The Progressive Reform Era
1890-1920

Roots of Progressivism
• An era of ____________ movements spread throughout American society at the turn of the twentieth century. Many of these movements were an outgrowth of earlier groups such as the _____________. But while that group thrived mainly among western and southern ____________, many of the new movements arose in the ____________ of the Northeast, Midwest, and West Coast.

Nativism
• Favoring the native-born over immigrants

Essentially, many progressive reformers had prejudiced motives. They believed that the new immigrants represented an inferior class of humans that needed saving from themselves. The power of government would be used to force the necessary changes in language, behavior, and so forth. Anti-Catholic and Anti-Jewish attitudes usually prevailed among nativists.

Prohibition
• Seeking to ban the manufacture, sale, and consumption of alcohol

Progressives were deeply distressed by all of the negative consequences of alcohol consumption, including sexual immorality, domestic abuse, absenteeism from work, workplace accidents, and poor health. Immigrants and the lower classes tended to consume alcohol in greater quantities.

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• They had their roots in movements such as ____________, ____________, ____________, ____________, ____________, ____________, and _____________.

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**Purity Crusades**

- During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a variety of efforts aimed at enforcing public morality, partly through legislation, but often through individual pledges:
  - *Blue Laws* – no business on Sunday
  - *No Gambling* (that includes lotteries)
  - *No pornography or other lewd material*
  - *Etc.*

**Electoral Reform**

- A variety of initiatives aimed at reducing corruption in government and party politics

**Social Gospel**

- Emphasizing and applying Christian ethics to solving social problems such as poverty, crime, and ignorance rather than focusing on personal salvation
- Contrasted with the idea of Social Darwinism, the belief that natural selection applied to individual success or failure, prosperity or poverty

**Settlement Houses**

- Typically large buildings in immigrant neighborhoods where volunteer “settlers” lived to teach and enculturate their neighbors; aimed at reducing poverty

Hull House in Chicago (above), Jane Addams (right)
The new reformers were reacting to the effects of the era’s rapid industrialization, immigration, and urbanization. Industrialization had brought prosperity but at a cost; workers suffered from low income and cycles of unemployment. Working and living conditions for the poor were deplorable.

**Industrialization**
- Progression of a nation’s economy from primarily agricultural to primarily industrial (manufacturing)

**Immigration**
- Total number of immigrants to the United States, by decade:
  - 1860-1870: 2,081,261
  - 1870-1880: 2,742,137
  - 1880-1890: 5,248,568
  - 1890-1900: 3,694,294
  - 1900-1910: 8,202,388
  - 1910-1920: 6,347,380

- Dominant Immigrant Nationalities
  - Prior to 1880 – Germans, Irish, English (Western and Northern Europe)
  - After 1880 – Italians, Greeks, Hungarians, Poles, Slavs (Eastern and Southern Europe)

**Urbanization**
- Percentage of total US Population living in urban areas, then defined as places with at least 2,500 residents:
  - 1820: 7.2%
  - 1840: 10.8%
  - 1860: 19.8%
  - 1880: 28.2%
  - 1900: 39.6%
  - 1920: 51.2%
Working and Living Conditions

- Slum conditions were often inhuman (crowded, dirty, dangerous, etc.)
- In the 1880s, photographer Jacob Riis documented the plight of many slum-dwellers in lectures and a book called *How the Other Half Lives*
Still, foreign and rural immigrants kept seeking jobs in cities. To care for the growing populations, governments expanded public services such as water, schools, and healthcare. Political corruption and graft often kept these services inadequate. Many Progressives maintained that private charity could not do enough to improve the lives of the industrial poor.

Progressivism was not a single unified movement. Progressives did not all share the same views and included members of all political parties. They were typically people of average wealth who shared four basic beliefs: Government
1. should be more accountable
2. should curb the power of the wealthy
3. needs more power to improve lives
4. can be more efficient, less corrupt, and more competent

Henry George
- Author of Progress and Poverty
- Proposed real estate tax reform: tax the land itself rather than improvements to encourage more productive use of real estate

Edward Bellamy
- Author of the novel Looking Backward
- Promoted a utopian vision of the future in which the government would own all of the large companies and focus on meeting human needs rather than making profits

Upton Sinclair
- Author of The Jungle
- Exposed abuses in the Chicago meat-packing industry

Excerpt from The Jungle

- (The meat would be shoehorned into carts, and the men who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift out a poisoned rat even when he saw one—there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit. There was no place for the marine with foul hands before they got their dinner, and they took it a

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Lincoln Steffens
• Author of *The Shame of the Cities*
• Exposed political corruption in St. Louis and other cities

Ida Tarbell
• Author of *The History of the Standard Oil Company*
• Revealed the abuses committed by the Standard Oil Trust

This era saw a rise in the popularity of socialism, an economic and political philosophy favoring public or government control of property and income. It often attracted union members who hoped for fundamental change in the economy. Supporters wanted to end the capitalist system, distribute wealth more equally, and have government ownership of American industries.

Karl Marx
• German philosopher
• Father of Communism

Capitalism v. Communism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property owned</th>
<th>Capitalism</th>
<th>Communism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individually</td>
<td>Entrepreneurs decide how capital will be invested and property used</td>
<td>“The people” decide how capital will be invested and property used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prices set by</td>
<td>Prices set by the law of supply and demand</td>
<td>Prices set by government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market competition</td>
<td>Economic freedom (to invest, etc.) usually accompanied by political and personal freedom</td>
<td>Political and personal freedom are highly restricted by the government</td>
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Most socialists wanted to accomplish their goals through the ballot box, not through revolution. In 1901 they formed the Socialist Party of America. By 1912 the party had won more than 1,000 city government offices.

Unlike more radical reformers, most progressives did not support sweeping changes. They did not want to lose the high standard of living and personal liberties that democracy and the free-enterprise system had given them.

Rising to new levels of civic activism, women played a pivotal role in the era’s reform movements. They formed organizations around nearly every major issue. Whatever their focus, all knew that they were powerless without political rights. Because so many women and children worked in factories, women’s organizations took a special interest in workplace reforms.
Florence Kelley
• Started working for reform at Jane Addams’s Hull House in 1891
• Inspired Illinois to pass a law prohibiting child labor, limiting work hours for women, and regulating sweatshop conditions
• Went to law school so that she could sue violators of the laws
• Served as general secretary of the National Consumers’ League

Mother Jones
• Became involved with the Knights of Labor after her iron working husband died
• Worked to organize unions across the country, especially in West Virginia and Colorado
• Helped found the Industrial Workers of the World in 1905

Crises Spur Action
• On March 25, 1911 a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York. A total of 146 workers died. This tragedy helped stir powerful public support for reforms.

Bureaucratic Government
Good?
- More efficient because bureaucrats are specialized to perform their duties and thereby more professional and productive
- Government can govern without worrying about re-election consequences
- Hiring decisions can be based on merit rather than politics

Bad?
- Bureaucrats may become too concerned with extending the power of their agencies
- Some agencies can defy the public will
- Bureaucrats may become too setzen in their formal procedures
- Bureaucrats may intimidate elected officials and run the government
- People may lose interest in electoral politics if they determine that bureaucrats run things

Progressives sought increased government involvement in people’s lives, health care, and even in the content of the movies. This provoked resistance, often among the very people Progressives hoped to help. For example, progressives saw child labor laws as critical to progress, but poor families who could not survive without those wages opposed the laws. Such disputes added to the perception that the progressives were insensitive to the poor.

Most progressives opposed government control of businesses, except for companies that supplied essential services such as water and electricity. They also believed that government should be more responsible for the welfare of people. They pressed for programs such as unemployment benefits, accident and health insurance, and a social security system for the disabled and elderly.

Many of the earliest reforms were made at the municipal level. Some reformers pushed for city home rule, a system that gives them self-rule and allows them to escape from state governments controlled by political machines or by business or rural interests.
Reformers opposed the influence of political bosses. They argued that only a civil service, system based on merit, rather than favors, would keep political appointees out of important jobs, such as enforcing labor and public safety laws. Mostly, though, the bosses survived.

Catastrophes helped to prompt reforms in city government. For example, floods prompted Galveston and Dayton to create new models of government. Reformers also succeeded in regulating or dislodging the monopolies that provided city utilities such as water, gas, and electricity.

Some reform mayors led movements for city-supported welfare services. In their view, all people would become good citizens if social conditions were good.

What factors weigh most heavily on individual achievement? Biological, Cultural, or Environmental?

### Direct Primary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good?</th>
<th>Takes the choice out of the hands of corruptible power-brokers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad?</td>
<td>Puts the choice in the hands of low-information voters who are easily misled</td>
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### Initiative

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<tr>
<th>Good?</th>
<th>Voters can pass necessary laws when the legislature won’t due to the influence of special interests</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad?</td>
<td>Voters may not understand the issue or consequences of the vote</td>
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### Referendum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good?</th>
<th>Keeps power in the hands of the people</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bad?</td>
<td>Can slow down the lawmaking process</td>
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### Recall

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Good?</th>
<th>Ensures that officeholders will maintain the confidence of the people they’re elected to serve</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad?</td>
<td>Officeholders may be too concerned with their popularity and ignore their duty, the demands of justice, or hard decisions</td>
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### 17th Amendment

<table>
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<th>Good?</th>
<th>Gave the people more direct influence over the federal government</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad?</td>
<td>Senators now spend more time raising campaign donations and running for reelection, perhaps less likely to work with members of the other party</td>
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• State reformers worked to curb workplace hazards by establishing labor departments, developing accident insurance and compensation programs, and other measures.

• Some of these efforts met with legal opposition, however, as business owners contended that they interfered with their constitutional rights. The courts generally upheld these views.

• In the Supreme Court case of Lochner v. New York (1905), the Supreme Court struck down a law setting maximum hours for bakers because the law had not been shown to protect public health and therefore constituted an illegal interference with individual rights. In Muller v. Oregon (1908), however, the Supreme Court upheld maximum hours restrictions for female laundresses on evidence long hours injured women’s health.

• By 1907, nearly 2/3 of the states had abolished child labor. Minimum wage laws for women and children also advanced.
One of the most determined progressives was Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin. As governor he ousted party bosses and introduced a new way of running state government. He drew on academics and citizen committees to run regulatory agencies. The “Wisconsin idea” of a public-academic alliance became known nationwide. He later served in the US Senate and ran for president.

Beginning with President Teddy Roosevelt in 1901, the White House became a powerful voice for change. He used his powers vigorously and viewed his office as a “bully pulpit” from which to rally the public to support worthy causes. He helped to create the modern presidency, in which the chief executive is a strong political force.
Teddy Roosevelt

- Born into an affluent New York family in 1858, he suffered from asthma as a child but forced himself into physical activity
- Went to Harvard, published a book of history, and served in the NY legislature
- Death of first wife shattered him; he went to South Dakota but returned to NY politics
- Became NY City Police Commissioner, then Assistant Navy Secretary, then resigned to go to war, then became Vice President

Youngest President (42) in US history

What phrase became a slogan of Teddy Roosevelt’s presidency?

The Square Deal

How did this slogan come about?
TR used that expression in 1902 to describe a deal he arranged for the United Mine Workers that averted a critical coal shortage

Antitrust Activism

- Roosevelt’s administration filed 42 lawsuits against companies it believed were forming monopolies
- The Northern Securities Company was dissolved, while a beef trust, Standard Oil, and the American Tobacco Company were broken up or forced to reorganize
- TR did not target trusts unless he thought they were harmful

Railroad Regulation

- TR won passage of the Hepburn Act in 1906, strengthening the Interstate Commerce Commission
- The ICC gained both legislative and judicial powers (that is, it could make rules and punish violators of those rules)
- The ICC became the first true federal regulatory agency

Environmental Protection

- Yellowstone National Park, our first, was established in 1872
- Yosemite National Park was created in 1890
- Presidents Harrison and Cleveland had preserved about 35 million acres of forest land
- 1902 – National Reclamation Act set aside money from the sale of public lands to build irrigation systems in arid states
- 1905 – TR appointed Gifford Pinchot to lead the US Forest Service
- TR set aside more than 200 million acres for conservation

Protecting Public Health

- Public horror over numerous food and drug scandals convinced TR to act
- 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act
- 1906 Meat Inspection Act
- Laws required accurate labeling of ingredients, strict sanitary conditions, and a rating system for meats

Department of Labor

- 1912 – Children’s Bureau established
- 1913 – Department of Labor added as a Cabinet-level agency
- 1920 – Women’s Bureau

Both bureaus were part of the Department of Labor and were the first led by women
16th Amendment
• Granted Congress the power to levy an income tax
• Previously, the federal government relied on tariffs (import taxes) that progressives argued pushed up the price of goods and unfairly hurt the poor; an income tax would be paid by the wealthy

18th Amendment
• Prohibited the manufacture and sale of liquor
• Many progressives hoped it would protect society from the poverty and violence associated with drinking

William Howard Taft
• After Teddy Roosevelt decided not to run for another term as president, he personally picked Taft as his successor. Although he had a judicial mind and would have preferred an appointment to serve as Chief Justice (a job he would later fill), he won the presidency by defeating William Jennings Bryan in 1908.

Gifford Pinchot
• First Chief of the US Forest Service
• Later served two non-consecutive terms as Pennsylvania Governor

William Jennings Bryan
• Long career in law prior to serving as President (youngest Solicitor General in US history)
• Only person to serve as both President and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

Taft had neither Roosevelt’s energy nor strength to battle the powerful congressmen who opposed progressive reforms. Although in many ways he did fulfill his pledge to continue those reforms, he alienated progressives and caused a crisis in the Republican Party.

Soon after his election, Taft called a special session of Congress to pass tariff reductions. While the House passed some reductions, the Senate added some highly protective increases. This compromise, the Payne-Aldrich Tariff, was an improvement over the law it replaced but still infuriated progressives.
• Taft appointed Richard Ballinger to be Secretary of the Interior. Ballinger opposed conservation policies on federal lands, an opinion that caused him to clash with Gifford Pinchot, head of the US Forest Service. When Ballinger allowed a group to purchase public lands, Pinchot suggested corruption. Taft then fired Pinchot, who remained a hero to progressives while Taft’s popularity slumped.

• Angry Republican progressives in the House teamed up with Democrats, to break the control of “old-guard” House Speaker Joe Cannon, an opponent of reform. In 1910, the House passed a resolution allowing the full membership to appoint the members of the Rules Committee, which controlled the flow of legislation. The resolution also barred the Speaker from serving on the committee.

• Following Taft’s election in 1908, Roosevelt had set off on a safari to East Africa. He returned to a wildly cheering crowd in New York and a storm of protest against Taft. He soon rushed to support the progressives. He campaigned for congressional candidates under a plan called “New Nationalism.”

• Roosevelt challenged Taft for the Republican presidential nomination in 1912. Roosevelt won more votes in the primaries, but Taft controlled the party officials at the convention and won the nomination. The progressives subsequently split and ran as a third party, nicknamed the “Bull Moose” Party.

New Nationalism

• Business regulation
• Welfare laws
• Workplace protection for women and children
• Income and inheritance taxes
• Voting reform

• After the 1910 elections, Democrats controlled both the House and the Senate. Technically, Republicans were still in the majority in the Senate, but Progressive Republicans and Democrats controlled the chamber.

• This was also the first election in which a Socialist was elected to the House of Representatives.
1912 Progressive Platform

- Limit campaign contributions
- Woman suffrage
- Political reform
- Restricting court power
- Labor reform
- Social insurance system
- Research laboratories
- Graduated taxes

On October 14, 1912, **Roosevelt** was shot by a would-be assassin but continued to speak for **1.5 hours**, before seeking medical aid.

Taft’s Progressive Record

- Reserved more public land and brought more antitrust suits than Roosevelt
- Supported the Children’s Bureau, 16th Amendment, and 17th Amendment
- Supported a law to allow the ICC to regulate telephone and telegraph rates

• The Democrats chose **New Jersey** Governor Woodrow Wilson to run in 1912. Like **Roosevelt**, he ran on a reform platform. Unlike him, however, Wilson criticized both big **business** and big **government**. He called his policies “**New Freedom**.” Prior to serving as governor, Wilson was a **political science** professor and president of **Princeton** University. He believed the President should be the leader of Congress.

• The fourth major candidate in 1912 was **Socialist labor leader Eugene V. Debs**.

1912 Election Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Electoral Votes</th>
<th>Popular Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woodrow Wilson</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>6,293,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theodore Roosevelt</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>4,119,207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William H. Taft</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3,483,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugene V. Debs</td>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>901,551</td>
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Different Outcome Possible?

- Had the Republicans united behind the Roosevelt candidacy, they would have won easily (based on the combined totals of Taft and Roosevelt).
- Progressivism was the real winner, though, as every major candidate (except, arguably, Taft) supported progressive platforms.
- Taft was the most conservative, especially concerning judicial reform, of the candidates.
**Woodrow Wilson**
- Strongly favored the English Parliamentary system over the American Constitutional system.
- Believed in presidential government and party leadership.
- He injected a strong streak of moralism into his political arguments.

**Underwood Tariff Act of 1913**
- Reduced tariffs from 40% to 25%, and opened the way for Wilson to adopt a federal income tax.

**Clayton Antitrust Act**
- Spelled out specific activities that businesses could not do, such as preventing customers from buying from competitors or cutting local prices to squeeze out competitors; legalized unions and their key weapons: strike, picketing, boycotts; subsequently enforced by the Federal Trade Commission.

**Federal Reserve Act of 1913**
- Reformed the banking system by dividing the country into districts to help pool resources and prevent bank failures; created a new national currency.

**Federal Farm Loan Board**
- Farmers could borrow money for five to forty years at lower interest rates.

**Louis Brandeis**
- The appointment of Louis Brandeis to the Supreme Court marked the peak of federal progressive reforms. Brandeis faced opposition for his unflagging liberalism and due to the fact that he was the first Jewish Supreme Court Justice.

**Charles Evans Hughes**
- In 1916, Wilson was reelected by barely beating Republican nominee, Charles Evans Hughes, a former governor of New York and Supreme Court justice, who reunified his party by winning Roosevelt's endorsement.

**By the mid-1910s, Progressives had made broad changes in society, government, and business.** They had redefined and enlarged the role of government, but their influence was limited in other sectors. Progressives did little to aid migrant farmers and non-unionized workers. Many progressives supported immigration limits and literacy tests for voting (which discriminated against minorities).
The progressive presidents did little to pursue social reforms. Wilson allowed his officers to extend the practice of separating races in federal offices. He had also opposed a constitutional amendment on women’s suffrage. The progressives did very little for African-Americans.

By the end of 1916, as calls to prepare for war drowned out calls for reform, the reform spirit nearly sputtered out.

For roughly 70 years, women’s organizations campaigned for the right to vote. Many viewed the idea as unnecessary at best or a threat to the stability of society at worst. Would women become too masculine? Would they be easily manipulated? Would politics distract them from their duties in the home? Furthermore, many women simply did not want to vote.

American women activists first formally demanded the right to vote in 1848 at the Seneca Falls Convention in New York. The meeting made famous the names of Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. A few years later, they were joined by Susan B. Anthony.
Lucretia Mott
• Early abolitionist and woman suffragist
• A Quaker minister
• Co-founder of Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania

Elizabeth Cady Stanton
• Abolitionist
• Temperance crusader
• Held many more radical opinions than most contemporaries
• Woman suffragist who authored the Statement of Sentiments at Seneca Falls

Susan B. Anthony
• Fought for temperance, abolition, and education as well as woman suffrage
• Led the National Woman Suffrage Association
• Modeled civil disobedience by getting arrested for voting in 1872
• Co-founded the National American Woman Suffrage Association

• The movement they started split into two groups: the National Woman Suffrage Association fought for an amendment for suffrage, while the American Woman Suffrage Association worked on the state level. When Wyoming joined the union in 1890, it became the first state to grant full suffrage.

• The state-level approach proved more successful at first, especially in the western states where survival on the frontier encouraged a greater sense of equality between the sexes. A federal amendment was proposed repeatedly after 1868, but never got very far prior to 1913.

NAWSA vs. CU
• National American Woman Suffrage Association followed a more moderate approach
  – Precinct by precinct organization, parades, etc.
• Congressional Union called for an aggressive, militant campaign
  – Radical demonstrations, civil disobedience, hunger strikes

• In 1917, New York voted for women’s suffrage, ensuring that presidential candidates would pay more attention to women’s interests. In 1918, Prohibition was adopted, so liquor interests no longer had a reason to oppose woman suffrage. Congress was also embarrassed by the way suffragists were being treated in jail. The suffrage amendment was introduced in 1919 and ratified in 1920.