

PERIOD 6: 1865–1898

The transformation of the United States from an agricultural to an increasingly industrialized and urbanized society brought about significant economic, political, diplomatic, social, environmental, and cultural changes.

Key Concept 6.1: The rise of big business in the United States encouraged massive migrations and urbanization, sparked government and popular efforts to reshape the U.S. economy and environment, and renewed debates over U.S. national identity.

1. Large-scale production — accompanied by massive technological change, expanding international communication networks, and pro-growth government policies — fueled the development of a “Gilded Age” marked by an emphasis on consumption, marketing, and business consolidation.
 - a. Following the Civil War, government subsidies for transportation and communication systems opened new markets in North America, while technological innovations and redesigned financial and management structures such as monopolies sought to maximize the exploitation of natural resources and a growing labor force.
 - b. Businesses and foreign policymakers increasingly looked outside U.S. borders in an effort to gain greater influence and control over markets and natural resources in the Pacific, Asia, and Latin America.
 - c. Business leaders consolidated corporations into trusts and holding companies and defended their resulting status and privilege through theories such as Social Darwinism.

Examples:

- John D. Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan

- d. As cities grew substantially in both size and in number, some segments of American society enjoyed lives of extravagant “conspicuous consumption,” while many others lived in relative poverty.
2. As leaders of big business and their allies in government aimed to create a unified industrialized nation, they were challenged in different ways by Populists and labor movements.
 - a. The industrial workforce expanded through migration (from Southern and Eastern Europe) across national borders and internal migration, leading to a more diverse workforce, lower wages, and an increase in child labor.
 - b. Labor and management battled for control over wages and working conditions, with workers organizing local and national unions and/or directly confronting corporate power.

Examples:

- Knights of Labor, American Federation of Labor (AFL), Mother Jones, Great Railroad Strike of 1877, Populist Movement, immigration patterns from Europe

- e. ~~Despite the industrialization of some segments of the southern economy, a change promoted by southern leaders who called for a “New South,” agrarian sharecropping, and tenant farming systems continued to dominate the region.~~

3. Westward migration, new systems of farming and transportation, and economic instability led to political and popular conflicts
 - a. Farmers adapted to the new realities of mechanized agriculture and dependence on the evolving railroad system by creating local and regional organizations that sought to resist corporate control of agricultural markets.

Example: the Grange Movement

- b. The growth of corporate power in agriculture and economic instability in the farming sector inspired activists to create the People's (Populist) Party, which called for political reform and a stronger governmental role in the American economic system.

Key Concept 6.2: The emergence of an industrial culture in the United States led to both greater opportunities for, and restrictions on, immigrants, minorities, and women.

1. International and internal migrations increased both urban and rural populations, but gender, racial, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic inequalities abounded, inspiring some reformers to attempt to address these inequities (i.e. the Social Gospel Movement, Progressives).
 - a. Increased migrations from Asia and from southern and eastern Europe, as well as African American migrations out of the South, accompanied the mass movement of people into the nation's cities and the rural and boomtown areas of the West.
 - b. Cities dramatically reflected divided social conditions among classes, races, ethnicities, and cultures, but presented economic opportunities as factories and new businesses proliferated.
 - c. Immigrants sought both to "Americanize" and to maintain their unique identities; along with others, such as some African Americans and women, they were able to take advantage of new career opportunities even in the face of widespread social prejudices.
 - d. In an urban atmosphere where the access to power was unequally distributed, political machines provided social services in exchange for political support, settlement houses helped immigrants adapt to the new language and customs, and women's clubs and self-help groups targeted intellectual development and social and political reform.

Examples:

- National-American Woman Suffrage Association, Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), migration patterns from Europe and the Southern United States, Social Gospel Movement, Progressive Movement, Urbanization, development of immigrant working class

2. As transcontinental railroads were completed, bringing more settlers west, U.S. military actions, the destruction of the buffalo, the confinement of American Indians to reservations, and assimilationist policies reduced the number of American Indians and threatened native culture and identity.
 - a. Post-Civil War migration to the American West, encouraged by economic opportunities and government policies, caused the federal government to violate treaties with American Indian nations in order to expand the amount of land available to settlers.
 - b. The competition for land in the West among white settlers, Indians, and Mexican Americans led to an increase in violent conflict.
 - c. The U.S. government generally responded to American Indian resistance with military force, eventually dispersing tribes onto small reservations and hoping to end American Indian tribal identities through assimilation.

Examples:

Dawes Act, Chief Joseph, Ghost Dance movement, Massacre at Wounded Knee

Key Concept 6.3: The “Gilded Age” witnessed new cultural and intellectual movements in tandem with political debates over economic and social policies.

1. Gilded Age politics were intimately tied to big business and focused nationally on economic issues — tariffs, currency, corporate expansion, and laissez-faire economic policy — that engendered numerous calls for reform.

- a. Corruption in government — especially as it related to big business — energized the public to demand increased popular control and reform of local, state, and national governments, ranging from minor changes to major overhauls of the capitalist system.

Examples:

Referendum, recall voting, the ballot initiative, socialism, Interstate Commerce Act

- b. Increasingly prominent racist and nativist theories, along with Supreme Court decisions such as *Plessy v. Ferguson*, were used to justify violence as well as local and national policies of discrimination and segregation.

Examples:

- Chinese Exclusion Act

2. New cultural and intellectual movements both buttressed [reinforced, strengthened] and challenged the social order of the Gilded Age.

- a. Cultural and intellectual arguments justified the success of those at the top of the socioeconomic structure as both appropriate and inevitable, even as some leaders argued that the wealthy had some obligation to help the less fortunate.

Examples:

Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Gospel of Wealth, Social Darwinism

- b. A number of critics challenged the dominant corporate ethic in the United States and *sometimes* capitalism itself, offering alternate visions of the good society through utopianism and the Social Gospel.
- c. Challenging their prescribed “place,” women and African American activists articulated alternative visions of political, social, and economic equality.

Examples:

Booker T. Washington (Atlanta Compromise), Ida Wells-Barnett, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, W.E.B. Du Bois (Talented Tenth), Progressive reform

PERIOD 7: 1890–1945 (our unit stops before 1945)

An increasingly pluralistic United States faced profound domestic and global challenges, debated the proper degree of government activism, and sought to define its international role.

Key Concept 7.1: Governmental, political, and social organizations struggled to address the effects of large-scale industrialization, economic uncertainty, and related social changes such as urbanization and mass migration.

1. The continued growth and consolidation of large corporations transformed American society and the nation's economy, promoting urbanization and economic growth, even as business cycle fluctuations became increasingly severe.
 - a. Large corporations came to dominate the U.S. economy as it increasingly focused on the production of consumer goods, driven by new technologies and manufacturing techniques.
 - b. The United States continued its transition from a rural, agricultural society to an urban, industrial one, offering new economic opportunities for women, internal migrants, and international migrants who continued to flock to the United States.
2. Progressive reformers responded to economic instability, social inequality, and political corruption by calling for government intervention in the economy, expanded democracy, greater social justice, and conservation of natural resources.
 - a. In the late 1890s and the early years of the 20th century, journalists and Progressive reformers — largely urban and middle class, and often female — worked to reform existing social and political institutions at the local, state, and federal levels by creating new organizations aimed at addressing social problems associated with an industrial society.
 - b. Progressives promoted federal legislation to regulate abuses of the economy and the environment, and many sought to expand democracy (while also limiting it).

Examples:

Clayton Antitrust Act, Florence Kelley, Federal Reserve Bank, Pure Food and Drug Act

3. National, state, and local (Progressive) reformers responded to economic upheavals and laissez-faire capitalism by transforming the United States into a limited welfare state.
 - a. The liberalism of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal drew on earlier progressive ideas.

Key Concept 7.2: A revolution in communications and transportation technology helped to create a new mass culture and spread “modern” values and ideas, even as cultural conflicts between groups increased under the pressure of migration, world wars, and economic distress.

1. New technologies led to social transformations that improved the standard of living for many while contributing to increased political and cultural conflicts.
 - a. New technologies contributed to improved standards of living, greater personal mobility, and better communications systems.

Teachers have flexibility to use examples such as the following:

- radio, motion pictures, automobiles, mass production, cheap amusements, Committee of Fourteen

2. Social tensions created by increased international migration, resulted in legislation restricting immigration from Asia and from southern and eastern Europe.