**CHAPTER 19**

**The Progressive Era**

**Learning Outcomes**

* 1. Discuss the reform efforts of the Progressive era and the groups involved in these efforts.

**Objectives**

1. Identify the groups most involved in reform during the Progressive era.

2. Describe the attempts at reform in America’s cities, especially the Settlement House movement and the Anti-Saloon League.

* 1. Describe the methods used by the various states to bring about reforms in state governments during the Progressive era.

**Objectives**

1. Explain the changes, such as the referendum and primary elections, made by some of the states during the Progressive era, to make their governments more democratic.

2. Discuss the trend toward hiring professionals to administer city governments, and assess the degree to which this change improved the government.

* 1. Compare and contrast the progressivism of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson.

**Objectives**

1. Describe Theodore Roosevelt’s focus and actions as a progressive reformer during his presidency.

2. Describe the absence of progressive reforms during the presidency of William Howard Taft.

3. Describe Woodrow Wilson’s focus and actions as a progressive reformer during his presidency.

* 1. Discuss the involvement of women’s groups in the Progressive-era reform movements.

**Objectives**

1. Compare and contrast the two major women’s suffrage groups of the Progressive era.

2. Explain when and how the efforts resulting in the implementation of women’s suffrage finally bore fruit.

* 1. Describe ways in which American culture was influenced by the Progressive movement.

**Objectives**

1. Explain who the muckrakers were, and describe their impact on the reforms during the Progressive era.

2. Discuss the ways in which business, education, and social laws were changed by those who adopted the ideals of progressivism.

**Chapter Summary**

The Progressive era could just as well have been called the Reform era, since so many Americans wanted to “fix” so many of the country’s problems. Two groups were especially important: followers of the Social Gospel movement and women. Led by the Social Gospel movement, many middle-class citizens and progressives worked to improve conditions in the expanding cities at the turn of the twentieth century. Progressive solution to the problem of poverty was the creation of settlement houses that served as community resources for the poor. Other activists continued the campaign against alcohol and the ways alcoholism destabilized immigrant and working-class families. Women were some of the most active reformers of the Progressive era.

Urban reform was just the beginning of the Progressives’ battle to rectify the nation’s problems. Progressives soon realized that improving conditions for the poor required broader political efforts at both the state and federal levels. Progressive reforms led to an improvement in politics at the local and state levels. Citizens gained leverage over government officials and policies with new tools such as recalls and initiatives. Professional administrators helped thwart cronyism while also bringing new levels of expertise to bureaucracies. This system ensured continuity and efficiency rather than a chaotic turnover of personnel each time a new party came into office. With the West and Midwest leading the way, these new approaches brought some needed changes and regulations to businesses and politics. The keys to reform were appointed commissions of experts working in the name of civil service.

Progressives had pursued reform at the city and state levels, but the real power of reform lay at the national level. At the national level, the Progressive Party did not supplant either of the two major parties, although presidents adopted their platforms. Republican Theodore Roosevelt was a champion of progressive reform, although his successor, William Howard Taft, did not continue this trend. Democrat Woodrow Wilson aggressively adopted progressive goals, although racial segregation continued in a variety of federal departments within the government.

Still second-class citizens, women in progressive movements also continued the quest for political equality. Two significant organizations that led this effort were the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and the National Women’s Party (NWP). The combined efforts of these two groups ultimately led to victory. In 1920, just after the end of the World War I, the Nineteenth Amendment was passed, and women won the right to vote. Beyond advocating the right to vote, nonpolitical women’s clubs were also vitally important to the Progressive cause.

In total, the Progressive era greatly influenced American culture. A new breed of journalists, the muckrakers, exposed corruption in business practices, prompting critical new regulations that improved the quality of consumer products. Business leaders adopted Fredrick W. Taylor’s scientific management principles to improve their profit margins and efficiency. Educators worked to improve the quality of education and the number of schools nationwide, in an effort to produce a more informed, educated, and politically involved populace. Eventually, Progressive educational ideas became so popular that, in 1919, Progressives formed the Progressive Educational Association to support and advocate for these educational reforms.

Laws derived from progressive ideals brought the needed change, but it also led to immoral policies such as forced sterilization. From changes in the way the city governments were run, to women’s efforts to gain the franchise, to improvements in business practices and education, the reformers left little untouched. Often, they looked to western Europe for inspiration and sought to spread their ideals overseas, often with little regard for the autonomy of other cultures. World War I put an end to this unprecedented era of reform.

**Chapter Outline**

I. The Reformers

A. Principal Reform Groups

1. The Social Gospel Movement

2. Women

B. Reforming the Cities

1. Settlement Houses

2. The Anti-Saloon League

II. State Political Reform

A. Democratizing Trends

B. Professional Administrators

C. Progress of Reforms

III. Progressivism in National Politics

A. Theodore Roosevelt, Reformer

B. William Howard Taft, Reformer?

C. Woodrow Wilson, Reformer

IV. Women’s Progressivism

V. Progressive Influences on American Culture

A. The Muckrakers

B. Progressivism in Business

C. Progressive Education

D. The Role of Laws

VI. Looking Ahead…

**Suggested Lecture Topics**

1. Highlights from Jane Addams’s *Twenty Years at Hull House*

2. The Middle Class Woman’s Role in Progressive Reforms

3. Woodrow Wilson, Alice Paul, and Woman Suffrage: The Story Too Few Have Heard

4. *The Jungle* Leads to Reform, but Not What Sinclair Envisioned

5. Margaret Sanger: Angel or Devil?

6. Dallas and Houston, Texas: A Study in Competition for a Federal Reserve Bank

7. The 1900 Galveston Hurricane: An Appalling Way to Achieve Local Political Reform

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| **The Reasons Why…** |
| (19-1). There were four principal reasons why the Progressive era occurred when it did:  a. The Industrial Age  b. Growth of the middle class  c. Fears of radicalism  d. Scientific authority  Many of the reforms of the Progressive era are still controversial to the current day. Have students compare and contrast "The Reasons Why ..." box with conditions today, either as individual lists or in groups. For example, the Industrial Age prefaced the Progressive era, and currently, the U.S. is a post-Industrial Age economy where industry jobs are shrinking (or similarly, compare the plight of the middle class between now and then, the fears of radicalism, and the clash between scientific and religious authority). Have students assess whether reforms of the Progressive era were a positive or negative outcome for the U.S. Finally, discuss why the term “progressives” has been revived in today’s current political arena as an insult or a badge of honor. |

**Research Topics—Projects and Papers**

Students might choose to complete a project to be presented in class or to write a more traditional research paper. Alternatively, the instructors could decide which they prefer to have them do. Following are a few topics that are relevant to this chapter. Instructors may, of course, choose to develop their own topics.

1. Presidential Reforms: Ask students to thoroughly examine the reforms backed by Theodore Roosevelt that were enacted, and to do the same for Woodrow Wilson. In two columns, ask the students to list as many reforms as they can for each president. Students should write a paragraph explaining who they consider more successful, and why.

2. Muckraking: Ask students to identify a situation that they think needs reforming. This needs to be local or within their state. Students should determine some of the ways they might investigate the situation. Students should then bring their findings to the class for a group discussion and a comparison of their experiences.

3. Woman Suffrage: In 2004, HBO Films produced *Iron Jawed Angels*, a riveting and graphic account of the six-month long demonstration by Alice Paul and other brave suffragists in front of the White House during Woodrow Wilson’s presidency. The film can be purchased directly from HBO for $14.97. It is just over two hours long. Instructors should consider showing at least some of this film in class and then discussing the reactions to it. Instructors may deliver the lecture “Woodrow Wilson, Alice Paul, and Woman Suffrage: The Story Too Few Have Heard,” and then introduce the film. A reaction paper from the students would be a good conclusion to this topic.

4. Report on Settlement Houses: Take the students on a field trip to visit the nearest settlement house, which once sheltered many people who could not afford homes during the Progressive era. Ask the students to look around and prepare a report on their observations. Ask them to ponder upon how their lives would have been if they were living in a settlement house.

5. Women’s Progressivism Today: Ask students to identify two or more areas in society, politics, or workplace where women still have not achieved the desired parity. Ask them to suggest measures to address the issue.

**Additional www Resources**

Galvin, Rachel. “Margaret Sanger’s ‘Deeds of Terrible Virtue’,” *Humanities*, September/October 1998, Vol. 19/No. 5. Reproduced on the National Endowment for the Humanities website.

<http://www.neh.gov/humanities/1998/septemberoctober/feature/margaret-sangers-deeds-terrible-virtue>

“Frederick Winslow Taylor: Scientific Management,” Who Made America?—a segment of *They Made America*, PBS presentation.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/theymadeamerica/index.html>

“In His Own Words: Quotations of Theodore Roosevelt,” Theodore Roosevelt Association.

<http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/life/quotes.htm>

Addams, Jane, *Twenty Years at Hull-House.* New York: The MacMillan Company, 1912. “A Celebration of Women Writers,” Mary Mark Ockerbloom, Ed. University of Pennsylvania Digital Library.

<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/addams/hullhouse/hullhouse.html#259>

**Primary Source Discussions**

**Assignment Name: Read Jacob A. Riis’s How the Other Half Lives**

*Introduction:* Jacob Riis’s entire book is presented on this website. You are *not* expected to read it all. Follow the instructions given here, and you will have what you need for the quiz.

Read Chapter 1, “Genesis of the Tenement,” and Chapter 2, “The Awakening.” Then scroll through the chapters and read each chapter title. Pause to look at pictures and to read anything that you find interesting. Read Chapter 25, “How the Case Stands.” Finally, examine the statistics in the Appendix.

*Visit URL:* *http://www.bartleby.com/208/*

[Read Jacob A. Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives*](http://www.bartleby.com/208/) and then take a brief quiz to check your understanding.

*Reflection Questions:*

1. How and why did the tenements come into being?

2. What do *you* think would have been the very worst aspect of living in a tenement? After you decide this, list four more of the worst things about tenements.

3. Where did people of certain ethnic groups tend to live? Why was this so?

4. From their beginnings, how had the design and use of tenements changed by the time Riis’s book was written?

**Assignment Name: Frederick W. Taylor’s Principles Scientific Management (1911)**

*Introduction:* Frederick W. Taylor’s Principles of Scientific Management (1911) was a bestseller and the most popular business book in the early 20th century. It provided not only a step-by-step way to apply rational, time-saving methods for industrial production but also conveyed a main theme in Progressive reform: that business and industry could not only be more efficient but that such strategies could benefit workers as well.

*Visit URL:* *http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth\_9781133309888/courseware/ps/taylor.html*

[Frederick W. Taylor’s Principles Scientific Management (1911)](http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth_9781133309888/courseware/ps/taylor.html)

*Instructions:* After reading the introduction and the primary source provided, answer the questions below.

1. What is the “principal object of management”? Why could this be considered part of Progressive thinking?

2. What is “maximum prosperity” for an employee?

3. How could Taylor’s policies moderate both the worst excesses of capitalism and the desire to implement socialist/communist economic ideas?

4. Why would scientific management increase profits for employers?