SESSION PREPARATION

Read the following material before attending the workshop. As you read the excerpts and primary sources, take note of the “Questions to Consider” as well as any questions you have. The activities in the workshop will draw on information from the readings and the video shown during the workshop.

UNIT INTRODUCTION

By the early 1900s, many Americans had left rural areas and moved to cities to take jobs in factories and offices. Although workers often lived in miserable conditions, city life attracted many newcomers because of an alluring consumer culture and new freedoms for young adults. Activist citizens started reform movements that worked for public education, labor rights, women’s rights, the safety of the nation’s food supply, and the conservation of natural resources—even though some of these movements often conflicted each other.

UNIT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading the text materials, participating in the workshop activities and watching the video, teachers will understand

- the factors that drew rural migrants and young people to cities;
- that manufacturing and advertising contributed to a new consumer culture, and marketed an urban lifestyle to young people that was often at odds with traditional rural values;
- how middle-class activists pressed for reforms and attained some successes at the local and state levels;
- that some reform movements sought to expand democracy and others sought to limit democracy;
- that many citizens argued that only the federal government had the regulatory power and resources to protect Americans.

THIS UNIT FEATURES

- Textbook excerpts (sections of U.S. history surveys, written for introductory college courses by history professors)
- Primary sources (documents and other materials created by the people who lived in the period) including photographs by Lewis Hine and Jacob Riis, The Birth of a Nation movie poster, and a Typhoid Mary broadside
- A timeline at the end of the unit, which places important events in the context of the Progressive Era
During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the United States experienced a fundamental change in the way workers earned a living and in the way people and institutions interacted. Relationships changed between government and industry, industry and workers, government and its citizens, and even between family members.

Many Americans left farming and moved to cities to take jobs in factories and offices. While the workers often lived in wretched conditions, increasing numbers of people with discretionary income formed a new urban middle class. Part of the attraction of city life was an alluring consumer culture. For many, the attraction of consumer goods such as fashion, furniture, and houses became the major incentive to “get ahead.” For young adults, another attraction of big cities was that they no longer lived with their parents; thus, courtship patterns changed from chaperoned visits to dating.

Activist citizens began movements to improve urban conditions because the infrastructure could not accommodate this growing and impoverished working class. Reformers worked for public education, better work conditions, labor rights, women’s rights, the safety of the nation’s food supply, and the conservation of natural resources.

Reform movements were so diverse that they sometimes conflicted. For example, some advocates protested censorship; others pressed for more censorship in the name of morality. Some reform movements sought to expand democracy, while others sought to rein it in. Some supported greater political rights for African Americans, and others sought to limit voting rights for immigrants and African Americans.

Historians have applied the term “Progressive” both to the period from roughly 1890 to 1914 and the reform movements that emerged during these years. Within these Progressive movements were some that might be considered conservative today, such as the movement to restrict voting rights. The term “progressive” in lower-case usually means tending toward more democracy and is a relative and historically changing term. To minimize confusion, we will use the term “reform movements” and the people who promoted them as “reformers.”

**Theme 1:**
A growing industrial labor market drew people to cities from elsewhere in the U.S. and abroad. Manufacturing and advertising created a new consumerism, and allowed young people in particular more freedom by weakening the controls over personal behavior previously exercised by families and small communities.

**Theme 2:**
The increasing damage created by a burgeoning commercial and industrial economy had many convinced that only government regulations could protect the public.

**Theme 3:**
Progressive era reforms often worked at odds to each other, resulting in both more democratic and anti-democratic social and political structures.
Historical Perspectives

During the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century, many Americans left farms, moved to cities, and experienced changes in the way they lived, earned an income, and interacted with the government. In cities, many young people lived away from their parents, drove cars, worked in offices, and had disposable income. Cities allowed women to be more independent, but this newfound independence clashed with the cultural perception that women were fragile.

A burgeoning consumer culture was part of the attraction to city life, with an increasing number of people who had discretionary income. The availability of so many cheap goods presented the opportunity to consume a greater variety of goods. Consumerism raised America's standard of living, but debt became a commonplace feature of urban society. Thousands of African Americans left the South and migrated north to cities for job opportunities. In part, chain migration of African Americans resulted in crowded black ghettos. Other newcomers, including foreign immigrants and white migrants from rural America, also often lived in miserable conditions.

During this “Progressive Era,” many reform movements resulted from the influx of immigrants and migrants that overwhelmed American cities. The Progressive Period ushered the United States into an era of increased government involvement in peoples’ lives, sometimes providing more democracy, sometimes less. As some reformers fought for the right of women to vote, other reformers passed laws limiting the voting rights of others.

Faces of America

Jane Addams, Henry Goddard, and W. E. B. DuBois struggled to improve American society and viewed government as having social responsibility; their perceptions of the government's responsibilities differed considerably, however.

Jane Addams, the daughter of a wealthy Illinois state senator, promoted an activist government to remedy the problems that caused ghetto life. Inspired by a program in England, Addams established Hull House, a settlement house in a poor immigrant neighborhood in Chicago. Unlike many reformers, Addams became convinced that the private sector could not be relied on to fix society's problems, and the only way to address many societal issues was through the taxing power of municipal, state, and federal governments.

Scientist Henry Goddard promoted the practice of Eugenics, a popular twentieth-century scientific movement that aimed at improving society through selective breeding of superior humans. Goddard's interest in human intelligence caused him to focus on those with learning disabilities, or to use the early-twentieth-century term, “feebleminded.” In 1913, Goddard established an intelligence testing program on Ellis Island at the request of the United States Department of Immigration.

William Edward Burghardt DuBois became the first African American to graduate from Harvard and became a political activist during the late nineteenth century. In 1906, DuBois and a group of northern blacks organized the Niagara Movement to promote integration and challenge the views of Booker T. Washington, the recognized African American leader of the times.

Hands on History

What do clothes tell us about the period in which they are designed or worn?

Annamarie Von Firley, a fashion designer at ReVamp Vintage, in Los Angeles recreates vintage fashions that cover the period from c. 1910–50. Von Firley explains how clothes reflect an era and how she uses primary source materials to create her designs.
Theme One: A growing industrial labor market drew people to cities from elsewhere in the U.S. and abroad. Manufacturing and advertising created a new consumerism, and young people in particular more freedom by weakening the controls over personal behavior previously exercised by families and small communities.

Overview

During the early 1900s, urban economic inequality became increasingly apparent with the rise of a new consumer culture, influenced by an innovative and powerful advertising industry. Advertising contributed to the formation of regional and national markets that exposed all classes of people to the same consumer goods. Advertisers persuaded people that their image and status relied on their ability to consume.

This new consumerism raised the standard of living for many but at the cost of increasing inequality and creating a debtor class. People bought and displayed goods as a measure of their own worth, but not everyone could afford the advertised goods. Some went without and grew increasingly alienated while others went into debt. Debt became an accepted norm that in prior decades had a stigma attached to it.

Advertising also targeted the new population of single men and women who had moved from the controls of parents and small town communities to the new freedoms of city life. Entrepreneurs and advertisers capitalized on and promoted a new modern lifestyle that further weakened controls over personal behavior. This clashed with traditional rural values of hard work, thrift, church, home, and family.

The automobile encouraged these new freedoms because people gained independence from public transportation and traveled whenever and wherever they wanted to go.

Questions to Consider

1. What was the appeal of city life for people migrating to urban areas?
2. How did advertising fuel a consumer culture?
3. How and why do courtship or dating patterns change during this period?
1. Advertising

Have you ever noticed that television commercials can often be more interesting and creative than the programs? One authority has suggested that the best way for a foreign visitor to understand the American character and popular culture is to study television commercials. Television advertising, the thesis goes, appeals to basic cultural assumptions. The nature of advertising not only reveals for historians the prejudices, fears, values, and aspirations of a people but also makes an impact on historical development itself, influencing patterns of taste and purchasing habits. One modern critic calls advertising a “peculiarly American force that now compares with such long-standing institutions as the school and church in the magnitude of its social impact.”

As long as manufacturing was local and limited, there was no need to advertise. Before the Civil War, for example, the local area could usually absorb all that was produced; therefore, a simple announcement in a local paper was sufficient to let people know that a particular product was available. But when factories began producing more than the local market could ordinarily consume, advertising came into play to create a larger demand.

Although national advertising began with the emergence of “name brands” in the late nineteenth century, it did not achieve the importance it now holds until the 1920s. In 1918, the total gross advertising revenue in magazines was $58.5 million. By 1920, it had more than doubled to $129.5 million, and by 1929, it was nearly $200 million. These figures should not be surprising in a decade that often equated advertising with religion. The biblical Moses was called the “ad-writer for the Deity,” and in a best-selling book, Bruce Barton, a Madison Avenue advertiser, reinterpreted Jesus, the “man nobody knows,” as a master salesman. Wrote Barton: “He would be a national advertiser today.”

The designers of ads began to study psychology to determine what motives, conscious or unconscious, influenced consumers. One psychologist concluded that the appeal to the human instinct for “gaining social prestige” would sell the most goods. Another way to sell products, many learned, was to create anxiety in the mind of the consumer over body odor, bad breath, oily hair, dandruff, pimples, and other embarrassing ailments. In 1921, the Lambert Company used the term halitosis for bad breath in an ad for Listerine. Within six years, sales of Listerine had increased from a little over 100,000 bottles a year to more than 4 million.
The appeal to sex also sold products, advertisers soon found, as did the desire for the latest style or invention. But perhaps the most important thing advertisers marketed was youth. “We are going to sell every artificial thing there is,” a cosmetic salesman wrote in 1926, “and above all it is going to be young-young-young! We make women feel young.” A great portion of the ads were aimed at women. As one trade journal announced: “The proper study of mankind is man . . . but the proper study of markets is woman.”

Question to Consider

How does Strasser's argument reveal the complexity of the consumer culture during the Progressive Era?

Customer to Consumer: The New Consumption in the Progressive Era

... In going directly to consumers to create demand ... sales representative[s] from the early 1900s followed the outlines of strategy that ... creat[ed] markets for branded products. This strategy established direct relationships between manufacturers and the end users of their products, and transformed the chain from manufacturer to wholesaler to retailer to customer. No longer might a grocer’s customers rely on his opinion about the best soap; no longer could wholesalers look for good deals among various soap manufacturers. People asked for Ivory, which could only be obtained from Procter and Gamble. Indeed, by 1909, some argued that a million dollars’ worth of advertising could not conquer the Ivory name—in essence, that Procter and Gamble was invulnerable to competition.

Manufacturers’ branding was used not only on packaged, labeled versions of traditional goods like vinegar and soap, but as an essential piece of the marketing strategy for new products like chewing gum, corn flakes, safety razors, and phonographs, which had never been made at home or in small crafts shops. Since colonial times, wealthy urbanites had eaten from ceramics made in English factories, and more typical Americans had bought a few manufactured products. But in 1880 they still grew some of their food or bought it from the grower, and most people wore some homemade clothing. During the next thirty years, Americans everywhere and of all classes began to eat, drink, clean with, wear, and sit on products made in factories. Standardized, uniform goods that cost money supplanted the makeshift, the homemade, and the handmade, altering fundamental ways of life.

Without land for gardens or time for handcrafts, even poor urban workers joined an expanding market for manufactured goods. Inexpensive products like gum, soap, and tobacco offered premiums as part of their marketing; working people who saved wrappers and tokens could aspire to Kodak cameras, Gillette razors, Thermos bottles, and the lowest-priced Victrolas. Even people who lived far from stores could shop; the Sears and Montgomery Ward catalog pictured nearly every kind of manufactured product America had to offer.
Formerly customers, purchasing the objects of daily life in face-to-face relationships with community-based craftspeople and storekeepers, Americans became consumers during the Progressive Era. They bought factory-produced goods as participants in a complex network of distribution—a national market that promoted individuals’ relationships with big, centrally organized, national-level companies. They got their information about products, not from the people who made or sold them, but from advertisements created by specialists in persuasion. These accelerating processes, though by no means universal, had taken firm hold of the American way of life.

The emerging consumer identity was especially well established among the middle- and upper-class people, many of them women, who regarded what we now understand as consumer issues as naturally allied to other progressive social and political campaigns.

. . . Turn-of-the-century products may be understood as artifacts of a culture in the making, founded on new technologies and structured by new personal habits and new economic forms. People who had never bought cornflakes were taught to need them; those once content with oats scooped from the grocer’s bin were told why they should prefer Quaker Oats in a box. Advertising, when it was successful, created demand, but many products failed. Old-fashioned ways persisted; grocers who ordered packaged products also sold in bulk. Early twentieth-century ads attempted to build consumer trust in manufacturers, but trust in local merchants still motivated many purchases. Advertising celebrated the new, but many people were content with the old. The most effective marketing campaigns encouraged new needs and desires, not by creating them out of whole cloth, but by linking the rapid appearance of new products with the rapid changes that were occurring in all areas of social and cultural life.

. . . Belief that progress could be equated with abundant consumer goods pervaded American culture as the diversity and quality of manufactured goods improved, their prices dropped, and daily physical needs were met with less drudgery. Even critics of corporate capitalism appreciated the benefits of mass production and mass distribution. McClure’s, Collier’s, and other inexpensive popular magazines—the media of the new advertising—were also the media of reform: in their pages the work of muckrakers was juxtaposed with advertisements for factory-made standardized products. Ladies’ Home Journal spearheaded the campaign for pure food and drugs, and featured columns by Ida Tarbell and Jane Addams. Both the advertised products and the reform campaigns were manifestations of progress as turn-of-the-century Americans understood it. At the same time, citizens—attuned to corporate greed and
The Progressives

misdeeds by progressive journalists and politicians—demanded protection from the big businesses on which they were becoming dependent for supplying daily needs . . . In individual lives, new ways coexisted with old ones: people bought some new things and not others, and they set their new purchases next to their customary goods and their keepsakes. Farmers both ordered from Sears and bartered eggs with country storekeepers; urban workers bought goods from pushcarts as well as department stores; immigrant cooks served both traditional foods and Uneeda biscuits. Still, the future was clear: young people insisted on new levels of convenience, leisure, and material comfort . . .

2. Clash of Values

During the 1920s, radio, movies, advertising, and mass-circulation magazines promoted a national, secular culture. But this new culture, which emphasized consumption, pleasure, upward mobility, and even sex, clashed with the traditional values of hard work, thrift, church, family, and home. Although it would be easy to see these cultural differences as a reflection of an urban–rural conflict, in fact, many people clinging to the old ways had moved into the cities. Still, many Americans feared that new cultural values, scientific breakthroughs, and new ideas like bolshevism, relativism, Freudianism, and Biblical criticism threatened their familiar way of life. A trial over the teaching of evolutionary ideas in high school in the little town of Dayton, Tennessee, symbolized, even as it exaggerated, the clash of the old versus the new, the traditional versus the modern, the city versus the country . . .

Nash et al., 794.

3. A Communications Revolution

. . . The movies had the power to influence attitudes and ideas. In the 1920s, many parents feared that the movies would dictate ideas about sex and life. One young college woman remembered, “One day I went to see Viola Dana in The Five Dollar Baby. The scenes which showed her as a baby fascinated me so that I stayed to see it over four times. I forgot home, dinner and everything. About eight o’clock mother came after me.” She also admitted that the movies taught her how to smoke, and in some of the movies “there were some lovely scenes which just got me all hot ‘n’ bothered.”

Not only movie stars became celebrities in the 1920s. Sports figures such as Babe Ruth, Bobby Jones, Jack Dempsey, and Red Grange were just as famous. The great spectator sports of the decade owed much to the increase in leisure time and to the automobile, the radio, and the mass-circulation newspaper. Thousands drove autos to college towns to watch football heroes perform. Millions listened for scores or read about the results the next day. One writer in 1924 called this era “the age of play.” He might better have called it “the age of the spectator.” The popularity of sports, like the movies and radio, was in part the product of technology.

The year 1927 seemed to mark the beginning of the new age of mechanization and progress. That was the year Henry Ford produced his 15 millionth car and introduced the Model A. During that year, radio-telephone service was established.
between San Francisco and Manila. The first radio network was organized (CBS), and the first talking movie was released (The Jazz Singer). In 1927, the Holland Tunnel, the first underwater vehicular roadway, connected New York and New Jersey. It was also the year that Charles Lindbergh flew from New York to Paris in his single-engine plane in 33 1/2 hours. Lindbergh was not the first to fly the Atlantic, but he was the first to fly it alone, an accomplishment that won him $25,000 in prize money and captured the world's imagination. He was young and handsome, and his feat seemed to represent not only the triumph of an individual but also the triumph of the machine. Lindbergh never talked of his accomplishments in the first person; he always said “we,” meaning his airplane as well. He was greeted by 4 million people when he returned to New York for a triumphant ticker-tape parade. Like many movie stars and sports heroes, he had become an instant celebrity. When Americans cheered Lindbergh, they were reaffirming their belief in the American dream and their faith in individual initiative as well as in technology.

Nash et al., 792–93.
Question to Consider
How does the artist use the poster’s image to attract moviegoers?

Audience: Middle-class Americans
Purpose: To show the change from movies that only appealed to lower-class ethnic audiences to movies that attracted a national audience

Historical Significance:
In 1915, D. W. Griffith produced *The Birth of a Nation*, the first full-length feature film that became a nationwide success. Before Birth of a Nation, early motion pictures appealed to lower-class ethnic audiences in movie theatres known as “nickelodeons.” Griffith’s portrayal of the Civil War and Reconstruction rendered racist themes that appealed to white Americans during a period when the nation experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization. More than 200 million people saw the film between 1915 and 1946. Some Progressives such as Woodrow Wilson, Dorothea Dix, and Charles Parkhurst supported the film; other reformers, such as Jane Addams and W. E. B. DuBois, sought to stop or delay its screening.
4. “Sex O-Clock in America”

The sexual mores and behavior of Americans seemed to be changing so dramatically that one observer announced that “sex o’clock” had struck. Indeed, the codes of the past were challenged at every turn. Among the middle class, unchaperoned dating began to replace the previous system of a man “coming to call” at the home of a woman he hoped to court. Automobiles gave young couples more freedom and privacy. Physical intimacy became more acceptable, and even unacceptable sexual behavior became more common.

Immigrants often brought traditional courtship patterns to the new world and extended them into the next generation. One Italian man described his thwarted efforts to woo his fiancée in private. When he visited her home, “She sat on one side of the table, and I at the other. They afraid I touch.” Finally, less than a month before their wedding, he got permission to take her to the theater. But the family was unwilling to let them go alone. “We came to the aisles of the theater. My mother-in-law go first, my fiancée next, my little sister, my father in law. I was the last one. I had two in between . . . I was next to the old man.” He tried to steal a kiss a few days before the wedding, but his fiancée rebuffed him: “No, not yet.”

In spite of efforts by their elders, native-born as well as immigrant youth challenged the sexual codes of the past. Young working women looked forward to fun in their leisure hours and sometimes exchanged physical intimacies for “treats” from men who took them out to a meal or a dance. These women were known as “charity girls” to distinguish them from prostitutes. Increasing sexual intimacy among unmarried men and women reflected heightened expectations for sexual satisfaction—for women as well as men. These years also witnessed a rise in the proportion of brides who were pregnant at marriage, from a low of 10 percent in the mid-nineteenth century to 23 percent by 1910.

Marriage increasingly held the promise not only of love, intimacy, and mutual obligation, as it had in the nineteenth century, but of sexual fulfillment and shared leisure pursuits. As expectations for marital happiness rose, so did the divorce rate. Liberal divorce laws, combined with expanding opportunities for women to support themselves, prompted increasing numbers of men and women to end unhappy marriages and try again. The rising divorce rate did not signal a decline in the popularity of marriage, however; a greater proportion of Americans married and at increasingly younger ages. Those who divorced were likely to remarry, a pattern that continued through the twentieth century.
Some women did not marry but instead formed lifelong attachments to other women. Rarely identified as lesbian but often described as “Boston marriages,” these unions signified long-term emotional bonds between women who lived together. The widely admired reformer Jane Addams shared her life with Mary Rozet Smith for more than thirty years. Meanwhile, lesbians, as well as gay men, gained greater visibility in the cities. They frequented bars and clubs in such places as Greenwich Village and Harlem, hoping to avoid the attention of police, who were likely to arrest them for indecent conduct. Heterosexual men and women also came to these neighborhoods for entertainment. Drag balls became elaborate annual events that drew thousands of spectators and participants, including large numbers of heterosexuals.

Question to Consider
How does the painting reflect greater freedom for young people and the weakening controls of personal behavior?


See Appendix for larger image – pg. 52

Historical Significance:
John Held’s art popularized and epitomized the flapper look and lifestyle of the 1920s—not only in Life magazine, but also in the New Yorker and Harper’s Bazaar. The “flapper” represented a young woman who revolted against societal expectations of proper behavior for women through such actions as wearing short skirts, listening to jazz music, drinking hard liquor, and smoking tobacco. Held’s depiction of a carefree, slender woman who interacted with men in a direct and flirtatious way differed from the idealized and romanticized portrayal of the American woman found in the previous generation’s Gibson Girl.
One of the Busiest Streets in the World

Question to Consider
Why was traffic congestion a problem?

Item 4987
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

See Appendix for larger image – pg. 53

Creator: Underwood and Underwood Publishers
Context: A burgeoning commercial and industrial economy attracted a growing labor market to growing cities such as Chicago.
Audience: Unknown
Purpose: To show the urban problem of traffic congestion that resulted from increased business activity and population density.

Historical Significance:
Chicago’s population exploded from 229,000 in 1870 to 1.7 million in 1900 because of job growth in manufacturing and retail, as well as the meatpacking industry that came to dominate the Midwest. Because of Chicago’s central location between the east and west coasts, it also became the nation’s largest hub for hauling freight along the railroads and one of the busiest ports for shipping goods. The photograph shows the urban traffic congestion when too many people and goods moved along Chicago’s State Street in 1903.
5. The Exploding Metropolis

... The census of 1920 indicated that for the first time, more than half the population of the United States lived in "urban areas" of more than 2,500. The census designation of an urban area was a little misleading because a town of 5,000 could still be more rural than urban. A more significant concept was the metropolitan area of at least 100,000 people. There were only 52 of these areas in 1900, but in 1930 there were 115.

The automobile transformed the city and led to the gradual decline of the street car and the interurban trolly. The most spectacular growth of all took place in two cities that the auto virtually created. Detroit grew from 300,000 in 1900 to 1,837,000 in 1930, and Los Angeles expanded from 114,000 in 1900 to 1,778,000 in 1930. With sprawling subdivisions connected by a growing network of roads, Los Angeles was the city of the future. [Cars were a major force in the spread of consumption. In 1910, there was 1 car for every 265 people; by 1919—just nine years later—there was 1 for every 16 people. By 1928, 29 percent of cars were bought by laborers.]

Cities expanded horizontally during the 1920s, sprawling into the countryside, but city centers grew vertically. A building boom that peaked near the end of the decade created new skylines for most urban centers. Even cities such as Tulsa, Dallas, Kansas City, Memphis, and Syracuse built skyscrapers. By 1929, there were 377 buildings of over 20 stories in American cities. Many were started just before the stock market crash ended the building boom, and the empty offices stood as a stark reminder of the limits of expansion. The most famous skyscraper of all, the Empire State Building in New York, which towers 102 stories in the air, was finished in 1931 but not completely occupied until after World War II.

Nash et al., 790–91.
6. A Communications Revolution

Changing communications altered the way many Americans lived as well as the way they conducted business. The telephone was first demonstrated in 1876. By 1899, more than 1 million phones were in operation. During the 1920s, the number of homes with phones increased from 9 to 13 million. Still, by the end of the decade, more than half of American homes were without phones. [The communications revolution also weakened the control of family and small community over young adults as radio advertising attempted to persuade people to purchase the same goods and services.]

Even more than the telephone, the radio symbolized the technological and communicational changes of the 1920s. Department stores quickly began to stock radios, or crystal sets as they were called, but many Americans in the 1920s built their own receivers. The first station to begin commercial broadcasting was WWJ in Detroit in the summer of 1920. When WWJ and KDKA in Pittsburgh broadcast the election returns in 1920, they ushered in a new era in politics. The next year, WJZ of Newark, New Jersey, broadcast the World Series, beginning a process that would transform baseball and eventually football and basketball as well. Five hundred stations took to the airwaves in 1922 alone, many of them sponsored by department stores and others by newspapers and colleges. In the same year, a radio station in New York broadcast the first commercial, an indication that the airways would be used to increase the demand for the goods the factories were producing.

Much early broadcasting consisted of classical music, but soon came news analysis and coverage of presidential inaugurals and important events. Some stations produced live dramas, but it was the serials such as “Amos ‘n’ Andy” that more than any other programs made radio a national medium. Millions of people scattered across the country could sit in their living rooms (and after 1927, in their cars) listening to the same program. The record industry grew just as rapidly. By the end of the decade, people in all sections of the country were humming the same popular songs. Actors and announcers became celebrities. The music, voice, and sound of the radio, even more than the sound of the automobile, marked the end of silence and, to a certain extent, the end of privacy . . .

Nash et al., 791–92.
Conclusion

During the early 1900s, the American economy witnessed the rise of a new consumer culture. A new advertising industry promoted the same consumer goods to everyone through regional and national markets. Advertisers persuaded consumers that buying and displaying goods was a measure of their own worth. Advertising particularly marketed to the new population of single men and women who had moved from the controls of parents and small town communities to the new freedoms of city life.

Questions to Consider

1. How did the new consumerism change everyday life and culture during this period?
2. How did the media weaken the controls that families and small communities had previously exercised?
Theme Two: The increasing damage created by a burgeoning commercial and industrial economy had many convinced that only government regulations could protect the public.

Overview

By 1900, the influx of immigrants from abroad and migrants from rural areas overwhelmed the capacity of American cities to provide public services. With rapid urban growth, city leaders confronted problems relating to sanitation, overcrowding, and access to clean water. Reformers, politicians, and citizens grappled with the best approach for effectively dealing with the problems of rapid urbanization.

One group of reformers sought to create a “city beautiful” by putting in water mains and sewers, planting trees along broadened boulevards, and expanding city parks. But these projects rarely reached the city neighborhoods inhabited by the urban poor who lived in crowded tenement houses. Reformers concerned with the poor and working class worked to gather data, conduct surveys, and organize committees to show the effects of industrialization on America’s cities. Their intent was to attain local and state legislation to develop building codes for tenements, abolish child labor, and improve factory safety. These laws created important improvements in public health and welfare, even if they were often evaded.

Improving public health was a major objective for many reformers, and the government responded to public pressure, mostly at the state and local levels. Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle added to reform pressure and persuaded many that only the federal government had the power and resources to protect people through regulation. A combination of reformers, writers, and government officials successfully pushed for federal regulation of the meatpacking industry. Reformers built on this success with additional federal legislation that established a program of compensating workers for industrial accidents and diseases.

Questions to Consider

1. How did the state and federal governments try to protect the public through regulation?
2. Why did the federal government have the regulatory power to protect the public?
1. Reforming the City

No late-nineteenth-century institution needed reforming more than urban government, called by the president of Cornell “the worst in Christendom—the most expensive, the most inefficient, and the most corrupt.” A Philadelphia committee pointed to years of “inefficiency, waste, badly paved and filthy streets, unwholesome and offensive water, and slovenly and costly management.” New York and Chicago, where cholera and typhoid epidemics resulted from raw sewage poured into Lake Michigan, were even worse, rivaling the appalling sewage, water, and health conditions in European cities like London, Frankfort, and Rome.

Creating a “city beautiful” through environmental remedies was one approach to cleaning up dirty cities. Urban planners and landscape architects attempted to counteract pollution and reshape the urban environment by putting in water mains and sewers, planting trees along broadened boulevards, expanding city parks, and erecting monumental public buildings—libraries, museums, theaters, and music halls. Cities could become centers of culture. Boston filled in over 500 acres of tidal flats in the Back Bay and elsewhere around the core of the city and created an elegant upper-class neighborhood along tree-lined Commonwealth Avenue.

Such environmental transformations of urban space, however beautiful, rarely reached the squalid sections of the city inhabited by the urban masses, who lived in crowded tenement house districts on narrow, dirty streets filled with people, garbage, and animals pulling streetcars and food and clothing carts. Although the “city beautiful” movement was intended to benefit poor as well as rich, it hardly touched these slums, which looked worse by contrast, especially as the influx of rural transplants and European immigrants increased.

Rapid urban growth swamped city leaders with new demands for service. Flush toilets, thirsty horses pulling street railways, and industrial users of water, for example, all exhausted the capacity of municipal waterworks built for an earlier age . . .

Nash et al., 659.
2. Home and School

The reformers believed that better housing and education could transform the lives of the poor and create a better world. Books such as Jacob Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) horrified them. With vivid language and haunting photographs, Riis had documented the misery of New York’s slums.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the progressives took a new approach toward housing problems. They collected statistics, conducted surveys, organized committees, and constructed exhibits to demonstrate the effect of urban overcrowding. Then they set out to pass tenement house laws in several cities. These laws set fire codes and regulated the number of windows, bathrooms, and the size of apartments, but the laws were often evaded or modified. In 1910, the progressive organized the National Housing Association, and some of them looked ahead to federal laws and even to government-subsidized housing. American housing reformers were inspired by the model working-class dwellings in London, the municipal housing in Glasgow, and by various experiments in government-constructed housing in France, Belgium, and Germany, but they realized that in the United States, they had to start with regulation at the local level.

The housing reformers combined a moral sense of what needed to be done to create a more just society with practical ability to organize public opinion and get laws passed. They also took a paternalistic view toward the poor. Many reformers disapproved of the clutter and lack of privacy in immigrant tenements. But often immigrant family ideals and values differed from those of the middle-class reformers . . .

Ironically, many middle-class women reformers who tried to teach working-class families how to live in their tenement flats had never organized their own homes. Often they lived in settlement houses, where they ate in a dining hall and never had to worry about cleaning, cooking, or doing laundry. Some of them, however, began to realize that the domestic tasks expected of women of all classes kept many of them from taking their full place in society . . .

Nash et al., 714 and 716.
Question to Consider
How does the combination of Riis’s photographs and description persuade the reader of the need for reform?

. . . LONG ago it was said that “one half of the world does not know how the other half lives.” That was true then. It did not know because it did not care. The half that was on top cared little for the struggles, and less for the fate of those who were underneath, so long as it was able to hold them there and keep its own seat. There came a time when the discomfort and crowding below were so great, and the consequent upheavals so violent, that it was no longer an easy thing to do, and then the upper half fell to inquiring what was the matter. Information on the subject has been accumulating rapidly since, and the whole world has had its hands full answering for its old ignorance.

. . . In New York, the youngest of the world’s great cities, that time came later than elsewhere, because the crowding had not been so great . . .
... To-day three-fourths of its people live in the tenements, and the nineteenth century drift of the population to the cities is sending ever-increasing multitudes to crowd them. The fifteen thousand tenant houses that were the despair of the sanitarian in the past generation have swelled into thirty-seven thousand, and more than twelve hundred thousand persons call them home. . . We know now that there is no way out; that the “system” that was the evil offspring of public neglect and private greed has come to stay, a storm-centre forever of our civilization. Nothing is left but to make the best of a bad bargain . . .

... What are you going to do about it? is the question of to-day. It was asked once of our city in taunting defiance by a band of political cutthroats, the legitimate outgrowth of life on the tenement-house level . . . Forty per cent. of the distress among the poor, said a recent official report, is due to drunkenness. But the first legislative committee ever appointed to probe this sore went deeper down and uncovered its roots. The “conclusion forced itself upon it that certain conditions and associations of human life and habitation are the prolific parents of corresponding habits and morals,” and it recommended “the prevention of drunkenness by providing for every man a clean and comfortable home . . . The remedy that shall be an effective answer to the coming appeal for justice must proceed from the public conscience. Neither legislation nor charity can cover the ground. The greed of capital that wrought the evil must itself undo it, as far as it can now be undone. Homes must be built for the working masses by those who employ their labor; but tenements must cease to be “good property” in the old, heartless sense . . .

Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1890); also available at http://www.yale.edu/amstud/inforev/riis/title.html (accessed March 1, 2007).
Questions to Consider
1. Why are the windows open and the children bundled in capes?
2. How does the open-air–school movement characterize Progressive Era reforms?

Historical Significance:
The open-air–school movement originated in Europe. It quickly spread to the United States and the first open-air school was founded in Providence, Rhode Island in 1908. By 1913, the Indiana Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis had established the first open-air school in Indianapolis. The purpose of these schools was to educate children who had anemia, malnutrition, tuberculosis, or exposure to tuberculosis. The schools aimed to provide children with fresh air, physical exercise, rest, and wholesome food through a curriculum that taught manual training, gardening, and crafts. Although the health of some students improved, the State of Indiana closed the open-air schools during the 1930s because of concerns about academic results.
Typhoid Mary Poster

Question to Consider

What is Mary Mallon mixing into the omelet?

Item 4988


Courtesy of the University of North Carolina, School of Public Health.

See Appendix for larger image – pg. 56

Creator: New York American

Context: The case of “Typhoid Mary” was relevant to urban health reformers who tried to control the spread of contagious diseases.

Audience: Readers of the New York American

Purpose: To publicize Mary Mallon’s quarantine because of typhoid

Historical Significance:

An Irish immigrant named Mary Mallon became the nation’s first known carrier of typhoid fever, a bacterial disease transmitted by poor sanitation. Between 1900 and 1907, she infected 22 people while working as a cook in private homes around New York City. As she changed employment, she continued to spread the disease until the health inspector investigated the case and concluded that Mary Mallon was the carrier. The issue of Mary Mallon’s quarantine went to trial in 1909, and the judge sided with the Department of Health’s decision to isolate an individual citizen in order to protect the health of the general public. After three years of isolation, the health inspector released her on the condition that she would not work in any job preparing or serving. In 1915, however, she infected 25 people while employed as a cook at Sloan Hospital, resulting in two deaths. The Department of Health quarantined Mary Mallon for life. After dying of pneumonia in 1938, an autopsy discovered live typhoid bacteria in her gallbladder.
**General View of Spinning Room, Cornell Mill**

**Question to Consider**
How did Hine’s photography convey the work conditions and lives of child laborers?

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Item 6142
Lewis Wicks Hine, GENERAL VIEW OF SPINNING ROOM, CORNELL MILL (1912).
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

See Appendix for larger image – pg. 57

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**Creator:** Lewis Hine

**Context:** Employers hired children to work in factories, mills, mines, and other work sites.

**Audience:** General public and the federal government through magazine articles, posters, and exhibitions

**Purpose:** To record the working conditions of child laborers throughout the country in order to bring about child labor laws

**Historical Significance:**
In 1904, the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) organized with the goal of passing legislation that prohibited child labor. The NCLC hired Lewis Hine to photograph the work conditions of child laborers in settings such as New York canneries, Georgian cotton mills, and West Virginian mines. Thousands of photographs showed children working in hazardous and unhealthy environments. These photographs provided the NCLC with evidence to make its case for child labor legislation to the federal government and to the public through magazine articles, posters, and exhibitions.
3. Meat Inspection and Pure Food and Drugs

Roosevelt’s first major legislative reform began almost accidentally in 1904 when Upton Sinclair, a 26-year-old muckraking journalist, started research on the Chicago stockyards. Born in Baltimore, Sinclair had grown up in New York, where he wrote dime novels to pay his tuition at City College. He was converted to socialism, but it was more a romantic, Christian socialism than a Marxist-style European radicalism. Like Eugene Debs, Sinclair was a home-grown radical. Though he knew little about Chicago, he wanted to expose the exploitation of the poor and oppressed in America. He boarded at the University of Chicago Settlement while he did research, conducted interviews, and wrote the story that would be published in 1906 as *The Jungle*. Sinclair documented exploitation in his fictional account, but his description of contaminated meat drew more attention. He described spoiled hams treated with formaldehyde and sausages made from rotten meat scraps, rats, and other refuse. Hoping to convert his readers to socialism, Sinclair instead turned their stomachs and caused a public outcry for better regulation of the meatpacking industry.

Roosevelt ordered a study of the meatpacking industry and then used the report to pressure Congress and the meatpackers to accept a bill introduced by Albert Beveridge, the progressive senator from Indiana. In the end, the Meat Inspection Act of 1906 was a compromise. It enforced some federal inspection and mandated sanitary conditions in all companies selling meat in interstate commerce. The meatpackers defeated a provision that would have required the dating of all meat. Some of the large companies supported the compromise bill because it gave them an advantage in their battle with the smaller firms. But the bill was a beginning. It illustrates how muckrakers, social justice progressives, and public outcry eventually led to reform legislation. It also shows how Roosevelt used the public mood and manipulated the political process to get a bill through Congress. Many of the progressive reformers were disappointed with the final result, but Roosevelt was always willing to settle for half a loaf rather than none at all. Ironically, the Meat Inspection Act restored the public’s confidence in the meat industry and helped the industry increase its profits.

Taking advantage of the publicity that circulated around *The Jungle*, a group of reformers, writers, and government officials supported legislation to regulate the sale of food and drugs. Americans consumed an enormous quantity of patent medicines, which they purchased through the mail, from traveling salesmen, and from local stores. Many packaged and canned foods contained dangerous chemicals and impurities. One popular remedy, Hosteter’s Stomach Bitters, was revealed on analysis to contain 44 percent alcohol. Coca-Cola, a popular soft
drink, contained a small amount of cocaine, and many medicines were laced with opium. Many people, including women and children, became alcoholics or drug addicts in their quest to feel better. The Pure Food and Drug Act, which passed Congress on the same day in 1906 as the Meat Inspection Act, was not a perfect bill, but it corrected some of the worst abuses, including eliminating the cocaine from Coca-Cola.

Nash et al., 731–32.
**Theme Two**

**Conclusion**

Reformers, politicians, and local citizens tried to come up with the best approach for solving the problems associated with industrialization. The “city beautiful” project failed to address crowded tenements, excessive garbage, unsafe drinking water, and a myriad other problems. The ideas of middle-class reformers also attempted to remedy the situation by organizing to pass local and state legislation, but many became convinced that only the federal government had the resources and power to protect the public through regulation.

**Question to Consider**

In what ways were the middle-class reformers successful in bringing about change at the state and local levels?
Theme Three: Progressive era reforms often worked at odds to each other, resulting in both more democratic and anti-democratic social and political structures.

Overview

The Progressive era contained a number of reform movements that often worked at odds to each other, but all centered on the problems created by industrialization, immigration, and urbanization. Some reformers sought to improve work conditions, housing, and education while others fought for labor rights, prohibition, and conservation of natural resources. Still other reformers promoted racial segregation and limits on voting rights. The motive connecting these groups was their shared anxiety about how the rapid growth of big cities and of immigration were changing American democracy.

One example to illustrate the contradictory nature of these movements is how reformers viewed race and ethnicity. Some reformers believed that all racial and ethnic groups should have equal access to good schools and housing, while others believed that some racial and ethnic groups would always be superior so that equal opportunity was pointless. The founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is the story of northern African American professionals and white allies trying to challenge racism and racial segregation. To Roosevelt and many others who called themselves reformers, however, the NAACP seemed dangerously radical.

Questions to Consider

1. Why did these reform movements take place during this period?
2. How did some of these reform movements create more democracy, and how did some create less democracy
1. The Progressive Worldview

Intellectually, the progressives were influenced by the Darwinian revolution. They believed that the world was in flux, and they rebelled against the fixed and the formal in every field. One of the philosophers of the movement, John Dewey, wrote that ideas could become instruments for change. In his philosophy of pragmatism, William James tried to explain all ideas in terms of their consequences. Most of the progressives were environmentalists who were convinced that environment was much more important than heredity in forming character. Thus, if one could build better schools and houses, one could make better people and a more perfect society . . .

Nash et al., 709.

2. Progressivism for Whites Only

Like most of his generation, Roosevelt thought in stereotyped racial terms. He called Indians “savages” and once remarked that blacks were “wholly unfit for the suffrage.” He believed that blacks, Asians, and Native Americans were inferior, and he feared that massive migrations from southern and eastern Europe threatened the United States. This kind of racism was supported by scientific theories accepted by many experts in the universities. In 1916, Madison Grant summarized these theories in his book The Passing of the Great Race, in which he argued against the dangers of “mongrelization” and urged the protection of the purity of the Anglo-Saxon race. A few who believed in eugenics even advocated the forced sterilization of criminals, mental patients, and other undesirable types. Roosevelt was influenced by these theories, but he was first of all a politician, so he made gestures of goodwill to most groups. He even invited Booker T. Washington to the White House in 1901, though many southerners viciously attacked the president for his breach of etiquette. Roosevelt also appointed several qualified blacks to minor federal posts, notably Dr. William D. Crum to head the Charleston, South Carolina, customs house in 190 . . .

[Southern Progressives worked to intensify segregation and exclude African Americans from the political process.] Even the most advanced progressives seldom included blacks in their reform schemes. Like most social settlements, Hull House was segregated, although Jane Addams (more than most progressives) struggled to overcome the racist attitudes of her day. She helped found a settlement that served a black neighborhood in Chicago, and she spoke out repeatedly against lynching. Addams also supported the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, the most important organization of the progressive era aimed at promoting equality and justice for blacks . . .

Nash et al., 733–34.
3. The Great Migration

The so-called Progressive era of 1900–1920 was anything but progressive from the viewpoint of African Americans, who experienced little progress. White mob violence reached its apex in these years, with hundreds of lynchings and dozens of race riots. Most African Americans lived in the South, where segregation and discrimination trapped the majority in poverty. Many therefore seized the unprecedented opportunity offered by the outbreak of the Great War. War-related orders created huge needs for workers in northern factories, and the war also closed the spigot of European immigration, drying up the standard source of new labor. Along with other cities, Chicago and Detroit became centers of the Great Migration of more than half a million African Americans out of Dixie during the war years.

Encouraged by black newspapers such as the Chicago Defender and sometimes assisted by northern labor recruiters, black Southerners wanted to go “where a man is a man” regardless of his color. They still found plenty of discrimination in the urban North. But the large black communities of Philadelphia, Cleveland, and New York offered far greater independence than the rural South they left behind. Here “I don’t have to humble to no one,” one former Southerner wrote home. African Americans could vote, earn higher wages, send their children to better schools, and even sit where they wanted on streetcars. One woman newly arrived in Chicago was stunned the first time she boarded a trolley and saw black people sitting next to whites. “I just held my breath, for I thought any minute they would start something. Then I saw nobody notices it, and I just thought this is a real place for Negroes.”

The Great Migration fit in a broader pattern of oppressed peoples seeking greater freedom and opportunity in the industrial workplaces of the American North. African Americans could not change their color and escape from discrimination, as could ethnic Europeans such as Irish, Italians, and Jews who struggled successfully against widespread prejudice to be identified as “white” (while still enduring elements of discrimination). But black Southerners moving north in pursuit of work and liberty acted much as European immigrants had, and they joined other newcomers seeking urban work. The 1920 census showed for the first time a majority of Americans living in towns and cities of at least 2500 people . . .

Wood et al., 683–84.
4. **War Workers**

[World War I] opened up industrial employment opportunities for black men. With 4 million men in the armed forces and the flow of immigrants interrupted by the war, American manufacturers for the first time hired African Americans in large numbers. In Chicago before the war, only 3,000 black men held factory jobs; in 1920, more than 15,000 did.

Northern labor agents and the railroads actively recruited southern blacks, but the news of jobs in northern cities spread by word of mouth as well. By 1920, more than 300,000 blacks had joined the “great migration” north. This massive movement of people, which continued into the 1920s, had a permanent impact on the South as well as on the northern cities. Like African Americans, thousands of Mexicans headed north into the United States, as immigration officials relaxed the regulations because of the need for labor in the farms and factories of the Southwest.

Nash et al., 768.
Abigail Scott Duniway Signing the First Equal Suffrage Proclamation

Question to Consider
Why did so many men (and some women) oppose women getting the right to vote?

Creator: Unknown
Context: Woman suffrage movement
Audience: Posterity
Purpose: To show the first woman to register to vote in the State of Oregon after the ratification of the suffrage amendment

Historical Significance:
Oregon’s male voters rejected woman suffrage five times between 1884 and 1910. Even Harvey Scott, the brother of Abigail Scott Duniway, wrote editorials against the woman’s vote in his newspaper, the Daily Oregonian. Oregon women finally won the right to vote in 1912. The photograph above records Duniway, the leader of the Oregon Equal Suffrage Association, receiving the honor of being the first woman to receive suffrage in the State of Oregon.

Unknown, ABIGAIL SCOTT DUNIWAY SIGNING FIRST EQUAL SUFFRAGE PROCLAMATION EVER MADE BY A WOMAN (1912). Courtesy of Women of Protest: Photographs from the records of the National Woman’s Party, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

See Appendix for larger image – pg. 58
The Ambiguous Legacies of Women’s Progressivism

. . . Ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 stood as a monumental victory for women progressives; it is one of the signal achievements of progressive reform. But even that fight to expand democracy was marked by racial division and hierarchy. Hoping to win support from white southerners, leaders in the North refused to admit black women’s clubs to the National American Woman Suffrage Association, which, with two million members in 1917, was the largest suffrage organization in U.S. history. In response, black women formed their own suffrage associations—like the Equal Suffrage League founded by Ida Wells-Barnett in Chicago—or fought for enfranchisement through multi-issue groups like the NACW or the black Baptist Women’s Convention. Complicating black women’s struggle for suffrage was their simultaneous fight for the re-enfranchisement of African-American men in the South, whose right to vote was eroding in the face of brutal violence, literacy tests, and poll taxes. When the women’s suffrage amendment passed, no state could deny suffrage on the basis of sex, but the same measures that disenfranchised black men in the South also prevented most black women from approaching the polls. Thus, not until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 did women’s suffrage achieve a complete victory.

. . . [W]hile most American women received the vote by 1920, imparting a new parity with men in public life, the same period produced legislation that construed women primarily as mothers rather than as workers and as more vulnerable, weaker workers than men. This ambiguous legacy has reverberated through the twentieth century . . .

. . . Most women’s activism took place through the many local, regional, and national organizations that women formed around 1900. The sheer number of women participating in these associations boggles the late-twentieth-century mind and suggests an engaged, cohesive female citizenry well before the achievement of women’s suffrage. For instance, two hundred local white women’s clubs joined together in 1890 to form the General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC), which by 1920 claimed over a million members. Along with the National Mothers’ Congress (NMC), formed in 1897, the GFWC became a vehicle for moderate white women’s political activism. In similar fashion, one hundred middle-class black women’s clubs created the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in 1896, and by 1914 this group claimed fifty thousand members in one thousand local clubs. Jewish women organized the National Council of Jewish Women in 1893, and black Baptist women founded the Woman’s Convention of the National Baptist Convention in 1900. That organization alone embraced over one million members.
Although gender and race segregation were the rule among civic organizations early in this century, there were exceptions. Some women participated in gender-integrated groups like the National Child Labor Committee, which targeted child labor as an urgent public problem, and some women helped to found such gender- and race-integrated groups as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Urban League. One of the most important progressive organizations, the National Consumers’ League (NCL), was ostensibly a gender-integrated group, though white women dominated it throughout the period, and thousands of women—overwhelmingly white—invigorated the Progressive party of 1912.

**Report of Conference on Minimum Wage Decision**

**Question to Consider**
What is the cartoonist’s perspective on the Supreme Court’s decision declaring the minimum-wage law for women unconstitutional?

**Creator:** Rollin Kirby of the New York World

**Context:** The Supreme Court decision in Adkins v. Children’s Hospital

**Audience:** Readers of the New York World

**Purpose:** To show how the Supreme Court’s decision affected women

**Historical Significance:**
In *Adkins v. Children’s Hospital* (1923), the Supreme Court ruled that requiring a minimum wage law for women was unconstitutional because it conflicted with the Fifth and Fourteen Amendment rights guaranteeing contracts. A few weeks later, the cartoonist Rollin Kirby drew the cartoon depicting the Supreme Court handing women the “constitutional right to starve.” The Supreme Court’s decision prompted the National Consumers’ League to call a meeting advocating federal minimum-wage legislation.

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*See Appendix for larger image – pg. 59*
The Ambiguous Legacies of Women’s Progressivism

In these organizations, women pursued an agenda that set them squarely in the social justice wing of progressivism. They aimed to ameliorate the worst suffering caused by rapid industrialization, immigration, and urbanization without forsaking capitalism altogether. To do so, they strove to make government at all levels more responsible for the social and economic welfare of citizens, and though many hoped ultimately to improve the lives of America’s entire working class or the whole community of color, most women reformers found that they were especially effective when they spoke specifically to the needs of women and children. Their agendas ran the gamut from anti-lynching campaigns to the prohibition of alcohol, from maximum hours laws to women’s suffrage, from improved educational opportunities for African-American children to the abolition of prostitution . . .

One example, the campaign for protective labor legislation, reveals some of the complex meanings of women’s progressivism. Although many working-class women believed the solution to workplace problems lay in unionization, some accepted the middle-class preference for legislation as the surest route to job-related improvements. Thus, both groups—organized, for instance, in the National Women’s Trade Union League—lobbied their states for guarantees of factory safety, maximum hours laws, and less often, minimum wage provisions as well. Many states passed such laws and even hired women as factory inspectors to enforce them.

These legislative successes were threatened in 1905, when the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its famous Lochner decision. In it, the Court struck down a New York law that regulated the hours of bakers, an overwhelmingly male group. The Court ruled that states could interfere in the freedom of contract only if long hours constituted a clear health risk either to the workers themselves or to the general public.

Women reformers would not see their protective laws undone. Indeed, their determination to sustain protective labor legislation led to their participation in a second case, Muller v. Oregon. In 1903, Oregon passed a law that limited the hours of women in industrial work to ten per day. Two years later, the state prepared a case against laundry owner Curt Muller for violation of the law. Muller took the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, where he expected the reasoning in Lochner to strike down Oregon’s law. The NCL, with the fiery Florence Kelley at its head, took up Oregon’s fight, leading the charge for protective legislation for women workers.
In 1908, the Supreme Court accepted their arguments, concluding that “woman's physical structure and the performance of maternal functions place her at a disadvantage in the struggle for subsistence.”

Women reformers thus won a progressive end—government intervention in the economy on behalf of workers—by perpetuating an older belief in male/female difference and moreover inscribing that difference into law. In this crusade, activist women, mostly middle-class and white, gained public power for themselves while at the same time cementing in public policy a view of working women as peculiarly vulnerable workers. This image of working women, while justifying legislation that genuinely helped many, made it impossible for women to compete effectively with men in many sectors of the labor market. This law created a complicated bequest to later generations of American women . . .

Another campaign rooted in a belief in the difference between women and men was the movement for mothers’ pensions. Mothers’ pensions were public stipends paid to mothers—usually widows—who found themselves without male support. The purpose of these payments was to allow impoverished mothers to remain at home with their children rather than having to put them in an orphanage or neglect them while working for wages. Led especially by the NMC and the GFWC, white activists lobbied their state governments for such programs and won them in virtually every state by the mid-1920s. These programs, unfortunately poorly funded and often unjustly administered, set the precedent for Aid to Dependent Children, a federal program enacted as part of the Social Security Act in 1935 during Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal . . .

Muncy, 18–19.
5. Family Economy

If married women did not work for pay outside their homes, their children did. The laborer whose annual earnings amounted to only $384 depended on his 13-year-old son, not his wife, to go out and earn an extra $196, critical to the family's welfare. Sending children into the labor market was an essential survival strategy for many working-class Americans. In 1880, one-fifth of the nation's children between the ages of 10 and 14 held jobs.

Child labor was closely linked to a father's income, which in turn depended on skill, ethnic background, and occupation . . . Middle-class reformers who sentimentalized childhood disapproved of parents who put their children to work. As one investigator of working-class life reported, “Father never attended school, and thinks his children will have sufficient schooling before they reach their tenth year, thinks no advantage will be gained from longer attendance at school, so children will be put to work as soon as able.” Reformers believed that such fathers condemned their children to future destitution by denying them education. Actually, sending children to work was a means of coping with the immediate threat of poverty, financing the education of one of the children, or paying off the mortgage. Many more young people over the age of 14 were working for wages than was the case for children. Half of all Philadelphia’s students had quit school by that age. Daughters as well as sons were expected to take positions, although young women from immigrant families were more likely to work than young American women. As Arthur’s Home Magazine for women pointed out, a girl's earnings would help “to relieve her hard-working father of the burden of her support, to supply home with comforts and refinements, to educate a younger brother.”

Nash et al., 631.
6. Child Labor

Child labor was an emotional issue. Many businesses made large profits by employing children, and many legislators and government officials, remembering their own rural childhoods, argued that it was good for the children’s character to work hard and take responsibility. Reformers, marshaling their evidence about the tragic effects on growing children of working long hours in dark and damp factories, pressured the Illinois state legislature into passing an anti–child labor law. A few years later, however, the state supreme court declared the law unconstitutional . . .

The National Child Labor Committee, headquartered in New York, drew up a model state child labor law, encouraged state and city campaigns, and coordinated the movement around the country. Although two-thirds of the states passed some form of child labor law between 1905 and 1907, many had loopholes that exempted a large number of children, including newsboys and youngsters who worked in the theater. The committee also supported a national bill introduced in Congress by Indiana Senator Albert Beveridge in 1906 “to prevent the employment of children in factories and mines.” The bill went down to defeat. However, the child labor reformers convinced Congress in 1912 to establish a children’s bureau in the Department of Labor. Despite these efforts, compulsory school attendance laws did more to reduce the number of children who worked than federal and state laws, which proved difficult to pass and even more difficult to enforce . . .

The crusade against child labor was a typical social justice reform effort. Its origins lay in the moral indignation of middle-class reformers. But reform went beyond moral outrage as reformers gathered statistics, took photographs documenting the abuse of children, and used their evidence to push for legislation first on the local level, then in the states, and eventually in Washington.

Like other progressive reform efforts, the battle against child labor was only partly successful. Too many businessmen, both small and large, were profiting from employing children at low wages. Too many politicians and judges were reluctant to regulate the work of children or adults because work seemed such an individual and personal matter. And some parents, who often desperately needed the money their children earned in the factories, opposed the reformers and even broke the law to allow their children to work.

Nash et al., 710–11.
**Theme Three Primary Source**

**Prohibition “Bust”**

**Question to Consider**
Why do you think Rhoads photographed the prohibition bust?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creator:</th>
<th>Harry M. Rhoads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context:</td>
<td>Prohibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience:</td>
<td>The public watched law enforcement open cases of liquor from the Blue Valley Distillery Company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose:</td>
<td>To show prohibition busts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Historical Significance:**
Some reformers waged a campaign for the prohibition of alcohol. In 1918, about three-quarters of the country lived in “dry” counties or states. A year later, Congress passed the Volstead Act, which banned the brewing and selling of beverages containing more than one-half percent alcohol. By June 1919, states ratified the Eighteenth Amendment that prohibited the sale, manufacture, and transportation of liquor within the United States. During Prohibition, nationally there were fewer arrests for drunkenness and the death rate due to alcoholism declined, but those who wanted to consume alcohol managed to with the help of bootlegging rings, speakeasies, and home brew. Enforcing the legislation became more difficult as organized crime flourished with the illegal sale of alcohol. The experiment to legislate moral reform ended with the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1933.

Item 4161
Harry M. Rhoads, PROHIBITION “BUST” (1920). Courtesy of the Western History/Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library.

See Appendix for larger image – pg. 60
7. Conservation

[Also during this period a debate developed over whether and how natural resources should be used to support a growing population.] . . . Using his executive authority, [Roosevelt] more than tripled the land set aside for national forests, bringing the total to more than 150 million acres . . .

More important than the conservation bills passed during Roosevelt's presidency, however, were his efforts to raise the public consciousness about the need to save the nation's natural resources. He convened a White House Conservation Conference in 1908 that included among its delegates most of the governors and representatives of 70 national organizations. A direct result of the conference was Roosevelt's appointment of a National Conservation Commission charged with making an inventory of the natural resources in the entire country. To chair the commission, Roosevelt appointed Gifford Pinchot, probably the most important conservation advocate in the country.

A graduate of Yale, Pinchot had studied scientific forestry management in Germany and France before becoming the forest manager of the Vanderbilt's Biltmore estate in North Carolina. In 1898, he was appointed chief of the U.S. Division of Forestry, and in 1900, he became the head of the Bureau of Forestry in the Department of Agriculture. An advocate of selective logging, fire control, and limited grazing on public lands, he became a friend and adviser to Roosevelt.

Pinchot's conservation policies pleased many in the timber and cattle industries; at the same time, they angered those who simply wanted to exploit the land. But his policies were denounced by the followers of John Muir, who believed passionately in preserving the land in a wilderness state. Muir had founded the Sierra Club in 1862 and had led a successful campaign to create Yosemite National Park in California. With his shaggy gray beard, his rough blue work clothes, and his black slouch hat, Muir seemed like an eccentric to many, but thousands agreed with him when he argued that to preserve the American wilderness was a spiritual and psychological necessity for overcivilized and overstimulated urban dwellers . . . The conflicting conservation philosophies of Pinchot and Muir were most dramatically demonstrated by the controversy over Hetch-Hetchy, a remote valley deep within Yosemite National Park. It was a pristine wilderness area, and Muir and his followers wanted to keep it that way. But in 1901, the mayor of San Francisco decided the valley would make a perfect place for a dam and reservoir to supply his growing city with water for decades to come. Muir argued that wilderness soon would be scarcer than water and more important for the moral strength of the nation. Pinchot, on the other hand,
maintained that it was foolish to pander to the aesthetic enjoyment of a tiny group of people when the comfort and welfare of the great majority were at stake.

The Hetch-Hetchy affair was fought out in the newspapers and magazines as well as in the halls of Congress, but in the end, the conservationists won out over those who wanted only to preserve the wilderness. Roosevelt and Congress sided with Pinchot and eventually the dam was built, turning the valley into a lake. But the debate over how to use the nation’s land and water would continue throughout the twentieth century.

Nash et al., 732–33.
Conclusion
From 1890 to 1921, reform movements created both more and less democracy in the United States, but both liberal and conservative reformers attempted to cope with a new country—more urban, more educated, and more diverse. Some reformers achieved greater democracy by improving work conditions, housing, education, and the conservation of natural resources, but other reformers stifled democracy by promoting racial segregation and limiting voting rights.

Questions to Consider
1. How was African American migration a result of the reform movements that provided less democracy?
2. How did immigration of foreigners and the migration of African Americans to the North change the country?

Unit Conclusion
During the late 1800s and early 1900s, many Americans left farms and moved to cities for jobs in factories and offices. For a new urban middle class with discretionary income to spend, part of the attraction of living in cities was the amount and variety of consumer goods available to purchase. The advertising industry promoted the same consumer goods to regional and national markets, and persuaded many Americans that their image and status relied on their ability to buy and display goods. Often clashing with traditional rural values, advertisers and entrepreneurs marketed to the new population of single men and women who had moved from the control of parents and small town communities to the new freedoms of city life.

With the influx of people, city leaders, government officials, and reformers confronted problems with overcrowding, sanitation, and access to clean water and sought the best approach for dealing with rapid urbanization. Activist citizens worked for reform in public education, work conditions, labor rights, women’s rights, the safety of the food supply, and the conservation of natural resources. Often working at odds to each other, some of these reform movements sought to expand democracy; others sought to limit democracy. The reformers produced local and state legislation aimed at regulating building codes, improving factory safety, and abolishing child labor. Yet, many citizens became convinced that only the federal government had the power and resources to protect the general public through government regulation.
**Timeline**

1889  Jane Addams establishes Hull House

1890s  Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho grant women suffrage

1900  Population of New York City reaches 4,023,000

1902  National Reclamations Act uses proceeds for public land sale to finance irrigation projects

1904  Lincoln Steffens exposes connections between corrupt politicians and businessmen in *The Shame of the Cities*

1905  Industrial Workers of the World union formed in Chicago

1906  Upton Sinclair exposes the meatpacking industry in *The Jungle*

1906  Pure Food and Drug Act

1906  Meat Inspection Act

1906  W.E.B. Du Bois and others organize Niagara Movement

1907–14  Sterilization laws enacted in 12 states

1907–24  3,000 Americans are involuntarily sterilized

1909  NAACP formed

1910  Mann Act prohibits transportation of women across state lines for “immoral purposes”

1912  Massachusetts passes first minimum-wage law

1912  Progressive party founded by Theodore Roosevelt

1912  Congress establishes a children’s bureau in the Department of Labor

1913  Henry Goddard writes *The Kallikak Family*

1913  Raker Act allows Hetch-Hetchy Reservoir to be built in Yosemite National Park
**Timeline continued**

1913  Sixteenth Amendment gives Congress power to impose federal tax on income from all sources

1913  IQ testing program instituted on Ellis Island

1914–18  World War I

1919  Prohibition Act becomes law

1919  One car for every 16 Americans

1920  Nineteenth Amendment prohibits states from denying the vote on account of sex

1924  Indian Citizenship Act grants full U.S. citizenship to America’s indigenous peoples
UNIT REFERENCE MATERIALS


FURTHER READING


Visit the Web Site

Explore these themes further on the America’s History in the Making Web site. See how this content aligns with your own state standards, browse the resource archive, review the series timeline, and explore the Web interactives. You can also read full versions of selected Magazine of History (MOH) articles or selected National Center for History in the Schools (NCHS) lesson plans.
THEME ONE PRIMARY SOURCE
Item 5510
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
THEME ONE PRIMARY SOURCE
Item 5598
John Held, Jr., THE GIRL WHO GAVE HIM THE COLD SHOULDER (1923).
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
THEME ONE PRIMARY SOURCE
Item 4987
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
THEME TWO PRIMARY SOURCE
Item 6802
Jacob Riis, WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS IN NEW YORK (1890).
Courtesy of Snark/Art Resource NY.
THEME TWO PRIMARY SOURCE
Item 4988

Courtesy of the University of North Carolina, School of Public Health.
THEME TWO PRIMARY SOURCE
Item 6142
Lewis Wicks Hine, GENERAL VIEW OF SPINNING ROOM, CORNELL MILL (1912),
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
Appendix 3-1

Theme Three Primary Source

Item 5974

Unknown, Abigail Scott Duniway Signing First Equal Suffrage Proclamation Ever Made by a Woman (1912). Courtesy of Women of Protest: Photographs from the records of the National Woman’s Party, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.
Nation Wide Conference
called by
National Consumers’ League
on the
Minimum Wage Decision
of the Supreme Court of the United States

This decision affirms your constitutional right to starve

THEME THREE PRIMARY SOURCE
Item 4162
 THEME THREE PRIMARY SOURCE
 Item 4161
 Harry M. Rhoads, PROHIBITION “BUST” (1920).
 Courtesy of the Western History/Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library.