Sitting in Darkness
- Text 8 Reading, Topic: Empire, The Gilded and the Gritty...

**THEODORE ROOSEVELT**

- New Nationalism Speech
- Teddy Roosevelt’s New Nationalism
THEODORE ROOSEVELT’S BIG STICK DIPLOMACY

President Theodore Roosevelt’s assertive approach to Latin America and the Caribbean has often been characterized as the “Big Stick,” and his policy came to be known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.

Although the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 was essentially passive (it asked that Europeans not increase their influence or recolonize any part of the Western Hemisphere), by the 20th century a more confident United States was willing to take on the role of regional policeman. In the early 1900s Roosevelt grew concerned that a crisis between Venezuela and its creditors could spark an invasion of that nation by European powers. The Roosevelt Corollary of December 1904 stated that the United States would intervene as a last resort to ensure that other nations in the Western Hemisphere fulfilled their obligations to international creditors, and did not violate the rights of the United States or invite “foreign aggression to the detriment of the entire body of American nations.” As the corollary worked out in practice, the United States increasingly used military force to restore internal stability to nations in the region. Roosevelt declared that the United States might “exercise international police power in ‘flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence.’” Over the long term the corollary had little to do with relations between the Western Hemisphere and Europe, but it did serve as justification for U.S. intervention in Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.
WILLIAM TAFT’S DOLLAR DIPLOMACY

From 1909 to 1913, President William Howard Taft and Secretary of State Philander C. Knox followed a foreign policy characterized as “dollar diplomacy.”

Taft shared the view held by Knox, a corporate lawyer who had founded the giant conglomerate U.S. Steel, that the goal of diplomacy was to create stability and order abroad that would best promote American commercial interests. Knox felt that not only was the goal of diplomacy to improve financial opportunities, but also to use private capital to further U.S. interests overseas. “Dollar diplomacy” was evident in extensive U.S. interventions in the Caribbean and Central America, especially in measures undertaken to safeguard American financial interests in the region. In China, Knox secured the entry of an American banking conglomerate, headed by J.P. Morgan, into a European-financed consortium financing the construction of a railway from Huguang to Canton. In spite of successes, “dollar diplomacy” failed to counteract economic instability and the tide of revolution in places like Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and China.

WOODROW WILSON’S MORAL DIPLOMACY

During his tenure as president, Woodrow Wilson encouraged Americans to look beyond their economic interests and to define and set foreign policy in terms of ideals, morality, and the spread of democracy abroad.

The United States continued its efforts to become an active player on the international scene and engaged in action both in its traditional “sphere of influence” in the Western Hemisphere and in Europe during the First World War. The Wilsonian vision for collective security through American leadership in international organizations, like the newly established League of Nations, appealed to the American public, but the United States ultimately declined membership in the League due to Article X of its charter that committed the United States to defending any League member in the event of an attack. In voting down American participation, however, Congress challenged the informal
tradition of the executive branch determining U.S. foreign policy.
America in the First World War

Isolation was a long American tradition. Since the days of George Washington, Americans struggled to remain protected by the mighty oceans on its border. When European conflicts erupted, as they frequently did, many in the United States claimed exceptionalism. America was different. Why get involved in Europe’s self-destruction? When the ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY was killed in cold blood, igniting the most destructive war in human history, the initial reaction in the United States was the expected will for neutrality. As a nation of immigrants, The United States would have difficulty picking a side. Despite the obvious ties to Britain based on history and language, there were many United States citizens who claimed Germany and Austria-Hungary as their parent lands. Support of either the ALLIES or the CENTRAL POWERS might prove divisive.

In the early days of the war, as Britain and France struggled against Germany, American leaders decided it was in the national interest to continue trade with all sides as before. A neutral nation cannot impose an embargo on one side and continue trade with the other and retain its neutral status. In addition, United States merchants and manufacturers feared that a boycott would cripple the American economy. Great Britain, with its powerful navy, had different ideas. A major part of the British strategy was to impose a blockade on Germany. American trade with the Central Powers simply could not be permitted. The results of the blockade were astonishing. Trade with England and France more than tripled between 1914 and 1916, while trade with Germany was cut by over ninety percent. It was this situation that prompted submarine warfare by the Germans against Americans at sea. After two and a half years of isolationism, America entered the Great War.

The contributions of the United States military to the Allied effort were decisive. Since the Russians decided to quit the war, the Germans were able to move many of their troops from the eastern front to the stalemate in the West. The seemingly infinite supply of fresh American soldiers countered this potential advantage and was demoralizing to the Germans. American soldiers entered the bloody trenches and by November 1918, the war was over. Contributions to the war effort were not confined to the battlefield. The entire American economy was mobilized to win the war. From planting extra vegetables to keeping the furnace turned off, American civilians provided extra food and fuel to
the war effort. The United States government engaged in a massive propaganda campaign to raise troops and money. Where dissent was apparent, it was stifled, prompting many to question whether American civil liberties were in jeopardy. In the end, the war was won, but the peace was lost. The Treaty of Versailles as presented by President Wilson was rejected by the Senate. Two dangerous decades of political isolationism followed, only to end in an ever more cataclysmic war.

**Farewell to Isolation**

With American trade becoming more and more lopsided toward the Allied cause, many feared that it was only a matter of time before the United States would be at war. The issue that propelled most American fencesitters to side with the British was German submarine warfare.
The British, with the world’s largest navy, had effectively shut down German maritime trade. Because there was no hope of catching the British in numbers of ships, the Germans felt that the submarine was their only key to survival. One "U-BOAT" could surreptitiously sink many battleships, only to slip away unseen. This practice would stop only if the British would lift their blockade.

**Sinking the Lusitania**

The isolationist American public had little concern if the British and Germans tangled on the high seas. The incident that changed everything was the sinking of the LUSITANIA. The Germans felt they had done their part to warn Americans about the danger of overseas travel.

The German government purchased advertisement space in American newspapers warning that Americans who traveled on ships carrying war contraband risked submarine attack. When the Lusitania departed New York, the Germans believed the massive passenger ship was loaded with munitions in its cargo hold. On May 7, 1915, a German U-boat torpedoed the ship without warning, sending 1,198 passengers, including 128 Americans, to an icy grave. The Lusitania, as it turned out, was carrying over 4 million rounds of ammunition.

President Wilson was enraged. The British were breaking the rules, but the Germans were causing deaths.

Wilson’s Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan, recommended a ban on American travel on any ships of nations at war. Wilson preferred a tougher line against the German Kaiser. He demanded an immediate end to submarine warfare, prompting Bryan to resign in protest. The Germans began a 2-year practice of pledging to cease submarine attacks, reneging on that pledge, and issuing it again under U.S. protest.

Wilson had other reasons for leaning toward the Allied side. He greatly admired the British government, and democracy in any form was preferable to German authoritarianism. The historical ties with Britain seemed to draw the United States closer to that side.

Many Americans felt a debt to France for their help in the American Revolution. Several hundred volunteers, appropriately named the LAFAYETTE ESCADRILLES, already volunteered to fight with the French in 1916. In November of that year, Wilson campaigned for re-election with a peace platform. "He kept us out of war," read his campaign signs, and Americans narrowly returned him to the White House. But peace was not to be.

**The Zimmermann Telegram**

In February 1917, citing the unbalanced U.S. trade with the Allies, Germany announced a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. All vessels spotted in the war zone would be sunk immediately and without warning. Wilson responded by severing diplomatic relations with the German government.

Later that month, British intelligence intercepted the notorious ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM. The German foreign minister sent a message courting support from Mexico in the event the United States should enter the war. Zimmermann promised Mexico a return of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona — territories it had lost in 1848.
Relations between the U.S. and Mexico were already strained. The U.S. had sent troops across the border in search of PANCHO VILLA, who had conducted several cross-border raids of American towns. Failing to find Villa, the troops had been withdrawn only in January 1917. Despite the recent souring between Mexico and its Northern neighbor, the United States, the Mexican government declined the offer. In a calculated move, Wilson released the captured telegram to the American press.

**War Declared on Germany**

A tempest of outrage followed. More and more Americans began to label Germany as the true villain in the war. When German subs sank several American commercial ships in March, Wilson had an even stronger hand to play. On April 2, 1917, he addressed the Congress, citing a long list of grievances against Germany. Four days later, by a wide margin in each house, Congress declared war on Germany, and the U.S. was plunged into the bloodiest battle in history.

Still, the debate lived on. Two Senators and fifty Representatives voted against the war resolution, including the first female ever to sit in Congress, JEANNETTE RANKIN of Montana. Although a clear majority of Americans now supported the war effort, there were large segments of the populace who still needed convincing.
The United States was developing a nasty pattern of entering major conflicts woefully unprepared.

When Congress declared war in April 1917, the army had enough bullets for only two days of fighting. The army was small in numbers at only 200,000 soldiers. Two-fifths of these men were members of the National Guard, which had only recently been federalized. The type of warfare currently plaguing Europe was unlike any the world had ever seen.

The Western front, which ran through Belgium and France, was a virtual stalemate since the early years of the war. A system of trenches had been dug by each side. Machine-gun nests, barbed wire, and mines blocked the opposing side from capturing the enemy trench. Artillery shells, mortars, flamethrowers, and poison gas were employed to no avail.

The defensive technology was simply better than the offensive technology. Even if an enemy trench was captured,
the enemy would simply retreat into another dug fifty yards behind. Each side would repeatedly send their soldiers "over the top" of the trenches into the no man's land of almost certain death with very little territorial gain. Now young American men would be sent to these killing fields.

Feeling a Draft

The first problem was raising the necessary number of troops. Recruitment was of course the preferred method, but the needed numbers could not be reached simply with volunteers. Conscription was unavoidable, and Congress passed the **SELECTIVE SERVICE ACT** in May 1917.

All males between the ages of 21 and 30 were required to register for military service. The last time a **DRAFT** had been used resulted in great rioting because of the ability of the wealthy to purchase exemptions. This time, the draft was conducted by random lottery.

By the end of the war, over four and a half million American men, and 11,000 American women, served in the armed forces. 400,000 African Americans were called to active duty. In all, two million Americans fought in the French **TRENCHES**.

The first military measures adopted by the United States were on the seas. Joint Anglo-American operations were highly successful at stopping the dreaded submarine. Following the thinking that there is greater strength in numbers, the U.S. and Britain developed an elaborate convoy system to protect vulnerable ships. In addition, mines were placed in many areas formerly dominated by German U-boats. The campaign was so effective that not a single American soldier was lost on the high seas in transit to the Western front.

The **AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE** began arriving in France in June 1917, but the original numbers were quite small. Time was necessary to inflate the ranks of the United States Army and to provide at least a rudimentary training program. The timing was critical.

When the Bolsheviks took over Russia in 1917 in a domestic revolution, Germany signed a peace treaty with the new government. The Germans could now afford to transfer many of their soldiers fighting in the East to the deadlocked Western front. Were it not for the fresh supply of incoming American troops, the war might have followed a very different path.

The addition of the United States to the Allied effort was as elevating to the Allied morale as it was devastating to the German will. Refusing to submit to the overall Allied commander, **GENERAL JOHN PERSHING** retained independent American control over the U.S. troops.
Paris: Ooh, La La

The new soldiers began arriving in great numbers in early 1918. The "DOUGHBOYS," as they were labeled by the French were green indeed. Many fell prey to the trappings of Paris nightlife while awaiting transfer to the front. An estimated fifteen percent of American troops in France contracted venereal disease from Parisian prostitutes, costing millions of dollars in treatment.

The African American soldiers noted that their treatment by the French soldiers was better than their treatment by their white counterparts in the American army. Although the German army dropped tempting leaflets on the African American troops promising a less-racist society if the Germans would win, none took the offer seriously.

By the spring of 1918, the doughboys were seeing fast and furious action. A German offensive came within fifty miles of Paris, and American soldiers played a critical role in turning the tide at CHATEAU-THIERRY and BELLEAU WOOD. In September 1918, efforts were concentrated on dislodging German troops from the MEUSE RIVER. Finding success, the Allies chased the Germans into the trench-laden ARGONNE FOREST, where America suffered heavy casualties.

But the will and resources of the German resistance were shattered. The army retreated and on November 11, 1918, the German government agreed to an armistice. The war was over. Over 14 million soldiers and civilians perished in the so-called GREAT WAR, including 112,000 Americans. Countless more were wounded.

The bitterness that swept Europe and America would prevent the securing of a just peace, imperiling the next generation as well.

WORLD WAR I: Major Turning Points

- [HSC Online - World War I: an overview](#)

WORLD WAR I: Impact of Trench Warfare

- [The Trenches: Symbol of a Stalemate](#)
- [First World War: Trench Warfare](#)

WORLD WAR I: Use of New Weapons and Technologies

- [Newspaper Pictorials - The Increasing Power of Destruction . . .](#)
WORLD WAR I: Herbert Hoover

- The Humanitarian Years
- Herbert Hoover
- Herbert Clark Hoover: Life Before the Presidency

WORLD WAR I: John J. Pershing and the American Expeditionary Force

- The Stars and Stripes, 1918-1919: The American...
- American Forces under General Pershing Launched First...
- Records of the American Expeditionary Forces
- The Doughboy Center: The Yanks Arrive in Europe

WORLD WAR I: Alvin C. York

- Sgt. Alvin C. York State Park
- US soldier Alvin York displays heroics at Argonne
- Pall Mall, TN
- Alvin C. York Biography - Facts, Birthday, Life Story
- Sergeant Alvin York
As the war drew to a close, Woodrow Wilson set forth his plan for a "JUST PEACE." Wilson believed that fundamental flaws in international relations created an unhealthy climate that led inexorably to the World War. His FOURTEEN POINTS outlined his vision for a safer world. Wilson called for an end to secret diplomacy, a reduction of armaments, and freedom of the seas. He claimed that reductions to trade barriers, fair adjustment of colonies, and respect for national self-determination would reduce economic and nationalist sentiments that lead to war. Finally, Wilson proposed an international organization comprising representatives of all the world’s nations that would serve as a forum against allowing any conflict to escalate. Unfortunately, Wilson could not impose his world view on the victorious Allied Powers. When they met in Paris to hammer out the terms of the peace, the European leaders had other ideas.

The Paris Peace Conference

Most of the decisions made at the PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE were made by the BIG FOUR, consisting of President Wilson, DAVID LLOYD GEORGE of Great Britain, GEORGES CLEMENCEAUX of France, and VITTORIO ORLANDO of Italy. The European leaders were not interested in a just peace. They were interested in retribution. Over Wilson’s protests, they ignored the Fourteen Points one by one. Germany was to admit guilt for the war and pay unlimited reparations. The German military was reduced to a domestic police force and its territory was truncated to benefit the new nations of Eastern Europe. The territories of ALSACE AND LORRAINE were restored to France. German colonies were handed in trusteeship to the victorious Allies. No provisions were made to end secret diplomacy or preserve freedom of the seas. Wilson did gain approval for his proposal for a LEAGUE OF NATIONS. Dismayed by the overall results, but hopeful that a strong League could prevent future wars, he
returned to present the **TREATY OF VERSAILLES** to the Senate.

**Defeating the League of Nations**

Unfortunately for Wilson, he was met with stiff opposition. The Republican leader of the Senate, **HENRY CABOT LODGE**, was very suspicious of Wilson and his treaty. **ARTICLE X OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS** required the United States to respect the territorial integrity of member states. Although there was no requirement compelling an American declaration of war, the United States might be bound to impose an economic embargo or to sever diplomatic relations. Lodge viewed the League as a supranational government that would limit the power of the American government from determining its own affairs. Others believed the League was the sort of entangling alliance the United States had avoided since **GEORGE WASHINGTON’S FAREWELL ADDRESS**. Lodge sabotaged the League covenant by declaring the United States exempt from Article X. He attached reservations, or amendments, to the treaty to this effect. Wilson, bedridden from a debilitating stroke, was unable to accept these changes. He asked Senate Democrats to vote against the Treaty of Versailles unless the Lodge reservations were dropped. Neither side budged, and the treaty went down to defeat.

Why did the United States fail to ratify the Versailles Treaty and join the League of Nations? Personal enmity between Wilson and Lodge played a part. Wilson might have prudently invited a prominent Republican to accompany him to Paris to help ensure its later passage. Wilson’s fading health eliminated the possibility of making a strong personal appeal on behalf of the treaty. Ethnic groups in the United States helped its defeat. German Americans felt their fatherland was being treated too harshly. Italian Americans felt more territory should have been awarded to Italy. Irish Americans criticized the treaty for failing to address the issue of Irish independence. Diehard American isolationists worried about a permanent global involvement. The stubbornness of President Wilson led him to ask his own party to scuttle the treaty. The final results of all these factors had mammoth long term consequences. Without the involvement of the world’s newest superpower, the League of Nations was doomed to failure. Over the next two decades, the United States would sit on the sidelines as the unjust Treaty of Versailles and the ineffective League of Nations would set the stage for an even bloodier, more devastating clash.

- Treaty of Versailles - World War I - HISTORY.com
- Chapter 11 The Fourteen Points and the Versailles Treaty
- Fourteen Points
- Woodrow Wilson’s 14 Points
- Activity #1: The Fourteen Points
2.19 World War I: Homefront

OVER HERE

The First World War was a total war. In previous wars, the civilian population tried to steer clear of the war effort. Surely expectations were placed on civilians for food and clothing, and of course, since the 19th century, troops were conscripted from the general population. But modern communication and warfare required an all-out effort from the entire population. New weapons technology required excess fuel and industrial capacity. The economic costs of 20th century warfare dwarfed earlier wars, therefore extensive revenue raising was essential. Without the support of the whole population, failure was certain. Governments used every new communications technology imaginable to spread pro-war propaganda. American efforts geared to winning World War I amounted to nothing less than a national machine.

FIGURE 2.77
Originally designed as a magazine cover, James Montgomery Flagg’s image of Uncle Sam soon became the “most famous poster in the world,” with 4 million copies printed in 1917 alone.
Rallying the Country

Once Congress declared war, President Wilson quickly created the COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION under the direction of GEORGE CREEL. Creel used every possible medium imaginable to raise American consciousness. Creel organized rallies and parades. He commissioned GEORGE M. COHAN to write patriotic songs intended to stoke the fires of American nationalism. Indeed, "OVER THERE" became an overnight standard. JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG illustrated dozens of posters urging Americans to do everything from preserving coal to enlisting in the service. Flagg depicted a serious UNCLE SAM staring at young American men declaring "I Want You for the U.S. Army." His powerful images were hard to resist. An army of "FOUR-MINUTE MEN" swept the nation making short, but poignant, powerful speeches. Films and plays added to the fervor. The CREEL COMMITTEE effectively raised national spirit and engaged millions of Americans in the business of winning the war.

Dealing With Dissenters

Still there were dissenters. The American Socialist Party condemned the war effort. Irish-Americans often displayed contempt for the British ally. Millions of immigrants from Germany and Austria-Hungary were forced to support initiatives that could destroy their homelands. But this dissent was rather small. Nevertheless, the government stifled wartime opposition by law with the passing of the ESPIONAGE AND SEDITION ACTS OF 1917. Anyone found guilty of criticizing the government war policy or hindering wartime directives could be sent to jail. Many cried that this was a flagrant violation of precious civil liberties, including the right to free speech. The Supreme Court handed down a landmark decision on this issue in the SCHENCK V. UNITED STATES verdict. The majority court opinion ruled that should an individual’s free speech present a "clear and present danger" to others, the government could impose restrictions or penalties. Schenck was arrested for sabotaging the draft. The Court ruled that his behavior endangered thousands of American lives and upheld his jail sentence. Socialist Party leader Eugene V. Debs was imprisoned and ran for President from his jail cell in 1920. He polled nearly a million votes.

Frankfurters to Hot Dogs

There was a sinister side to the war hysteria. Many Americans could not discern between enemies abroad and enemies at home. German-Americans became targets for countless HATE CRIMES. On a local level, schoolchildren were pummeled on schoolyards, and yellow paint was splashed on front doors. One German-American was lynched by a mob in Collinsville, Illinois, only to be found innocent by a sympathetic jury. Colleges and high schools
stopped teaching the German language. The city of Cincinnati banned pretzels, and esteemed city orchestras refused to play music by German composers. Hamburgers, sauerkraut, and frankfurters became known as liberty meat, liberty cabbage, and hot dogs. The temperance movement received a boost by linking beer drinking with support for Germany. These undeserved crimes against innocent German-Americans went completely unpunished.

Why Victory Gardens?

Once support for the war was in full swing, the population was mobilized to produce war materiel. In 1917, the War Industries Board was established to coordinate production of munitions and supplies. The board was empowered to allocate raw materials and determine what products would be given high priority. Women shifted jobs from domestic service to heavy industry to compensate for the labor shortage owing to military service. African Americans flocked northward in greater and greater numbers in the hope of winning industry jobs. Herbert Hoover was appointed to head the Food Administration. Shortages of food in the Allied countries had led to shortages and rationing all across Western Europe. Hoover decided upon a plan that would raise the necessary foodstuffs by voluntary means. Americans were encouraged to participate in "Meatless Mondays" and "Wheatless Wednesdays." Additional food could be raised by planting "Victory Gardens" in small backyard patches or even in window boxes on fire escapes. President Wilson showed his support by allowing a flock of sheep to graze on the White House lawn. Similar measures were employed by the Fuel Administration. The government also adopted Daylight Savings Time to conserve energy.

World War I was the most expensive endeavor by the United States up to that point in history. The total cost to the American public amounted to over $110 billion. Five successful Liberty Bond Drives raised about two-thirds of that sum. Of course, bonds are loans to be paid by future generations. The first Income Tax under the Sixteenth Amendment was levied. The tax rate at the top level was 70%. All in all, great sacrifices were made on behalf of the United States people in their venture to make the world safe for democracy.