

## PROGRESSIVE ERA

1869 TO 1918

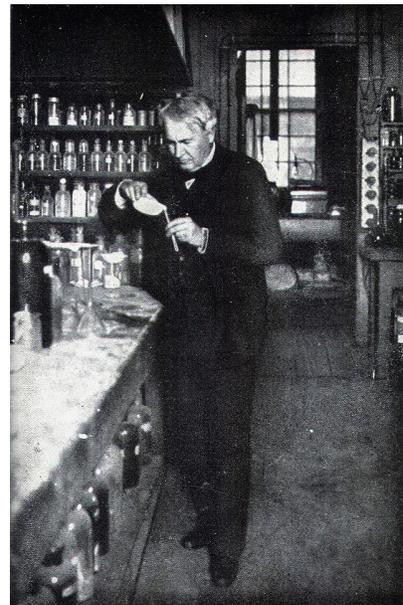
### TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD TO THE GREAT WAR

#### ERA SUMMARY – PROGRESSIVE ERA

The decades following the Civil War were peaceful and prosperous overall but involved a great deal of change and disruption. Economic booms were often followed by busts; large influxes of immigrants enabled a great expansion of industry while at the same time depressing wages, and new inventions created entire newly industries while displacing old ones. Although the overall standard of living of most Americans improved during the late 19th century, it improved more for some than others, and many large fortunes were concentrated in a few hands. Even worse, almost all the growth occurred in the North and West, leaving the post-confederate south still economically backward and segregated.

**Invention and Industry**—Until the late 19th century, Britain led the world in invention and industry. From that time forward, however, a series of American inventors and engineers made developed a number of life-changing technologies. A few of the most important are listed below, but hundreds of patents were issued during this period for technologies that are now commonplace.

1) [Thomas Edison](#) invented the phonograph, the movie camera, the light bulb, the electrical grid system and many other familiar items. 2) James Eads built the first road and Rail Bridge across the Mississippi river. He later designed a jetty system for the Mississippi river. 3) [Charles Goodyear](#) invented a system to vulcanize, or toughen rubber. 4) [Alexander Graham Bell](#) invented the Telephone. 5) [Orville and Wilbur Wright](#) invented the Airplane. 6) George Eastman invented photographic film. 7) [Cyrus Field](#) laid the first transatlantic cable.



EDISON AT WORK IN THE ORANGE LABORATORY.

In addition to these heroes of invention, there were a great many fortunes made by titans of industry who came to dominate a growing field. Among the most famous industrialists and bankers of the late 19th century were these. 1) John Rockefeller controlled Standard Oil Co. 2) [Andrew Carnegie](#) dominated the Steel Industry. 3) Cornelius Vanderbilt built his empire on shipping and railroads. 4) Henry Ford built the first automotive empire. 5) J. P. Morgan made much of his fortune in Banking and Electrification projects.

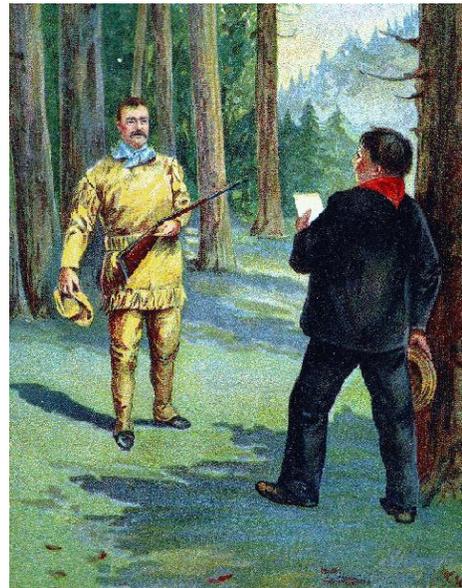
**Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy**—Late 19th century presidents included Rutherford Hayes, James Garfield, Chester Arthur, [Grover Cleveland](#), and [William McKinley](#). It was an era of party politics and political bosses, and one of the important issues of the days was "civil service" reform. This issue came to the forefront when James Garfield was assassinated by an office seeker. There was need of reform in many other areas of government as well, since the age of large fortunes and monopolies inevitably led to political corruption and backroom deals. Grover Cleveland, a Democrat, had a reputation for integrity and was elected for two terms with the help of Reform-minded Republicans.

The tremendous grow in population and industry during the late 19th century led to a boom and bust economy which was effected by monetary policy. The U.S. government had coined silver dollars after the war and this easy-money policy led to speculation and inflation. In 1873 they returned to the "Gold Standard" and this caused a financial crisis and depression. As soon as the economy recovered however, aggressive growth and speculation resumed, leading to the Panics of 1893 and 1907. In order to stabilize the money supply and prevent bank failures the government created the Federal Reserve in 1913, which in turn provided the illusion of financial security that fueled the 1920's boom and 1930's collapse.

In the realm of foreign policy, the main conflict in the post-Civil War era was the [Spanish American War](#). The war was provoked by war-mongering journalists who favored Cuban independence from Spain. When the *Maine* exploded in the Havana harbor, Americans considered it an act of war, even though there was no proof of Spanish involvement. The war was one-sided, lasted only a few months, and ended with American possession of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

**Social Reformers and Trust Busters**—The idea of "social reform" took hold in the late 19th century in both Europe and America. The idea of social progress was applied to many different institutions but the common theme was the idea that "society" could be improved by changing laws or methods, or by educating the populace. In politics, this took the form of movements to root out corruption and limit the power of big moneyed interests. In education this meant promoting universal public schooling, adopting "scientific" methods of teaching, and professionalizing certain vocations.

Two famous reform movements of the early 20th century required amendments to the constitution. These were the prohibition of alcohol (18th amendment, passed 1917), and women's suffrage (19th amendment, passed 1919). Many other reform movements resulted in Acts of Congress. A few examples of this were Anti-trust Acts of 1890 and 1915 and the Civil Service reform act of 1883.



THEODORE ROOSEVELT IS SUMMMONED.

Social reform movements were popular across the political spectrum in the early twentieth century. Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican, and Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat, were both considered leaders of the "progressive movement". Roosevelt was a critic of business monopolies and known as a "trust buster". At the same time he was a conservationist, and helped to establish the national park system. He was also a science and technology enthusiast, and promoted the building of the Panama Canal, the most ambitious technological feat of the age. Wilson promoted laws that prohibited child labor, imposed an 8-hour work day, helped farmers get loans, and opposed business monopolies.

## CHARACTERS – PROGRESSIVE ERA

### INVENTION AND INDUSTRY

<b>Alexander Graham Bell</b>	1847–1922	Inventor of the telephone, and also a founder of a school for the deaf.
<b>Thomas Edison</b>	1847–1931	Prolific inventor, responsible for improvements in the light bulb, movies, phonograph, and many others.
<b>Wilber and Orville</b>	1871–1948	Inventors of the first practical airplane. The Wright brothers were self-educated bicycle shop owners.
<b>Andrew Carnegie</b>	1835–1919	American Industrialist who gained his wealth in steel. He gave away most of his riches to libraries and schools.
<b>Jay Gould</b>	1836–1892	American Financier involved with gold speculation, railroad speculation, and Boss Tweed in New York
<b>John Philip Holland</b>	1841–1914	Born in Ireland, Holland designed the first submarine used by the U.S. Navy.
<b>Robert Peary</b>	1856–1920	Arctic explorer who claimed to have reached the North Pole.

### POLITICAL AND MILITARY

<b>James Garfield</b>	1831–1881	Elected President of the United States in 1880, but was assassinated only a few months after taking office.
<b>Grover Cleveland</b>	1837–1908	President of the United States, elected twice. He was a reformer, noted for his honesty.
<b>William McKinley</b>	1843–1901	President of the United States during the Spanish American War. He was assassinated in office.
<b>Theodore Roosevelt</b>	1858–1919	Progressive Republican who served as the 26th President of the United States.
<b>Woodrow Wilson</b>	1856–1924	United States President during the First World War. Founder of the League of Nations.
<b>General Pershing</b>	1860–1948	Leader of the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I.
<b>Admiral Hobson</b>	1870–1937	Naval leader in the Spanish American war, who heroically attempted to sink a collier in Santiago harbor.
<b>George Dewey</b>	1837–1917	Highest ranking Naval Officer in U.S. Hero of <i>Battle of Manila Bay</i> in Spanish American War.
<b>Sergeant York</b>	1887–1964	Great War veteran famous for his heroic exploits during the <i>Battle of Argonne</i> .

### SOCIAL REFORM

<b>Lucretia Mott</b>	1793–1880	Influential Quaker leader who advocated the rights of women. Held relatively conservative views among early feminists.
<b>Elizabeth Cady Stanton</b>	1815–1902	Early leader in the female suffrage, and temperance movement.
<b>Susan B. Anthony</b>	1820–1906	Leader of the female suffrage and temperance movements who traveled widely and became a full time advocate.
<b>Booker T. Washington</b>	1856–1915	Former slave who became an important leader of newly freed negroes. Emphasized education, job training, clean-living, and self-help.
<b>Joseph Smith</b>	1805–1844	Founder of the Church of Latter Day Saints. Killed before the Mormons moved to Utah.

# TIMELINE – PROGRESSIVE ERA

## **POLITICS AND STATECRAFT**

- 1865** Beginning of "Reconstruction". Union troops occupy the south.
- 1871** "Alabama Claims" against Britain decided by arbitration.
- 1877** Last Union Troops are withdrawn from the South.
- 1883** Civil service reformed after office-seeker assassinated [James Garfield](#).
- 1884** Reform-minded Republicans support anti-corruption Democrat, [Grover Cleveland](#) for president.
- 1886** Statue of Liberty, a gift to America from France, is dedicated at Liberty Island
- 1889** Johnstown Flood near Pittsburgh, kills thousands after a dam on the Conemaugh river bursts.
- 1896** William Jennings Bryan, a populist democrat, campaigns against the "gold-standard".
- 1898** U.S.S. Maine is sunk in Havana Harbor, triggering the [Spanish American War](#).
- 1898** Admiral [George Dewey](#) defeats the Spanish at Manila Bay, bringing the Philippines under U.S. control.
- 1898** Americans defeat the Spanish fleet at Santiago de Cuba, bringing Cuba under U.S. control.
  
- 1901** President [William McKinley](#) is assassinated by an anarchist; [Theodore Roosevelt](#) becomes president.
- 1912** [Roosevelt](#) splits Republicans by running on "Bull Moose" ticket, Democrat [Wilson](#) elected president.
- 1913** Sixteenth Amendment establishes a Federal Income Tax.
- 1913** [Woodrow Wilson](#) helps institute the Federal Reserve, a central banking system.
- 1914** The Panama canal, started in 1903 under Roosevelt's administration, is complete.
- 1915** Germany sinks the *RMS Lusitania*, killing over 2000 civilians, including Americans.
- 1917** The United States, under Woodrow Wilson, declares [War on Germany](#).

## **SOCIAL REFORM**

- 1848** Seneca Falls Convention Women's Rights organized by [Lucretia Mott](#), [Elizabeth Cady Stanton](#).
- 1874** Francis Willard becomes the leader of the Women's Christian Temperance Union.
- 1878** [Susan B. Anthony](#) and [Elizabeth Cady Stanton](#) introduce amendment granting women the right to vote.
- 1881** [Booker T. Washington](#) becomes the leader of the Tuskegee Normal School in Alabama.
- 1919** Nineteenth Amendment grants women the right to vote in all states.
- 1920** Eighteenth Amendment prohibits the sale of alcoholic Beverages in the United States.

## INDUSTRY AND INVENTION

- 1866 Transatlantic cable laid by [Cyrus Field](#) Cyrus Field.
- 1869 First Transcontinental Railroad is completed between Council Bluff, Iowa and Oakland, California
- 1873 Railroad speculation and problems in Europe cause the financial "Panic of 1873"
- 1874 James B. Eads completes first steel bridge across the Mississippi at St. Louis.
- 1878 [Alexander Graham Bell](#) exhibits telephone.
- 1879 [Thomas Edison](#) demonstrates first commercial light bulb.
- 1903 [Wilber and Orville](#) test fly first airplane at Kittyhawk.

## RECOMMENDED READING – PROGRESSIVE ERA

### CORE READING ASSIGNMENTS \*

- Guerber - [Story of the Great Republic](#) [The Atlantic Cable](#) to [Two Presidents](#) (22)
- Marshall - [This Country of Ours](#) [The President is Impeached](#) to [The Great War](#) (8)

### SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Evans - [America First](#) [Laying the Atlantic Cable](#) to [Sergeant York](#) (11)
- Meadowcroft - [Boys' Life of Edison](#) *entire book*
- McSpadden - [Theodore Roosevelt](#) *entire book*
- Washington - [Up from Slavery](#) *entire book*
- Morris - [True Stories of Our Presidents](#) [Ulysses S. Grant](#) to [Theodore Roosevelt](#) (8)
- Morris - [Heroes of Progress in America](#) [Lucretia Mott](#) to [Booker T. Washington](#) (16)
- Morris - [The War with Spain](#) *entire book*

### ALSO RECOMMENDED

- Southworth - [Builders of Our Country - II](#) [Cyrus McCormick](#) to [Andrew Carnegie](#) (5)
- Fraser - [Boys' Book of Sea Fights](#) [Dewey at Manila Bay](#) to [Battle of Santiago Harbor](#) (2)
- Brawley - [History of the American Negro](#) [Missionary Endeavor](#) to [Literature and Art](#) (9)

\* *Level I and Level II Study Questions are based on **Core Reading Assignments**.*