The Progressive Era

America Seeks Reforms in the Early 20th Century
Origins of Progressivism

• As America entered the 20th century, middle class reformers at the municipal, state, and national levels addressed the problems of the Gilded Age, including:
  – Economic inequality
  – Environmental issues
  – Social welfare
  – Working conditions
  – Rights for women and children
Four Goals of Reformers

1. The Government should be more accountable to its citizens.

2. The Government should curb the power and influence of wealthy interests.

3. The Government should be given expanded powers so that it could become more active in improving the lives of its citizens.

4. The Government should become more efficient and less corrupt.
Industrialization in the late 19th century was largely unregulated. Employers felt little responsibility toward their workers.

As a result, settlement houses and churches served the community and organizations like the YMCA and the Salvation Army took on service roles.
Some reformers felt that the answer to society’s problems was personal behavior. They proposed such reforms as prohibition.

Groups wishing to ban alcohol included the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)
Secure Economic Reform

• The Panic of 1893 prompted some Americans to question the capitalist economic system.

• As a result, some workers embraced socialism. Eugene Debs organized the American Socialist Party in 1901.

Debs encouraged workers to reject American capitalism.
Muckrakers Criticize Big Business

• Though most Progressives did not embrace socialism, many writers saw the truth in Debs’ criticism.

• Investigative journalists, known as “Muckrakers,” exposed corruption in business. For example, Ida Tarbell exposed Standard Oil Company’s cut-throat methods of eliminating competition.
“The Jungle” Leads to Food Regulation

• After reading *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair, Roosevelt pushed for passage of the Meat Inspection Act of 1906.

• The act mandated cleaner conditions for meatpacking plants.
Pure Food and Drug Act

• In response to unsubstantiated claims and unwholesome products, Congress passed the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906. The Act halted the sale of contaminated foods and medicines and called for truth in labeling.
Fostering Efficiency

• Many Progressive leaders put their faith in scientific principles to make society better.

• In industry, Frederick Taylor began using time and motion studies to improve factory efficiency. Taylorism became an industry fad as factories sought to complete each task quickly.
Cleaning Up Local Government

• Efforts at reforming local government stemmed from the desire to make government more efficient and responsive to citizens.

• Some believe it also was meant to limit immigrants’ influence on local governments.
Regulating Big Business

• Under the progressive Republican leadership of Robert La Follette, Wisconsin led the way in regulating big business and implementing the Wisconsin Idea – a partnership between government and the experts at the University of Wisconsin.

Robert La Follette
Protecting Working Children

• As the number of child workers rose, reformers worked to end child labor.
• Children were more prone to accidents caused by fatigue.
• Nearly every state limited or banned child labor by 1918
Efforts To Limit Hours

• The Supreme Court and the states enacted or strengthened laws reducing women’s hours of work.

• Progressives also succeeded in winning worker’s compensation to aid families of injured workers.
Election Reform

• Citizens fought for and secured such measures as secret ballots, referendums, and recalls. Citizens could petition and get initiatives on the ballot.

• In 1899, Minnesota passed the first statewide primary system.
Progressive Political Reforms

**Before**
- Party leaders choose candidates for state and local offices.
- State legislatures choose U.S. senators.
- Only members of the state legislature can introduce bills.
- Only legislators pass laws.
- Only courts or the legislature can remove corrupt officials.

**Reforms**
- **Direct Primaries**
  - Voters select their party’s candidates.
- **17th Amendment**
  - U.S. senators are elected by popular vote.
- **Initiative**
  - Voters can put bills before the legislature.
- **Referendum**
  - Voters can vote on bills directly.
- **Recall**
  - Voters can remove elected officials from office.

**After**
- Power moves to voters.
Direct Election Of Senators

• Before 1913, each state’s legislature had chosen U.S. senators. To force senators to be more responsive to the public, Progressives pushed for the popular direct election of senators.

• As a result, Congress passed the 17th Amendment in 1913.
Roosevelt and the Rough Riders

- Roosevelt captured national attention by advocating war with Spain in 1898. His volunteer cavalry brigade, the Rough Riders, won public acclaim for its role in the battle of San Juan Hill in Cuba.
- Roosevelt returned a hero and was soon elected governor of NY and later McKinley’s vice-president.
Teddy Roosevelt’s Square Deal

• When President William McKinley was assassinated six months into his second term, Theodore Roosevelt became the nation’s 26th president.

McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist in Buffalo in September of 1901.
The Modern President

• When Roosevelt was thrust into the presidency in 1901, he became the youngest president ever at age 42.

• He quickly established himself as a modern president who could influence the media and shape legislation.
Trust-Busting

• By 1900, trusts – legal bodies created to hold stock in many companies – controlled 80% of U.S. industries.

• Roosevelt filed 44 antitrust suits under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act
1902 Coal Strike

- In 1902, 140,000 coal miners in Pennsylvania went on strike for increased wages, a 9-hour work day, and the right to unionize. Mine owners refused to bargain.
- Roosevelt called in both sides and settled the dispute. Thereafter, when a strike threatened public welfare, the federal government was expected to step in and help.
Roosevelt and the Environment

- Before Roosevelt’s presidency, the federal government paid very little attention to the nation’s natural resources. Roosevelt made conservation a primary concern of his administration.

Film clip of Theodore Roosevelt
Roosevelt’s Environmental Accomplishments

- Roosevelt set aside 148 million acres of forest reserves, 1.5 million acres of water-power sites, 50 wildlife sanctuaries, and several national parks.
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming
Roosevelt and Civil Rights

- Roosevelt failed to support Civil Rights for African Americans. He did, however, support a few individuals such as Booker T. Washington, who founded the Tuskegee Institute to provide a technical education for African Americans.
NAACP Formed to Promote Rights

- In **1909** a number of African Americans and prominent white reformers formed the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.** The NAACP had 6,000 members by 1914.
- The goal of the organization was full equality among the races through the court system, a position supported by W.E.B. DuBois.
Progressivism under President Taft

• Republican William Howard Taft easily defeated Democrat William Jennings Bryan in the 1908 presidential election.

• Among his accomplishments, Taft “busted” 90 trusts during his four years in office – more than Theodore Roosevelt during his eight years in office.

Taft, right, was Roosevelt’s War Secretary
Taft Loses Power

• Taft was not popular with the American public or reform-minded Republicans. He called the Presidency, the “lonesomest” job in the world.” By 1910, Democrats had regained control of the House of Representatives.
1912 Election

- Republicans split in 1912 between Taft and Roosevelt (who returned after a safari to Africa).
- Convention delegates nominated Taft and discontented Republicans formed a third party, the Progressive Party (nicknamed the Bull Moose Party), and nominated Roosevelt.
- The Democrats put forward a reform-minded New Jersey governor, Woodrow Wilson.
Election of 1912

Electoral Vote by State

- **DEMOCRATIC**
  - Woodrow Wilson
  - 435 votes
  - Popular Vote: 6,296,547

- **PROGRESSIVE**
  - (Bull Moose)
  - Theodore Roosevelt
  - 88 votes
  - Popular Vote: 4,118,571

- **REPUBLICAN**
  - William H. Taft
  - 8 votes
  - Popular Vote: 3,486,720

- **MINOR PARTIES**
  - 531 votes
  - Popular Vote: 1,135,697

Total Electoral Vote: 531
Total Popular Vote: 15,037,535
Wilson’s New Freedom

• With a strong mandate from the American people, Wilson moved to enact his program, the “New Freedom.”

• He planned his attack on what he called the triple wall of privilege: trusts, tariffs, and high finance.
Clayton Anti-Trust Act

- In 1914 Congress enacted the Clayton Anti-Trust Act that strengthened the Sherman Act.

- It had an anti-trust provision that prevented companies from acquiring stock from another company and supported workers’ unions.
Federal Trade Commission Formed

• The FTC was formed in 1914 to serve as a “watchdog” agency to end unfair business practices. The FTC protects consumers from business fraud.
The Federal Reserve Act, 1913

- Congress did not give the FTC authority over the banks.
- The Federal Reserve Act created the Federal Reserve System, dividing the country into 12 districts, each with a Federal Reserve Bank.
- This became the nation’s banking system.
- A new national currency was also created, called Federal Reserve notes.
- The Federal Reserve could now regulate the amount of money in circulation.
Federal Income Tax Arrives

• Wilson worked hard to lower tariffs, however, the lost revenue had to be made up and was when the 16th Amendment instituted a graduated federal income tax.
Women in Public Life

• Before the Civil War, American women were expected to devote their time to home and family.
• By the late 19th and early 20th century, women were visible in the workforce.
Domestic Workers

• Before the turn-of-the-century women without formal education contributed to the economic welfare of their families by doing domestic work.

• Altogether, 70% of women employed in 1870 were servants.
Women in the Work Force

• Opportunities for women increased especially in the cities. By 1900, one out of five women worked.

• The garment industry was popular as were office work, retail, and education.
Women Lead Reform

• Many of the leading Progressive reformers were women. Middle and upper class women entered the public sphere after graduating from the new women’s colleges.

Colleges like Vassar and Smith allowed women to excel
Women and Reform

- Women reformers strove to improve conditions at work and home.
- In 1896, black women formed the National Association of Colored Women (NACW).
- Suffrage was another important issue for women.
Three-Part Strategy for Winning Suffrage

• Suffragettes tried three approaches to winning the vote:

  1. Convincing state legislatures to adopt the vote.
  2. Pursuing court cases to test 14th Amendment.
  3. Pushing for national Constitutional amendment.
Woman Suffrage Before 1920

- Equal suffrage with effective date
- Partial woman suffrage
- No woman suffrage

The map shows the states where women had the right to vote before 1920, with different shades indicating the year in which suffrage was granted.
Women Win Suffrage

- Native-born, educated, middle-class women grew more and more impatient. Through local, state, and national organization, as well as vigorous protests, women finally realized their dream in 1920, with the ratification of the 19th Amendment.
Limits of Progressivism

• While the Progressive Era was responsible for many important reforms, it failed to make gains for African Americans. Like Roosevelt and Taft, Wilson retreated on Civil Rights when he entered office.

The KKK reached a membership of 4.5 million in the 1920s