

Whose Government? Politics, Populists, and Progressives

1880–1917

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The following annotated chapter outline will help you review the major topics covered in this chapter.

I. Reform Visions, 1880–1892

A. Electoral Politics After Reconstruction

1. New Initiatives

- a. In the 1880s and 1890s, labor unions and agrarian or farmers' groups took the lead in critiquing the new industrial order and demanding change. Over time, more and more middle-class and elite Americans also took up the call, eventually earning the name progressives.
- b. On the whole, middle-class progressives proposed more limited measures than radical labor and farmer advocates did, but since they wielded more political clout, they often had greater success in winning passage of new laws.
- c. Disillusionment with Republicans, resurgence of Democrats in the South, rapid population growth, and the

addition of new states contributed to fierce party competition and political instability.

- d. More voters turned out in presidential elections between 1876 and 1892 than in any other time in American history because they held strong views about issues related to the outcome of the Civil War, rights for African Americans, and economic policy.
- e. Presidents during this era could not act aggressively because they were elected on narrow margins and often had to work with a Congress controlled by the opposing party.
- f. Although the term *Gilded Age* applies to the economic history of this time period, politics was not stagnant or meaningless; instead, Americans bitterly disagreed over how to clean up corruption and rein in corporate power.
- g. After the assassination of President Garfield in 1881, reform of the spoils system became urgent, even though this system was not the immediate motive for the murder.

- h. The Pendleton Act of 1883 established a nonpartisan Civil Service Commission to fill federal jobs by examination. Cities and states across the country enacted similar laws.
 - i. Although this regulation seemed to benefit the educated middle class the most, it did place talented professionals into office, discouraged hiring of disqualified party supporters, brought consistency to government bureaucracy, and reduced corruption.
 - j. Leaders of the civil service movement included many proponents of classical liberalism, a term that at the time described those Americans, especially former Republicans, who became disillusioned with Reconstruction and advocated more limited and professionalized government.
 - k. During the 1870s and 1880s, farmer-labor advocates were able to pressure President Cleveland into signing the Interstate Commerce Act. At the same time, many states established commissions such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics to oversee private business and expose unsafe working conditions.
2. Republican Activism
- a. In 1890, the Republican-controlled Congress extended pensions to all Union veterans and passed a law to regulate interstate corporations. Though it proved difficult to enforce and was soon weakened by the Supreme Court, the Sherman Antitrust Act (1890) was the first federal attempt to forbid any “combination, in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade.”
 - b. President Benjamin Harrison sought to protect black voting rights in the South. He found an ally in Massachusetts representative Henry Cabot Lodge, who drafted a bill to create a bipartisan federal elections board. Whenever one hundred citizens, in a district of 20,000 or more, appealed for intervention, the board would investigate. Upon finding evidence of fraud or disfranchisement, they could work with federal courts to seat the rightful winner.
 - c. Although the bill passed in the House, it failed in the Senate because northern liberals thought it provided for too much democracy, and western Republicans feared too much government interference.
 - d. The defeat was a devastating blow to those who sought to defend black voting rights. The episode marked the demise of the party of emancipation.
 - e. Voters and politicians opposed other Republican initiatives such as prohibition, end of state funding for Catholic schools, and protective tariffs. A major political shift in 1890 resulted in the re-election of Grover Cleveland by a large margin and Democrats capturing the House of Representatives.
- B. The Populist Program
- 1. Although rural voters pressured a few savvy Democrats to join the Farmers’ Alliance to address their needs, most did nothing.
 - 2. In Kansas, a state entirely dominated by Republicans who treated the Alliance with contempt, the Alliance joined with the Knights of Labor to form the People’s Party in 1890; they then stunned the nation by capturing four-fifths of the lower house of the Kansas legislature and most of the state’s congressional seats.
 - 3. The victory electrified workers and farm advocates nationwide. In July 1892, their delegates met at Omaha, Nebraska, formally created the national People’s Party, and nominated former Union general and Greenback-Labor leader James B. Weaver for president. In

November, the Populists, as they became known, captured a million votes and carried four western states.

4. Populists differed from the mainstream parties by calling for stronger government to protect ordinary people through means such as public ownership.
5. Populism represented a grassroots uprising of ordinary farmers and received much ridicule from the national press based in the Northeast.
6. Although farmers' votes were its chief instrument of victory, the People's Party attracted support from other groups such as Alabama steelworkers and Rocky Mountain miners but failed to interest other industrial workers.
7. Prohibitionist and women's suffrage leaders hoped that Populists would adopt their causes, but they were disappointed. Constituency thus remained limited.

II. The Political Earthquakes of the 1890s

A. Depression and Reaction

1. In 1893, after European investors pulled money out of the United States, farm foreclosures had increased, and railroad companies went bankrupt, the stock market crashed, initiating a lengthy depression that contributed to bank closures and soaring unemployment above 20 percent.
2. For Americans who had lived through the terrible 1870s, the depression looked grimly familiar. Even fresher in their minds were recent labor uprisings, including the 1886 Haymarket affair and the 1892 showdown at Homestead—followed, during the depression's first year, by a massive Pennsylvania coal strike and a Pullman railroad boycott that ended with bloody clashes between angry crowds and the U.S. Army.
3. In the summer of 1894, another protest jolted Americans. Radical reformer Jacob Coxey of Ohio proposed that the U.S. government hire the unemployed to fix the

nation's roads. In 1894, he organized jobless men to carry out a peaceful march to Washington to appeal for the program.

4. President Cleveland was out of step with his party on a major issue: expansion of federal coinage to include silver as well as gold coinage. Advocates of this free silver policy ("free" because the U.S. Mint would not charge a fee for minting silver coins) believed the policy would expand the U.S. money supply, encourage borrowing, and stimulate industry. But Cleveland was a firm advocate of the gold standard, believing the money supply should be closely tied to the nation's gold reserves.
 5. A secret arrangement with a syndicate of bankers led by John Pierpont Morgan to buy gold to replenish the Treasury—at a tidy profit for the bankers—enraged even fellow Democrats.
 6. On election day, large numbers of voters in Midwestern, Mid-Atlantic, and even in western states chose the Republicans, who promised to support business, put down social unrest, and bring back prosperity. The election gave Republicans control of the House by a margin of 245 to 105 and began sixteen years of Republican dominance in national politics.
- ### B. Democrats and the "Solid South"
1. In the South, the only region where Democrats gained strength in the 1890s, the People's Party met defeat for distinctive reasons.
 2. After the end of Reconstruction, African Americans had continued to vote in significant numbers in many areas. As long as Democrats competed for (and sometimes bought) black votes, the possibility remained that other parties could win their loyalty. Populists appealed to poor white and black people and built cross-racial ties.
 3. Although Democrats struck back by calling themselves the "white man's

- party” and denouncing Populists for promoting “Negro rule,” many white farmers, tenants, and wage earners ignored such appeals and continued to support populism.
4. Democrats vowed that white supremacy was nonnegotiable, and they looked for new ways to enforce it. As early as 1890, a state constitutional convention in Mississippi adopted a key innovation: an “understanding clause” that required would-be voters to interpret a clause of the state constitution, with local Democratic officials deciding who met the standard.
 5. After the Populist uprising, antivoting measures spread to other southern states. Louisiana’s grandfather clause, which denied the vote to any man whose grandfather had been unable to vote in slavery days, was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court. But in *Williams v. Mississippi* (1898), the Court allowed poll taxes and literacy tests to stand. By 1908, every southern state had adopted such measures.
 6. In most of the South, voter turnout plunged, from above 70 percent to 34 percent or even lower. Not only blacks but also many poor whites ceased to vote.
 7. Segregation laws proliferated and lynching of African Americans increasingly occurred in broad daylight.
 8. Although reformers, labor unions, and Populists heavily protested, the convict lease system also expanded and transitioned into the chain gang system of prisoners working directly for the state.
 9. This 1890s southern counterrevolution was clearly visible in Grimes County, Texas. Populists had swept into office in part owing to African American support. Democrats reacted by organizing a secret brotherhood, forcibly preventing blacks from voting, driving the sheriff out of the country, winning an overwhelming election, and ruling the county for the next fifty years.
- C. New National Realities
1. After their crushing defeats outside the South, Democrats astonished the country by embracing parts of the agrarian-labor program in the presidential election of 1896. They nominated young free-silver advocate William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska, who passionately defended farmers and attacked the gold standard.
 2. Populists, reeling from their recent defeats, endorsed Bryan for president. But their power was waning. Bryan ignored them, running as a straight Democrat without ever acknowledging the People’s Party nomination.
 3. The Populists never recovered from their defeats in 1894 or from Democrats’ ruthless opposition in the South and by 1900 faded away. Agrarian voters pursued their reform efforts elsewhere, particularly through the newly energized Bryan wing of the Democrats.
 4. The Republicans’ brilliant campaign manager, Ohio coal and shipping magnate Marcus Hanna, orchestrated an unprecedented fund-raising campaign for William McKinley in 1896 among corporate leaders. Under Hanna’s guidance, Republicans denounced Bryan’s supporters as “anarchistic,” backed away from moral issues such as prohibition of liquor, and reached out to invite new immigrants to vote with them. McKinley won handily: 271 electoral votes to Bryan’s 176.
 5. Nationwide, as in the South, the 1894–1896 realignment prompted a wave of political “reforms” such as imposing literacy tests and restrictions on voting for new immigrants. Leaders of both major parties worked to shut out future threats from new movements like the Populists. In the wake of such laws, voter turnout declined and the electorate narrowed in

ways that favored the native-born and wealthy.

6. Intending to increase the democratic power of those who could vote, both major parties increasingly turned to the direct primary, asking voters rather than party leaders to choose nominees.
 7. Another measure that enhanced democratic participation was the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution (1913), requiring voters, not state legislatures, to choose U.S. senators.
 8. In 1894, the Supreme Court proved hostile to many proposed reforms when it struck down a recently adopted federal income tax on the wealthy.
 9. Federal courts also invalidated many of the regulatory laws that states had passed to protect workers and promote public welfare, arguing that the courts were protecting workers from government regulation. As early as the case of *In re Jacobs* (1882), the New York State Court of Appeals struck down a public-health law that prohibited cigar manufacturing in tenements, arguing that such regulation exceeded the state's police powers. In *Lochner v. New York* (1905), the Supreme Court told New York State it could not limit bakers' workday to ten hours because that violated bakers' rights to make contracts.
 10. Farmer and labor advocates, urban progressives, and even the Supreme Court justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. disagreed with these rulings, arguing that judges did not recognize the difference between working and starving.
- III. Reform Reshaped, 1901–1912**
- A. Theodore Roosevelt as President
 1. Antitrust Legislation
 - a. In 1900, William McKinley easily won his second political face-off against Democrat William Jennings Bryan. Only six months into his second term, however, on September 14, 1901, the president was shot as he attended a fair in Buffalo, New York. He died eight days later.
 - b. Theodore Roosevelt, a reform-minded Republican, had political experience as a New York assemblyman, U.S. Civil Service commissioner, head of the New York City Police Commission, and McKinley's assistant secretary of the navy. After the Spanish-American War, Roosevelt was elected as governor of New York.
 - c. In an effort to neutralize this rising star, Republican bosses chose him as McKinley's running mate in 1900, hoping the vice-presidency would be a political dead end. Instead, they suddenly found Roosevelt in the White House.
 - d. Roosevelt did not prove to be quite the rebel his critics feared. He blended reform with the needs of private enterprise. During a bitter 1902 coal strike, his threats to nationalize coal companies if their owners refused to talk with the miners' union resulted in negotiations. Roosevelt also sought better enforcement of the Interstate Commerce Act and the Sherman Antitrust Act. In 1903, he pushed through the Elkins Act, which prohibited discriminatory and preferential railway rates. That same year, he created the Bureau of Corporations, empowered to investigate business practices and bolster the Justice Department's capacity to mount antitrust suits.
 - e. In 1904 Roosevelt won the presidential election by promising every American a Square Deal, and he stepped up his attack on trusts. The passage of the Hepburn Act in 1906 enabled the Interstate Commerce Commission to set shipping rates.

- f. Following its precedent from 1904 when it ordered the dissolving of Northwest Securities Company, the U.S. Supreme Court in 1911 ordered the breakup of Standard Oil into smaller competing companies. This federal authority to dissolve the most egregious monopolies resulted in antitrust actions against other giant companies.
2. Environmental Conservation
 - a. Roosevelt, an ardent outdoorsman and hunter, translated his love for nature into environmental action.
 - b. He issued fifty-one executive orders creating wildlife refuges, oversaw the creation of three national parks, and vigorously used the Antiquities Act to set aside beautiful sites such as the Grand Canyon.
 - c. Many of his conservation policies had a strong pro-business bent.
 - d. He increased the amount of land held in federal forest reserves and turned their management over to a new, independent U.S. Forest Service. But Roosevelt's forestry chief, Gifford Pinchot, insisted on fire suppression to maximize logging potential.
 - e. In addition, Roosevelt supported the Newlands Reclamation Act (1902), which promoted economic development in the West but also gave the federal government the ability to sell public lands to raise money for irrigation projects that expanded agriculture on arid lands.
 3. Roosevelt's Legacies
 - a. Theodore Roosevelt was a man of contradictions whose presidency left a mixed legacy. An unabashed believer in what he called "Anglo-Saxon" superiority, Roosevelt nonetheless invited Booker T. Washington to dine at the White House, earning fierce denunciation from white supremacists.
 - b. Similarly, Roosevelt was an advocate of elite rule who called for the "best men" to enter politics, but he also defended the dignity of labor.
 - c. In 1908 Roosevelt retired and passed the Republican nomination to William Howard Taft who easily defeated William Jennings Bryan.
 - d. Disagreements over the reach and assertiveness of reform soon split the Republican Party into conservatives who opposed further reform and militant progressives who thought Roosevelt and Taft had not done enough.
 - e. Reconciling these conflicting forces was a daunting task for Taft; through various incidents, he found himself on the opposite side of progressive Republicans, who began to call themselves "Insurgents."
- B. Diverse Progressive Goals
 1. Protecting the Poor
 - a. Although activists at the grassroots level called for more aggressive action and more democracy, groups of progressives—women, antipoverty reformers, and African American advocates—often disagreed about priorities and goals.
 - b. States often served as seedbeds of change. Wisconsin's Republican governor Robert La Follette promoted the Wisconsin Idea that called for more government intervention in the economy, with reliance on economic experts; he also expanded democracy by restricting lobbying activities and giving citizens the right of recall (voting to remove unpopular politicians from office) and referendum (voting directly on a proposed measure instead of relying on elected legislators).
 - c. Progressives, inspired by the emerging fields of social science, focused special

- attention on the plight of the urban poor, arguing that individual laziness and ignorance did not cause unemployment and crowded slums, as elite Americans had long believed.
- d. Reformers, focusing on labor conditions for women and children, established the National Child Labor Commission in 1907 and hired Lewis Hine to photograph the conditions for children working in mines and mills.
 - e. These investigations inspired Roosevelt to sponsor the first White House Conference on Dependent Children in 1909, which in turn contributed to the creation of the Children's Bureau in the U.S. Labor Department.
 - f. One of the National Consumers' League's greatest triumphs was the Supreme Court's decision in *Muller v. Oregon* (1908), which upheld an Oregon law limiting women's workday to ten hours.
 - g. This decision inspired women's organizations to work for further reform, resulting in the first law providing public assistance for single mothers with dependent children (Illinois, 1911) and the first minimum wage law for women (Massachusetts, 1912).
 - h. The *Muller* decision, however, also dismayed labor advocates because it did not address men's working hours, and it divided female reformers because it declared that women as mothers deserved special protection.
 - i. Labor reforms steadily advancing through state initiatives did benefit men, most notably workmen's compensation laws; by 1917, all the industrial states had enacted insurance laws covering on-the-job accidents.
 - j. State initiatives, however, limited national reform. Several states strictly regulated child labor, but only four passed the proposed U.S. constitutional amendment to abolish child labor. Decentralized power that permitted innovation in states also hampered the creation of national minimum standards for wages and job safety.
2. The Birth of Modern Civil Rights
 - a. In the wake of the *Plessy* decision, southern disfranchisement, and deterioration of African American rights, a new generation of African American leaders challenged the leadership of Booker T. Washington.
 - b. Harvard-educated sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois called for a "talented tenth" of educated blacks to develop new strategies.
 - c. In 1905, Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter called a meeting at Niagara Falls—on the Canadian side, because no hotel on the U.S. side would admit blacks. The group's Niagara Principles called for full voting rights; the end of segregation; equal treatment in the justice system; and equal opportunity in education, jobs, health care, and military service. These principles, based on black pride and an uncompromising demand for full equality, guided the civil rights movement throughout the twentieth century.
 - d. Not long after the conference, a shocking atrocity brought public attention to the civil rights cause. In 1908, a bloody race riot broke out in Springfield, Illinois, hometown of Abraham Lincoln.
 - e. Appalled by the violence against blacks, New York settlement worker Mary White Ovington called together a small group of sympathetic progressives. Their meeting led in 1909 to the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of

Colored People (NAACP). Most leaders of the Niagara Movement soon joined, and W.E.B. Du Bois became editor of the NAACP journal, *The Crisis*.

- f. The fledgling NAACP allied with black churches, the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, and the National Urban League (1911), a union of agencies that assisted black migrants in the North. Over the coming decades, these groups grew into a powerful force for racial justice.
3. The Problem of Labor
 - a. Leaders of the nation's dominant union, the American Federation of Labor, had long preached that workers should improve wages and working conditions through strikes and direct negotiations with employers, not political action.
 - b. But by the 1910s, as progressive reformers came forward with solutions, organized labor leaders in state after state began to join the cause.
 - c. At the same time, more radical and more militant labor groups emerged. In 1905, the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), led by fiery leaders like "Big Bill" Haywood, joined with other radicals to create a new movement, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).
 - d. The Wobblies, as the IWW were called, were fervent supporters of the Marxist class struggle, arguing that by resisting in the workplace and ultimately launching a general strike, workers could overthrow capitalism.
 - e. At its height in power, the IWW counted about 100,000 members and conducted several strikes against major railroad companies, textile concerns, and mining companies.
 - f. Violence carried out by union members, such as the bombing of the *Los Angeles Times* headquarters on October 1, 1910, set the nation on edge and turned labor issues into a national agenda during the 1912 presidential election.
- C. The Election of 1912
 1. After completing a yearlong safari in Africa, Roosevelt yearned to reenter the political fray. In a speech in Osawatimie, Kansas, in August 1910, Roosevelt made the case for what he called a New Nationalism that proposed a federal child labor law, more recognition of labor rights, and a national minimum wage for women. Roosevelt also endorsed women's suffrage and curbing the power of the courts.
 2. Early in 1912, Roosevelt announced himself as a Republican candidate for president, sweeping Insurgents into his camp. A bitter battle within the party ensued. Roosevelt won the states that held primary elections, but Taft controlled party caucuses elsewhere. Dominated by regulars, the Republican convention chose Taft. Roosevelt led his followers into what became known as the Progressive Party, offering his New Nationalism directly to the people.
 3. Roosevelt was not the only rebel on the ballot in 1912. The major parties also faced a challenge from charismatic socialist Eugene V. Debs.
 4. In the 1890s, Debs had founded the American Railway Union (ARU), a broad-based union that included both skilled and unskilled workers. In 1894, amid the upheavals of depression and popular protest, the ARU had boycotted luxury Pullman sleeping cars, in support of a strike by workers at the Pullman Company. Railroad managers, claiming that the strike obstructed the U.S. mail, persuaded the Cleveland administration to

intervene against the union. The strike failed. Along with other ARU leaders, Debs served time in prison.

5. The experience radicalized Debs, and in 1901 he launched the Socialist Party of America. Debs translated socialism into an American idiom, emphasizing the democratic process as a means to defeat capitalism. By the early 1910s, his party had secured a minor but persistent role in politics.
6. Among the Democrats' new generation of leaders was Virginia-born Woodrow Wilson, a political scientist who had served as president of Princeton University. As governor of New Jersey, Wilson had compiled an impressive reform record, including passage of a direct primary, workers' compensation, and utility regulation. In 1912, he won the Democratic presidential nomination.
7. With four candidates in the field—Taft, Roosevelt, Wilson, and Debs—the 1912 campaign generated intense excitement. But the division of former Republicans between Taft and Roosevelt made the results fairly easy to predict.
8. Wilson won, though he received only 42 percent of the popular vote and almost certainly would have lost if Roosevelt had not been in the race. With his warnings about “free enterprise” and his markedly southern racial views, Wilson appeared to be a rather old-fashioned choice. But with labor protests reaching new peaks of visibility and middle-class progressives gathering public support, Wilson faced intense pressure to act.

IV. Wilson and the New Freedom

A. Economic Reforms

1. Wilson was a Democrat, and labor interests and farmers made up important components of his party's base. But Democrats had a blind spot: their unwillingness to address African American needs.
2. In an era of rising corporate power, Democrats had come to believe that workers needed stronger government to intervene on their behalf.
3. One landmark achievement during the Wilson administration was the establishment of the progressive income tax through the Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1913. Congressional law in 1914 taxed incomes above \$4,000 per year. The tax affected less than 5 percent of households.
4. Combined with the inheritance tax established in 1917, this measure created a new way to fund the federal government and replaced tariffs as the chief source of revenue.
5. The new president also reorganized the nation's financial system to address problems caused by the absence of a central bank. The main function of central banks at the time was to back up commercial banks in case they could not meet their obligations. In the United States, the great private banks of New York assumed this role; if they weakened, the entire system could collapse. This had nearly happened in 1907, when the Knickerbocker Trust Company failed and caused a financial panic.
6. The Federal Reserve Act of 1913 gave the nation a banking system more resistant to financial panic. It created twelve district reserve banks funded and controlled by their member banks, with a central Federal Reserve Board to impose public regulation.
7. Wilson and the Democratic Congress turned next to the trusts. Wilson relied heavily on Louis D. Brandeis, the celebrated “people's lawyer,” who believed vigorous competition in a free market was most efficient. The trick was to prevent trusts from unfairly using their power to curb such competition.

8. In the Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914, which amended the Sherman Act, the definition of illegal practices was left flexible, subject to the test of whether an action “substantially lessen[ed] competition or tend[ed] to create a monopoly.” A new Federal Trade Commission received broad powers to decide what was fair, investigating companies and issuing “cease and desist” orders against anticompetitive practices.
 9. The Commission on Industrial Relations, appointed near the end of Taft’s presidency and charged with investigating the condition of labor, revealed in its 1913 report that many workers earned \$10 or less per week, endured regular periods of unemployment, and faced constant poverty and hardship. The commission concluded that labor activism was the result of employers’ ruthless antiunionism. The report recommended federal protection for workers’ right to organize and collective bargaining. Although too radical for its time, this report helped set an agenda that was finally addressed in the 1930s.
 10. The report also inspired Wilson to support pro-labor legislation such as the Adamson Act, establishing an eight-hour day for railroad workers; the Seamen’s Act, outlawing age-old abuses of merchant sailors; and a workmen’s compensation law for federal employees.
 11. Wilson’s reforms, however, did not extend to African Americans; indeed, he rolled back the Republican policy of selected appointments of black postmasters. He also praised the film *Birth of a Nation* (1915), which depicted the Reconstruction-era Ku Klux Klan in heroic terms. In this way, Democratic control of the White House helped set the tone for the Klan’s return in the 1920s.
- B. Progressive Legacies
1. In the post–Civil War era, millions of Americans understood that the political system needed to adjust to new industrial conditions.
 2. Whether they were rural, working-class, or middle-class, reformers faced fierce opposition from powerful business interests. When reformers managed to win a key regulatory law, they often found it struck down by hostile courts. Thus, the Progressive Era in the United States should be understood partly by its limitations.
 3. Racial prejudice and increasing elitism warped the cause of reform; African Americans, their plight ignored by many white reformers, faced segregation and violence.
 4. Divided power in a federalist system blocked the passage of uniform national laws on such key issues as child labor. Key social welfare programs—including national health insurance and old-age pensions, which became popular in Europe during these decades—scarcely made it onto the American agenda until the New Deal of the 1930s.
 5. Another limitation to progressive reform was the fact that business interests in the United States were exceptionally successful and powerful, flush with recent expansion. During the era of industrialization, voters in countries with older, more native-born populations supported more robust government regulation and social welfare spending than voters in younger countries populated with many immigrants. Younger voters seemed, logically, to be less concerned about health insurance and security in old age.
 6. Divisions within the American working class also played a role in limiting progressive reforms. Native-born whites, blacks, and immigrants often viewed one another as enemies or strangers rather than as members of a unified class with

common interests. This helps explain why the Socialist Party drew, at its peak, less than 6 percent of the U.S. vote at a time when its counterparts in Finland, Germany, and France drew 40 percent or more. Lack of pressure from a strong, self-conscious workingmen's party led to more limited results in the United States.

7. But it would be wrong to underestimate the achievements of agrarian, labor, and urban progressive reformers. Over the course of several decades, they persuaded more and more comfortable, prosperous Americans that the industrial economy required stronger government regulation.
8. Even the most cautious, elite progressives recognized that the United States had entered a new era. Giant multinational corporations overshadowed small businesses; with immigrants and farmers' children crowding into vast cities, ties of kin and village melted away. Outdated political methods—from the spoils system to corrupt urban machines—would no longer do.
9. Progressives created new wisdom. Between 1883 and 1917, they drew the blueprints for a modern American state, one whose powers more suited the needs of an industrial era. At the same time, a stronger, more assertive United States began to exercise new influence on the world stage.