

The Progressive Era
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During weak moments, I sometimes asked myself if choosing to study the Gilded Age and Progressive Era was a poor career choice for an American historian. I fanaticize that it might be easier and more popular to study a period defined by war. There seems to be an endless flow of best selling books on war. Most wars have a clear beginning and ending that is familiar to Americans. They include heroic stories of human sacrifice, as well as distinct consequences. In addition, examining wartime's drama justifies historians' overarching statements about military conflict as important moments in history. At first glance, none of this seems true of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era: "The GAPE." The years following the end of the American Civil War and the onset of World War I include military conflict (the brutal struggle to implement reservation policy on American Indians in the Last West and the brief fifteen-week Spanish-American War), but war was not the period's defining crucible. Some GAPE historians include World War I in the era's periodization, but the Great War did not mark either the beginning or ending of the many topics that shaped the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. So, as I ask the students enrolled in my GAPE course at University of Maryland, Baltimore County, why is it important to study the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with no major war to define these decades or even a concrete beginning and ending? Those of you with an interest in the GAPE may find the question ridiculous, but a former colleague who specialized in twentieth century military history once advised me to rush through the years between the end of the Civil War and the 1920s when teaching the U.S. history survey course because, in his words, "nothing very interesting happened during those years."

Of course, in the end I could not disagree more with my former colleague. Nonetheless, even those of us who discount my friend's assessment find ourselves unable to agree on a fundamental framework for studying the GAPE. For example, the periodization itself is a problem. Further, there is no single perspective that best defines the period's history. Looking from the top down, the bottom up, or applying race, ethnicity, and class to the analysis forces debates over whether the GAPE is a single time period or at least two distinct eras. In addition, questions arise as to whether region makes a difference when examining the GAPE, and if so, how do varying regional perspectives complicate the era's history? Despite such interpretive difficulties, most scholars agree that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century marked an important turning point in U.S. history: the "origins of modern America." Rapidly expanding industrialization, urbanization, the growth of big business and government, the settling of America's last frontiers, the United States' expanding influence in a world made smaller by new technology, the implementation of Jim Crow segregation, an intensified struggle for women's rights, a new immigration wave and greater diversity, major reforms in public health and social welfare policy, new definitions of family and childhood, expanding educational opportunities, professionalization, and the commercialization of leisure and mass consumer culture are just a few of the topics that fashioned this volatile period of American history. Looking at this list of topics underscores the importance of studying the GAPE in order to understand the development of the United States during the twentieth century—and beyond. Most important, focusing on Progressivism highlights the shifting struggles for power among accruing among various groups in a more urban and industrial United States.

Despite Progressivism's important legacy it is difficult to help students get a handle on so many diverse topics for a period with no definitive beginning or ending. Focusing on Theodore

Roosevelt (TR) as a window to the Progressive Era is one way to personalize these years for many students. Stacy Cordery's *Theodore Roosevelt: In the Vanguard of the Modern* (2003). Cordery does a marvelous job of placing TR as a man in and of his times. Roosevelt was the quintessential progressive whose life reflected the major issues facing Americans during the first decades of the twentieth century. Theodore Roosevelt brought new power and authority to the American presidency and the United States in a shrinking world moving toward its first world war. He also advocated new regulatory responsibilities for government such as conserving the environment. Roosevelt spoke about controversial topics such America's increasing diversity, and the escalating demand for women's rights. By 1912, Roosevelt reflected the overwhelming popular appeal of progressive reform. His death in 1919 came at a time when many Americans backed away from reform minded politics and instead sought a "return to normalcy" after witnessing the world's worst military conflict up to that date.

Who Were the Progressives?

Identifying progressives can be as difficult as defining the era in which they held their greatest influence. Nevertheless, historians tend to agree on some general commonalities shared by most individuals thought of as progressive reformers. First, they tended to be individuals born between 1860 and 1885. These men and women were the first generation of Americans to come of age in a United States without slavery and an economy dominated by industrialization and urbanization rather than agriculture. Second, most were native-born, white, middle-class, urban dwellers. They had better access to education than earlier generations and many were college educated. This was a significant fact at a time when only 6.3 percent of seventeen year olds in America graduated from high school (1900). In 1920, the rate rose to 15 percent. Third, progressives saw themselves as linked to like-minded individuals and self-identified as

“reformers.” This last point is perhaps the most important factor justifying the labeling of the period as the Progressive Era. There was no unified movement, but many people believed the nation, and much of the world, had entered a new period of human history that demanded thoughtful reforms.

What Ideas did American Progressives Share?

So, what ideas did self-identified Progressives share? First, they tended to be a very optimistic bunch that embraced education, technology, and science as a means to a secure and improve the future for everyone. Second, in the United States their optimism was strengthened by a strong belief in American exceptionalism and moral superiority grounded in (Protestant) Christian values. Not all Progressives were Protestant Christians, but there was an assumption among many that such traditions formed the basis of America’s moral superiority. Third, Progressives shared the belief that government could serve as a tool for improving the well-being of all Americans. Fourth, consistent with their belief in education, Progressives advocated “scientific investigation” (social science data collection) and the employment of trained “experts to solve society’s problems. Professionalization in all areas of the economy and the growth of the social sciences were fundamental aspects of Progressivism. Finally, Progressive reformers rejected the notion of inevitability and looked to standardization as a key to a secure future.

What Didn’t the Progressives Share?

It is also important to look at factors that divided progressives. As a group they saw themselves as reformers, but there was no shared identification of a single problem that needed their attention. Progressivism included an alphabet soup of social, political, and economic issues. Even those focused on an issue, could not agree on a single solution. They also failed to share a single vision for the future. All of this points to the fact that Progressivism was not a single

“movement.” There was no single group that defined the Progressive agenda or measured its success. In addition, despite reformers rhetoric about promoting greater democracy and opportunity, Progressivism generally neglected questions of racial and ethnic equality. And finally, Progressivism did not have longevity. Many changes implemented during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century have shaped modern America, but Progressivism’s major influence did not continue into the 1920s.

Why Progressivism?

Challenges to traditional power structures were the biggest factors influencing the embrace of progressive ideas at the turn-of-the twentieth century. Industrialization and urbanization were expanding at a fever pace by the end of the nineteenth century. This shift reorganized economic and political power in the United States from a system rooted in an agrarian society to one built on industry, capital expansion, and cities. A new immigration wave intensified this trend. Newcomers from northern and western Europe continued to come to the United States, but after 1880 they were joined in growing numbers by immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, the Caribbean, and Asia. Turn-of-the century Americans witnessed the highest immigration rates in U.S. history. In addition, unlike earlier periods of American history, most immigrants during the Progressive Era settled in urban areas rather than the countryside. Greater ethnic diversity and demographic trends favoring cities contributed further to the nation’s shifting economic and political power centers. The settling of America’s last frontiers was another factor contributing to the growth of Progressivism. Since the nation’s founding Americans had always looked to the frontier as an endless resource. As historian Frederick Jackson Turner noted in 1893, the Census of 1890 marked the disappearance of a distinct American frontier, and a growing number of Americans began to call for the conservation of

natural resources. The notion that resource were finite brought into question past practices dealing with the environment.

Simultaneously the growth of big business brought into question the role of government in regulating economic development and protecting the interests of individual Americans. The nation's expanding economy gave the United States new status among the world's greatest powers. The world had never witnessed the growth of business on the grand scale of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil, Andrew Carnegie's steel company, and the conglomerates of railroad and shipping magnates like Cornelius Vanderbilt and Jay Gould. The concentration of wealth in the hands of America's great capitalists highlighted the growing gap between the richest and poorest Americans. An expanding middle-class also felt threatened by what seemed to be limited entrepreneurial opportunities as the bulk of wealth was concentrated in the hands of a very few. By 1900, the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans controlled over one-third of the nation's wealth. In addition, poverty seemed more visible as the poor crowded in the nation's growing cities. Muckraking journalists such as Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, Jonathan Spargo, and others wrote exposés complaining about the excesses of unregulated capitalism. During the 1890s, Populists had already complained about the concentration of industrial wealth into monopolies, but much of the Populists' vision was rooted in America's agrarian past. Progressives trumpeted the benefits of industrialization and urbanization, but called for regulated by government and controls implemented by experts. Finally, the growing influence of the women's rights movement and a greater focus on childhood as a special period of life based on a middle-class family ideal signaled new roles for women and children within families and the larger society. These changes raised fundamental questions about where power would reside as the United States left its agrarian traditions behind.

Progressivism's "Must Haves"

While progressives did not agree on the details, they shared ideals that help students to understand the fundamentals of calls for reform at the turn-of-the twentieth century. First, progressives generally believed that government could be used as a tool for improving the well-being of all Americans. Second, political power moved toward the national government from the states, and there was an expansion of government at all levels. Third, U.S. foreign policy embraced interventionism as a key to world stability and the growth of American influence. Fourth, progressives endorsed greater female equality, independence, and a larger role in public life.

Theodore Roosevelt: Progressive

As Stacy Cordery argues, Theodore Roosevelt's life "helped to shape the very notion of what it means to be an American."¹ Roosevelt was born in 1858, just three years before the start of the American Civil War. His childhood recollections were of a nation redefining itself after its most devastating crisis. TR's private world mirrored modern middle-class definitions of family life and childhood that paralleled the growth of an increasingly industrial and urban economy. He married for love, and suffered great heartbreak when his wife and mother died on the same day. Like many Americans of the time, TR looked to the West as an escape and a place to make a fresh start after a personal hardship. In the process he helped to characterize modern American manhood as well as America's relationship to the environment. He wrote "Ranching Life and the Hunting Trail" in 1888 about his experiences as a western cowboy. Roosevelt loved the West and celebrated what he called the rugged life. Another Roosevelt essay, "The American Boy," published in 1900, was a prescription for raising sons and also a metaphor for TR's view of how

¹ Stacy A. Cordery, *Theodore Roosevelt: In the Vanguard of the Modern* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 2003), p.xi.

the United States should mature beyond its adolescence. According to Roosevelt, a son (and a nation) should not:

be a coward or a weakling, a bully, a shirk, or a prig. He must work hard and play hard. He must be clean-minded and clean-lived, and able to hold his own under all circumstances and against all comers. It is only on these conditions that he will grow into the kind of American man of whom America can be really proud.

Like his country, TR was bigger than life and extremely complex. He wanted to conserve the things he believed to be best about America's past, but he simultaneously embraced the future. His Square Deal philosophy was built on ideas that valued individual initiative and hard work, but also acknowledged a need for government regulation in order to establish an equal playing field for everyone. For TR, the new business economy offered vast opportunities, but unregulated capitalism and industrialization also threatened freedom. By the 1890s, calls for reform became the "progressive movement" and Progressivism became the single most important thread linking American politics and public policy from the 1890s through the passage and ratification of the eighteenth and nineteenth Amendments (in 1919 and 1920).

When he ascended to the presidency in 1901 upon the assassination of William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt became the poster boy for Progressivism. His death in 1921 marked the beginning of a period of diminished influence for progressives, but not their legacy. As Stacy Cordery argues, Theodore Roosevelt's "life and ideas" similar to the Progressives who supported him, "continue to resonate today."² The Progressives addressed almost every aspect of

² Ibid., p.175.

American society. The following paragraphs note a few of the major issues addressed by Roosevelt and Progressivism.

TR, Big Business, and Labor

During his lifetime Theodore Roosevelt was known as a trustbuster and friend of organized labor. But similar to his stance on most issues, Roosevelt was a moderate toward big business and labor. For example, he supported the creation of the Department of Commerce and Labor in 1903. The 1887 Interstate Commerce Act had created the Department of Commerce, but consistent with Roosevelt's call for a "Square Deal" for all Americans, the president endorsed the inclusion of also protecting and regulating labor's interests in the agency's mandate. In addition, Roosevelt signed the Hepburn Act of 1906 which strengthened the federal government's civil service system, thereby weakening political patronage. He resided over passage of the nation's first consumer protection laws, the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act enacted in 1906. The positive public response to such legislation was fueled by the publication of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1905). TR read Sinclair's book and endorsed greater regulation of the meatpacking industry.

Roosevelt was willing to use government authority when he believed business's power ran counter to American democratic ideals. His actions during the 1902 Anthracite Coal Strike demonstrate the president's moderate, but path breaking attitude toward big business and labor. In 1902, coal miners in Pennsylvania demanded the right to organize, wanted a 10 percent pay increase, and called for shortening the work schedule to nine hours a day, six days a week. The mine owners refused to negotiate with the strikers, then expected Roosevelt to send in troops to break up the strike. This had been the response of Roosevelt's predecessors to such labor actions. TR feared that many Americans might freeze to death over the winter in cities without coal.

Instead of sending in troops, Roosevelt threatened to send in the U.S. Army to work the mines if the owners and the union refused to negotiate. The resulting arbitration agreement gave the workers a 10 percent increase and reduced hours. But the final agreement did not include recognition of the union. The result was a clear reflection of Roosevelt's moderate approach to balancing the interests of labor and big business.

TR, like most progressives, condemned the growing practice of children working for wages in the nation's mines, streets, and factories. In 1903, Mary "Mother" Jones, a famous (or infamous) labor union activist, organized the March of the Children to draw attention to a textile workers strike in eastern Pennsylvania. Over the summer an estimated 100 to 200 children walked from Philadelphia to New York City carrying placards demanding an end to child labor and higher pay for adult workers. After a triumphant entrance to New York City, Jones took a small group of the marchers to Roosevelt's home on Oyster Bay. The president refused to see Jones's group, and did not respond to a letter Jones wrote to him asking for his public support. Roosevelt likely viewed the labor activist and her march as a radical publicity stunt, even though he had endorsed the idea of ending child labor. A majority of Americans supported calls to restrict child labor, but the issue faced strong opposition from manufacturing interests, newspapers, and other groups. Roosevelt was a skilled politician who used his political capital cautiously and did not advocate legislation to end child labor until the 1912 presidential campaign. On the other hand, while he was president, the Department of Justice prosecuted a growing number of anti-monopoly suits under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act and the Interstate Commerce Act (for example, forty-four in 1905 alone). But Roosevelt was not a wild-eyed radical for either business or labor. His role as the first president to implement new regulation of

business and his tempered support for organized labor marked a dramatic change from the policies of his Gilded Age predecessors.

TR and Foreign Affairs

Theodore Roosevelt was also a moderate in foreign affairs, although he was an interventionist. Roosevelt became a national celebrity during the Spanish-American War of 1898. When Congress declared war against Spain after the mysterious sinking of the Battleship Maine, Roosevelt quickly organized the “Rough Riders” and headed for Cuba. When he became president, the Spanish-American War hero’s foreign policy included the Roosevelt Corollary which expanded U.S. interventionist powers by drawing on the 1823 Monroe Doctrine. Many twentieth century presidents have used the Roosevelt Corollary to justify military intervention in the western hemisphere.

Roosevelt liked to say that he “walked softly and carried a big stick” when it came to foreign affairs. In 1905, he received the Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership in ending the Russo-Japanese War. He also used his “big stick”. For example, in 1907-1908 Roosevelt sent America’s Great White Fleet around the world to highlight the nation’s growing naval power. When Americans debated entrance into World War I, Roosevelt urged President Woodrow Wilson to intervene. For TR, American military intervention should be used to bring a Square Deal to the world.

Nevertheless, his claims to fairness, Theodore Roosevelt’s activist foreign policy was, and is, controversial. The best example is Roosevelt’s actions during the Panamanian revolution. During the first months of Roosevelt’s presidency, the French attempt to build a canal over the Isthmus of Panama ended in failure. When the Roosevelt Administration offered to buy the right to continue construction of the canal in Columbia’s colony, the Columbian government refused.

Roosevelt felt that construction of the canal was vital to his vision for the future. When a small group of Panamanians declared Panama's independence from Columbia in 1903, Roosevelt quickly recognized the new government and stationed a warship off the coast of Columbia. Roosevelt then signed a treaty with the new Panamanian government that gave the United States the right to build the canal, and maintain control over the canal zone for an outright grant of \$200,000 and an annual fee of \$1 "in perpetuity." The Panama Canal that opened in 1911 was a marvel of modern engineering. Roosevelt had gotten his canal, but by somewhat dubious means. In 1923 Congress agreed to pay Columbia reparations for its loss of Panama.

TR and the Environment

Many progressive reformers shared an interest in the environment. The American interest in conservation paralleled the settling of the nation's last frontiers. In 1872, Yellowstone National Park had become the first federally designated park in the world in 1872. Americans were beginning to realize that natural resources were finite. Roosevelt endorsed and signed the Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902 that established federal authority for building dams, irrigation systems, and other conservation projects in the western United States. The president was also a champion for the National Parks and the Antiquities Act of 1906. Roosevelt had an avid personal interest in preserving the nation's awe-inspiring sites. He designated eighteen national monuments beginning with Devils Tower in northeastern Wyoming in 1906. By 1916, there were fourteen national parks and twenty-one national monuments maintained by the Interior Department.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that Theodore Roosevelt was also a moderate on the environment. During the Progressive Era, environmentalists debated the merits of planned use conservation versus preservation. Roosevelt's close friend and head of the U.S. Forestry Service,

Gifford Pinchot, represented the planned use conservation argument. John Muir and the Sierra Club supported the preservationist stance. Under Roosevelt's watch, the preservationists made some headway but, in general, lost the debate to planned use conservationists like Gifford Pinchot.

The case of water for Los Angeles illustrates the differences between these two views on the environment and Theodore Roosevelt's personal leanings. Water, not gold, has long been the most valuable natural resource in the American West. William Mulholland was an ambitious Irish immigrant with limited education and a penchant for hard work who arrived in Los Angeles in 1878. He got a job as a ditch digger with the Los Angeles water company, taught himself hydraulic engineering, and memorized the entire L.A. water system. In 1886 Mulholland became superintendent of the city's water bureau.

The completion of the Los Angeles' area's two major railroads in 1876 and 1885 brought an abundance of newcomers came to the area. The city's population grew from just over 11,000 in 1880, to 50,000 in 1890, and doubled to 100,000 by 1900. Although exactly what businessmen and politicians had hoped for, the explosive population growth sucked the Los Angeles River dry by 1903. Fearing for the city's future, Mayor Fred Eaton suggested to his friend William Mulholland that the Owens River might be used to solve the city's water problem. The Owens River Valley benefited from the massive Sierra Nevada Mountain snowmelt. Farmers had already settled in the area taking advantage of the abundant water supply. Located more than 200 miles from L.A., the project would come at an enormous cost and test the limits of existing technology. Mulholland also knew that farmers in the Owens River Valley would certainly object to the city's plan. In addition, Mulholland knew that the federal government had already earmarked the Owens Valley for reclamation under the Newlands Act. Nevertheless, with

unabashed confidence and arrogance, Mulholland devised a daring scheme to harness the Owens River for Los Angeles.

Knowing that state and federal law gave landowners complete control over water running through or bordering their lands, Mulholland secretly learned who owned property in the Owens River Valley. He then sent men posing as Bureau of Reclamation agents to purchase land that held the access to water rights. Unsuspecting farmers believed they were selling land to the federal Bureau of Reclamation for a local irrigation project. When the plot was exposed, President Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot secretly supported Mulholland's plan. To guarantee that there would be no future irrigation projects in the Owens River Valley, Roosevelt designated the desert between Los Angeles and the Owens River Valley the Inyo National Forest; the country's only national forest without trees.

Mulholland also needed to secure public funding and support. Few Angelenos cared what happened to Owens River Valley farmers, but the project's cost did not seem to justify the expense. The aqueduct would supply much more water than the city actually needed. In order to quiet possible public controversy about the project's details, Mulholland enticed the most powerful businessmen in Los Angeles to form a real estate syndicate that purchased land in the San Fernando Valley. The city annexed the area. Although virtually worthless at the time, the San Fernando Valley would soon become a very successful agricultural area supplied with water from Mulholland's aqueduct. The businessmen involved in the syndicate would become very rich and therefore had a strong personal interest in seeing Mulholland's project succeed. Mulholland also had help from the weather. In 1905, Los Angeles voters were unaware of the real estate syndicate. But after suffering through more than a week of 100 plus degree heat, they overwhelmingly approved funds for the project by a margin of ten to one. This time Roosevelt

turned a blind eye to the corruption.

Mulholland's aqueduct was a technological marvel. Composed of pipe sections twelve-foot in diameter linked over the 233 miles to Los Angeles, there was little need for pumping stations. Instead, 142 tunnels totaling fifty-two miles in length made the trip almost entirely downhill. It took eight years and over 100,000 workers to complete the project which was finished in 1913, under budget and ahead of schedule. In a ceremony celebrating its dedication, Mulholland simply instructed Angelenos, "There it is; take it" as Owens River water poured over the San Fernando Valley spillway. Mulholland's aqueduct brought Los Angeles four times more water than its citizens could use and still supplies over 80 percent of the city's water.

The project made the San Fernando Valley's land speculators and corporate farmers very wealthy. Angelenos benefited from the city's municipally owned water system and the electric power provided by the network. Los Angeles grew eleven times faster than New York City and had 1,000,000 residents by 1922. Turning the desert into an Eden drew newcomers to the artificial urban garden known as "L.A.". The Owens River Valley farmers were ruined as water disappeared into Mulholland's pipes. Roosevelt believed the planned-use conservation interests of Angelenos outweighed that of Owens River farmers, or the natural environment.

TR and Social Welfare Reform

Social welfare was also a favorite issue for many progressives. Women throughout the United States joined clubs and worked to improve the urban neighborhoods. The settlement house movement, centered in Jane Addams' and Helen Gates Starr's Hull House, highlighted the greater visibility of poverty in America's growing cities and established social work as an acceptable profession for educated women. Addams and her allies were the major architects of America's infant semi-welfare state. Roosevelt had worked with Lillian D. Wald, founder of

New York's Henry Street Settlement, when he was chief of police and governor of New York. He became the most popular politician among progressives, even though he generally chose moderate positions on most social welfare issues while president. During his last weeks in office, Roosevelt called the first White House Conference on Dependent Children. This 1909 meeting set the standard for White House conferences for children that took place every decade of the twentieth century. The 1909 meeting's participants called for the establishment of a federal bureau for children and Roosevelt endorsed the idea in the 1912 Progressive Party's run for the presidency. Like many Americans, by 1912 TR had become a more radical progressive, especially on issues of social welfare reform. Although Roosevelt lost his run for the presidency in 1912, the creation of the U.S. Children's Bureau in 1913 led the move toward a greater federal responsibility for the lives of ordinary Americans throughout the twentieth century.

TR, Race, and Ethnicity

Despite their calls for great democracy and praise for American "pluralism", Theodore Roosevelt and the progressives were guilty of many of the racial and ethnic prejudices common to their times. For example, the Roosevelt Administration continued the federal policy of assimilation among American Indians that had been strengthened by the 1887 Dawes Severalty Act. Under the Dawes Act American Indians lost much of the reservation lands negotiated under earlier treaties, and they were "encouraged" to abandon their traditions. Many youngsters were sent from the reservations to boarding schools such as the Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. There boys and girls were prohibited from speaking their native languages or practicing Indian culture. Roosevelt, and many other progressives, held many of the same assimilationist and negative prejudices toward immigrants, especially those from Asia, and southern and eastern Europe.

Roosevelt's record on promoting equality for blacks was also poor. He was the first president to invite a black American, Booker T. Washington, to the White House. But he was also the president who signed the order giving dishonorable discharges to the entire regiment of black soldiers linked to the 1906 Brownsville Incident. Black soldiers stationed near Brownsville, Texas had been harassed by white residents. The racial tensions resulted in deadly violence. In response, Roosevelt discharged the entire regiment without trying to find those who were directly responsible, or discover the whites who had exacerbated racial tensions. Theodore Roosevelt, like most white progressives, ignored calls for greater racial equality from activists such as W.E.B. DuBois and Ida B. Wells-Barnett. This is especially significant at a time when upwards of 100 racially motivated lynchings took place each year in a nation strengthening Jim Crow segregation.

TR and Women's Rights

The fight for women's rights, and specifically woman's suffrage, gained momentum during the Progressive Era. The 1848 Seneca Falls Convention had planted the seed for the American women's rights movement. The effort, however, made only moderate gains throughout the nineteenth century. The growing integration of women into public life during the Progressive Era fueled the women's right movement. During his presidency, consistent with his moderate stance on many issues at the time, Theodore Roosevelt lent only lukewarm support to woman's suffrage. By 1912, TR and his Progressive Party, like a growing number of Americans, called for a federal amendment granting women the right to vote. U.S. entrance into World War I in 1917 added new energy to the woman's suffrage movement. Women proved their patriotism and abilities during the war. In addition, President Woodrow Wilson's justification for the war as an effort to "save the world for democracy", made the denial of female suffrage in the United States

less defensible. The existence of a new radical wing of the female suffrage movement, the Woman's Party, gave the movement's older wing mainstream respectability. Finally, the passage of the eighteenth amendment in 1918 removed a powerful incentive for the nation's liquor lobby to continue to fight against female suffrage. By the time Tennessee became the thirty-sixth state to ratify the nineteenth amendment in August, 1920, Roosevelt and the majority of Americans celebrated women's new citizenship status in the United States' Constitution as a positive good.

Conclusion

Calls for reform were the defining themes of the Progressive Era. The Election of 1912 marked the high point of Progressivism's popular support. The four major candidates for the presidency, William Howard Taft (Republican), Theodore Roosevelt (Progressive), Woodrow Wilson (Democrat), and Eugene V. Debs (Socialist) all viewed themselves as progressives. Roosevelt and his supporters split with the Republican Party and formed the Progressive Party. When Roosevelt was shot during a failed assassination attempt at a campaign stop, he continued with his speech and declared that it would take more than that to kill a bull moose. That sentiment seemed to also reflect the strength of popular support for progressive reforms. While calls for several progressive reforms failed, such as a federal law prohibiting child labor, four constitutional amendments were ratified during the second decade of the twentieth century. The Sixteenth Amendment (1913) gave authority for a federal income tax. The government needed new sources of revenue if given additional responsibilities under Progressivism. The Seventeenth Amendment (1913) established the direct election of senators, a theme consistent with calls for greater democracy. The Eighteenth Amendment (1919) prohibited the manufacture, sale, or importation of alcohol, a policy intended to maintain Protestant Christian values and "order" on an increasingly diverse America. The Nineteenth Amendment (1920) granted women the right to

vote, a reform showing women's new citizenship status in a more modern United States.

The wave of reform sentiment that swept the United States floundered by the late teens. Many of the ethnic and racial prejudices that continued to exist throughout the Progressive Era gained new fuel as fears of anarchy and radical politics were highlighted in by World War I. Calls for immigration restrictions intensified and demands for a "return to normalcy" dominated the Election of 1920. Theodore Roosevelt's death in 1919 seems to mark the end of Progressivism as a majority opinion. Nevertheless, the framework for a modern America established during the Progressive Era resonates throughout the twentieth century.

Suggested Readings

Secondary Sources

Some of the most influential works on the Progressive Era include:

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Primary Sources

Wisconsin Historical Society

Wisconsin was a hotbed of progressive reform politics. Therefore, the Wisconsin Historical Society Library (<http://arc.library.wisc.edu/>) contains an abundance of materials on the topic. Some of the most accessible include:

The papers of **Robert M. La Follette** (1855-1953) was one of the period's most prominent politicians and progressive reformers. La Follette was a national voice for progressive reform and an influential senator. He served as a Wisconsin congressman, governor, and U.S. senator. An online search using his name as a keyword phrase resulted in an abundance of primary source materials.

John J. Blaine (1875-1934) is another significant Wisconsin political figure from the period. Blaine ran for congress in 1904, was a state senator from 1909-1913, attorney general from 1919-1921, and Wisconsin's governor from 1921-1927.

Anita McCormick Blaine (1871-1958) was the daughter of Cyrus McCormick and the wife of Emmons Blaine, son of John J. Blaine. She was an important figure in education reform and later dedicated her efforts to world peace.

There are also a number of important progressive reform organizations papers housed by the library.

General Websites of Interest

The Library of Congress' **American Memory Project** (<http://www.loc.gov/ammem>) is another excellent website for primary source materials. The site includes a wonderful resource for teachers entitled "The Learning Page". Its sections entitled "The Rise of Industrial America" and Progressive Era to New Era include lesson plans and primary source materials on a number of useful topics. (For example, the impact of electricity, Indian boarding schools, Billy the Kid and the West, child labor in America, Jim Crow, and many more.) (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/theme.html>)

The "**American Women and Social Movements**" website is a good online source for including women's voices in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America. (<http://womhist.binghamton.edu>). The site includes primary source documents as well as historiographical essays for the period. The projects for the 1895-1914, and 1915-1919 period are especially relevant for those teaching about the Progressive Era.

The New Industrial Order

Andrew Carnegie (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/carnegie/peopleevents/pande01.html>) This website is sponsored by PBS's American Experience. It complements the PBS video on Carnegie's life. The section on "Making Money the Old Fashion Way" is very useful for teaching (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/carnegie/sfeature/money.html>).

Thomas Edison

America's most famous inventor. Edison turned invention into a business. The following website accompanies the American Experience documentary on Edison <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/edison/>

Rutgers University houses the **Edison Papers' Project**

<http://edison.rutgers.edu/>

Black Inventors

The American Inventors website includes a listing and biographical information of black American patent holders. Many were successful even during the strengthening of Jim Crow laws. <http://inventors.about.com/library/blblackinventors.htm>

John D. Rockefeller

(http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rockefellers/peopleevents/p_rock_jsr.html) This website is similar to the PBS site on Andrew Carnegie. I like to use the primary source materials from Ida Tarbell's History of Standard Oil as well as many of the other works on this site. For more on Tarbell see <http://tarbell.alleg.edu/>

The Rockefeller Trust maintains a website on philanthropy (<http://www.rockefeller.edu/archive.ctr/>).

The Vanderbilts

The opulent lifestyle of the richest Americans is evident on the Biltmore website. <http://www.biltmore.com/>. Wealthy Americans continued to build mansions during the Progressive Era, but it is useful to contrast these legacies of the Gilded Age with **Frank Lloyd Wright**'s new designs after the turn of the century when progressivism emphasized less flamboyant home construction (The American Crafts movement) <http://www.delmars.com/wright/flw1.htm> Be sure to also look at the examples of Wright's prairie style architecture <http://www.delmars.com/wright/flw2.htm>

Theodore Roosevelt

Roosevelt was the consummate progressive politician. The Library of Congress has an interesting website that features old film footage of Roosevelt's life.

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/trfhtml/>

The Theodore Roosevelt Association also has an interesting and useful website with images, speeches, and cartoons. <http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/>

Black Americans, Jim Crow, and Civil Rights

The Library of Congress's American Memory Project has a collection on African American pamphlets. The collection is keyword searchable. I have links on my website to a select group of these pamphlets: <http://www.research.umbc.edu/~lindenme/hist441/blackpamphlets.htm>

Conservation

The Library of Congress's site, "The Evolution of the Conservation Movement" has more than enough material to interest young environmentalists
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amrvhtml/conshome.html>

Consumer Culture

The growth of consumer culture and leisure is explained in PBS' s documentary on Richard Sears ("Mr. Sears Catalog") and "Coney Island". The Coney Island film also features a website
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/coney/gallery/index.html>

Professional Sports and Entertainment

The following website features images of **Boxing in 1890s New Orleans**.
<http://www.common-place.org/vol-03/no-02/haley/>

The Library of Congress has a marvelous collection of **Vaudeville** theater materials, including some motion pictures.

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/vshtml/vshome.html>

To Market, To Market looks at the effects of transportation technologies on consumers and urban life <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/97/market/main.html>

Immigration

The New York Tenement Museum offers a very good website with commentary and primary source materials <http://www.tenement.org/>

I also like to use the **Ellis Island Museum** website when discussing Gilded Age and Progressive Era immigration <http://www.ellisland.org/>

Labor History

There are many online sources for investigating and teaching about labor history. Two are my favorites are:

The Chicago Public Library's presentation of the **1887 Haymarket Riot**,

<http://www.chipublib.org/004chicago/timeline/haymarket.html>

And the Chicago Historical Society's wood engravings of press coverage of the incident

<http://www.chicagohs.org/hadc/visuals/engratic.htm>

Coal Mining

Coal was the fuel of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. This website illustrates many of the dangers associated with mining in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century

http://www.history.ohio-state.edu/projects/Lessons_US/Gilded_Age/Coal_Mining/default.htm

Child Labor

Children had always worked in America, but industrialization took many young workers from the fields to the factories and streets. The issue of “child labor” was an issue that also gained widespread attention during the Progressive Era. The University of Maryland Baltimore County Special Collections library has put many of the National Child Labor Committee’s Lewis Hine photographs on the web <http://aok.lib.umbc.edu/Speccoll/hinepage.php3> (includes photographs from Wisconsin).

The National History Day website includes a lesson plan on child labor and reformers. http://nationalhistoryday.org/03_educators/2001-2002curbook/new_page_16.htm

The **Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire** in 1911 grabbed the nation’s attention for labor reform. The Cornell University site on the topic includes essays, primary source documents and photographs. One of the most useful documents is a list of the “victims” and their ages. <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/> This event is often used to illustrate the trend toward women’s wage labor and the eventual call for labor reforms. It can also be used to illustrate the youth and ethnicity of many wage workers in the nation’s growing cities.

America’s Last West

Many websites talk about settlement in the West. It is valuable to remember that the “western frontier” continues into the early 20th century. Wisconsin teachers may find the following site on frontier images of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century particularly helpful, **Settlement in the Upper Midwest** <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/umhtml/umhome.html>

Another focuses on California, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cbhtml/cbhome.html>

Woman’s Suffrage

There are a number of excellent sites covering the history of the fight for female suffrage from 1848 through ratification of the 19th Amendment. One of the best is:

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/naw/nawshome.html>

For a solid lesson plan see “Voices for Votes”

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/00/suffrage/index.html>

and “Women’s Rights and Nothing Less”

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/99/suffrage/intro.html>

Women and Reform

I have placed a few of my favorites on my website focused on women and reform at

<http://www.research.umbc.edu/~lindenme/hist441/reform.htm>

The sites feature Prohibition, Female Suffrage, and Birth Control. The aforementioned “American Women and Social Movements” website is also a good source for a variety of topics concerning women and reform.

