The Progressive Era

Peace

Justice

Prosperity
“Progressivism”

- What is it?
- When is it?
- Who were the Progressives?
- What were their goals?
- What were their methods?
- Successes & failures?
- Consequences?
“Progressivism”

- What is it?
  - Reform movement
  - Positive change
“Progressivism”

- When is it?
  - 1900 – 1914
  - Dawn of a new century
  - Modernization = modern problems
Who are the “progressives”?

- “from all walks of life”
- Men and women
- All races & ethnicities
- All religious groups
- All political parties
- Different classes
Goals – what did they hope to achieve?

- Positive change
- Improve society
- Curb power of big business
- Curb power of special interests
- “level the playing field”
- Make gov’t responsive to people
- Eliminate corruption
- “American exceptionalism”
Methods – HOW are they going to achieve their goals?

- Use science & technology
- Use “collective” action
- Use churches
  - Social Gospel Movement
- Use power of government
Intellectual foundation

William James, “pragmatism”
“Pragmatism”

- “practical” application
- Turning theory into action
- Applying solutions to problems of society
John Dewey
Charles Beard

An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the U.S.
Thorstein Veblen

The Theory of the Leisure Class
The Promise of American Life

Herbert Croly
“Muckrakers”

Investigative journalists

Jacob Riis
“Muckrakers”

Ida Tarbell

Lincoln Steffens
“Muckrakers”

Upton Sinclair
“Muckrakers”
Progressive Reforms

- Social
- Economic
- Political
Progressive Reforms – Social

➢ Social Justice Movement
  ▪ Settlement homes
  ▪ Improve housing, services
  ▪ Improve working conditions
  ▪ Parks, playgrounds
Collective Action

- National Conference of Social Work
- General Federation of Women’s Clubs
- National Council of Jewish Women
- Schools of Social Work
Social Purity Movement
Progressive Reforms – Social

- Improve Mental hospitals & prisons

Dorothea Dix
We need not longer. It was some time ago, when we were in the middle of a hot summer. A visit to our prison in the city was very unpleasant, and we found it necessary to keep the prisoners in a state of high agitation. It was now that we saw the effects of the punishment of the African. One of the inmates was sentenced to be hanged. He was a large, strong man, with a thick beard, and his face was covered with blood. When he was taken from his cell, he was chained to a post, and a man was put in his place. The warden then ordered the execution to be performed. The man was taken to the gallows, and the rope was put around his neck. He was then swung up, and he was soon dead. The scene was very sad, and we could not help feeling a little pity for the man who had to suffer. We hope that such punishments will be abolished, for they are cruel and unjust.
Prison Lease
Progressive Reforms - Education

School enrollment

1880  7 million
1920  23 million
Progressive Reforms

- Education
  - Education for the public good
  - Intelligence used for social action
  - Scientific techniques - testing
Intelligence Testing

Alfred Binet

Theodore Simon
School of Pedagogy, U of Chicago
Social Reforms – the “Dark Side”

- Remove “obstacles” to progress
  - Segregation
  - Disfranchisement
  - Lynching
  - Restrict Immigration
  - Eugenics
Eugenics

"If we desire a certain type of civilization, we must exterminate the sort of people who do not fit in."

- George Bernard Shaw
Eugenics Education Society, 1907

Francis Galton
Eugenics

- American Breeders Association

“to investigate and report on heredity in the human race, and emphasize the value of superior blood and the menace to society of inferior blood.”
EUGENIC CERTIFICATE

THIS GUARANTEES that I have examined the sender of this card and find a perfect physical and mental balance and unusually strong eugenic love possibilities, well fitted to promote the happiness and future welfare of the race.

S. F. F. N.D.

Margaret Sanger
Buck vs. Bell, U.S. Supreme Court

Carrie Buck
Progressive Reforms – Business & Industry

- Owners – their goals
- Workers – their goals
Progressive Reforms – Business & Industry

- Business owners – their goals
  - “Modernize” business practices
  - Lower the costs
  - Increase production
“Scientific Management”

Frederick Taylor
“Moving assembly line”

Henry Ford
Model T
Ford Motor Company

1908  11,000 sold       $825 each
1916  +470,000          $360 each
Progressive Reforms - Workplace

- Improve working conditions
  - Health & Safety
- Improve hours
  - Children & women
- Improve wages
Progressive Reforms - Workplace

- Improve working conditions
  - Health & Safety
- Improve hours
  - Children & women
- Improve wages
Labor Unions

- American Federation of Labor
- International Workers of the World
  - “Big Bill” Heywood

“The struggle must go on until the workers of the world...take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system”
Business Reforms

- Anti-trust campaigns
Progressive Reforms - Politics

- Local - Cities
- State
- National
Progressive Reforms - Politics

- Eliminate corruption in the cities
  - New forms of city government
  - Civil service exams
  - Update tax assessments
  - Update voter rolls
Progressive Reforms

- State-level reforms
  - Regulate railroads
  - Regulate utilities
  - Direct primaries
Progressive Reforms - Political

- Empowering voters
  - Initiative – allow voters to propose new laws
  - Referendum – allow voters to accept or reject laws
  - Recall – allow voters to remove elected official from office
Progressive Politics at the National Level

- Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt - R
  - 1901 - 1908

- William Howard Taft - R
  - 1908 - 1912

- Woodrow Wilson - D
  - 1912 - 1920
Sept 6, 1901
Buffalo, NY

Leon Czolgosz
Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt
“Bully pulpit”

- Using the power of his office to effect reforms
“...it is the duty of the President to act upon the theory that he is the steward of the people”
Government as Power broker

- Stop abuses
- Abolish privilege
- Increase individual opportunity
- “level the playing field”
“Square Deal”

- Trust-buster
- Government regulation
- Conservation
Trust-buster (monopolies)

- “good” trusts vs. “bad” trusts

- Northern Securities Company, 1902
Government regulation of business

- Railroads
  - Elkins Act
  - Hepburn Act

- Food industry
  - Meat Inspection Act
  - Pure Food & Drug Act
Conservation

- U.S. Forest Service
- American Antiquities Act
"I wish very much that the wrong people could be prevented entirely from breeding; and when the evil nature of these people is sufficiently flagrant, this should be done. Criminals should be sterilized and feeble-minded persons forbidden to leave offspring behind them."
On race...

“...the door of opportunity [should not] be shut upon any man, no matter how worthy, purely upon the grounds of race or color. Such an attitude would, according to my contentions, be fundamentally wrong.”
William Howard Taft
Republicans split

- progressive wing
  - Teddy Roosevelt

- conservative wing
  - William Taft
Election of 1912

- Republicans
  - William Howard Taft

- Progressives
  - Teddy Roosevelt

- Democrats
  - Woodrow Wilson

- Socialist party
  - Eugene V. Debs
Thomas “Woodrow” Wilson
“New Freedom”

- Banking & currency
  - Federal Reserve Act

- Business
  - Clayton Anti-trust Act
  - Underwood Tariff Act
  - Federal Trade Commission Act
“New Freedom”

- Social reform
  - Keating-Owen Act
  - Adamson Act
  - Woman suffrage
The Progressive Era

“There was life in all these new things; there was excitement, there was healthy revolt, investigation, discovery, and an utterly new world opened out of it all.”

- artist Marsden Hartley
World at War