



# HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

STUDENT BOOK

► **8th Grade** | Unit 7

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# HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY 807

## Gilded Age to Progressive Era (1880–1915)

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# Gilded Age to Progressive Era (1880–1915)

## Introduction

The era from 1880 to 1915 was one of great changes. The Civil War had settled the burning political questions that had dominated the government before 1860. The last of the frontier was being opened by the railroad and settled by hardy pioneers, but the major change in this era was the tremendous growth of big business and industry. At the beginning of the 19th century, America had been an internationally unimportant nation of small farmers. America at the end of the 19th century was a wealthy, industrial world power, status it has never lost.

The change did not come without conflict. The new, huge industrial powers abused their strength. The American public at first welcomed the stronger, more efficient industries. The incredible wealth collected by the men who owned them was seen as their rightful reward. However, as these rich men exploited their workers, paid off politicians, and ruthlessly eliminated their competitors, the American attitude began to change.

Since the Revolution, Americans had always favored small government that interfered as little as possible in the lives of its citizens. Slowly, there arose a cry to control these great corporations before they robbed the nation of its most precious possession, government by the people. That cry brought down the Gilded Age, the age of wild growth, wealth, and poverty. The demand for reforms ushered in the Progressive Era, a rewriting of the basic laws of the American system. This LIFEPAAC® will cover this change and what it meant to American history.

## Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAAC. When you have finished this LIFEPAAC, you should be able to:

1. Describe the social, political, technological, and industrial developments of the Gilded Age.
2. Describe the last years of the Western frontier.
3. Describe the presidents of the Gilded Age and their policies.
4. Describe the development of unions and reform movements from 1865 to 1915.
5. Describe the causes, course, and consequences of the Spanish-American War.
6. Describe the course of the Progressive Movement.
7. Describe the personality of Theodore Roosevelt and his effect on the presidency.
8. Name the Progressive presidents and describe their policies.

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# 1. THE GILDED AGE

One of the most famous American authors of the late 1800s, Mark Twain, published a novel in 1873 called the *Gilded Age*. It was written in collaboration with another author and gave a snapshot of its era. The greedy businessmen and corrupt politicians in the novel were mirror images of the people in power at the end of the 19th century. Thus, the name of the novel has become the name of the entire era, from about 1865 to 1900.

Gilding is a process that puts a thin layer of gold over the top of something less valuable. The result is beautiful and valuable on the surface, but underneath it can be worthless, dirty, and scarred. That was the late 1800s.

The gold surface of the 1880s and 1890s was the wealth and power of the United States. New American millionaires spent lavishly on homes, art, carriages, clothes, and travel

accommodations. Museums, libraries, theaters, and schools were built all over the nation. New inventions like telephones, street cars, electric lights, and phonographs became popular and common. By 1900 America was the wealthiest nation in the world in total assets and income per person.

However, there was a less valuable center under the gold surface. Wealthy “captains of industry” virtually controlled the government which gave them subsidies, incredibly high tariffs, and protective legislation. A few powerful individuals routinely would control an entire industry, setting prices and making huge profits. Many of the workers in the new industries labored under horrible conditions and lived in worse ones. Cities and whole states were run by corrupt political machines that traded favors for votes and money. Thus, “gilded” is an accurate description of this complex era.

## SECTION OBJECTIVES

**Review these objectives.** When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Describe the social, political, technological, and industrial developments of the Gilded Age.
2. Describe the last years of the Western frontier.
3. Describe the presidents of the Gilded Age and their policies.
4. Describe the development of unions and reform movements from 1865 to 1915.

## VOCABULARY

**Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.**

**anarchist** (an' ə r kist). Person seeking to establish complete freedom by eliminating all government.

**assimilate** (ə sim' ə lāt). To absorb into the cultural tradition of a population or group.

**bankrupt** (ban' krəpt). To declare a person unable to meet their debts by law, their available assets are taken by the court to be given to their creditors.

**capitalist** (kap' ə t əst). A system in which capital goods (money, factories, land) are privately owned and controlled. Decisions about prices, production, and distribution are based on private decisions in response to free market competition.



# AMERICA from 1880 to 1915



**Rutherford B. Hayes**  
1877-1881  
Republican



**James A. Garfield\***  
1881  
Republican



**Chester A. Arthur**  
1881-1885  
Republican



**Grover Cleveland**  
1885-1889  
Democratic



**Benjamin Harrison**  
1889-1893  
Republican



**Grover Cleveland**  
1893-1897  
Democratic



**William McKinley\***  
1897-1901  
Republican



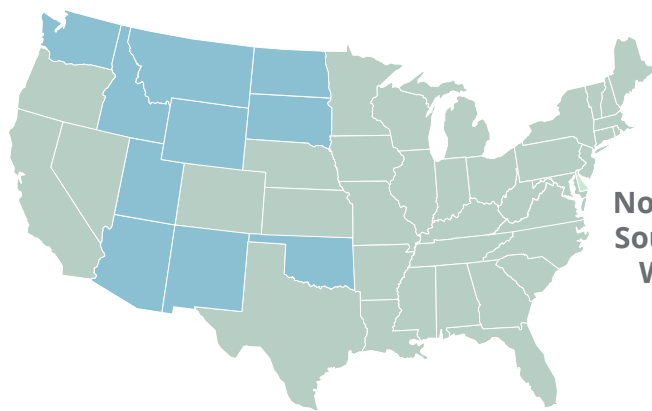
**Theodore Roosevelt**  
1901-1909  
Republican



**William H. Taft**  
1909-1913  
Republican



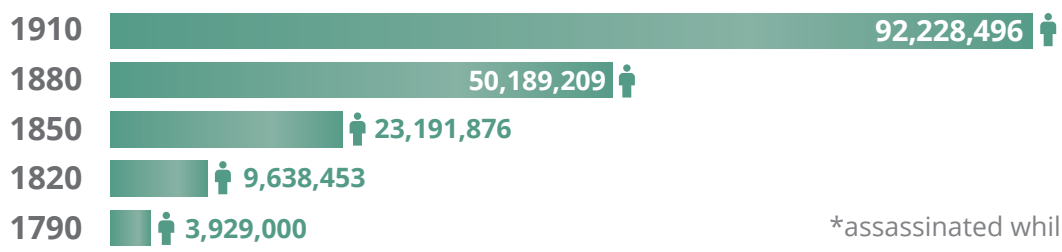
**Woodrow Wilson**  
1913-1921  
Democratic



## STATES ADMITTED TO THE UNION

North Dakota	1889	Wyoming	1890
South Dakota	1889	Utah	1896
Washington	1889	Oklahoma	1907
Montana	1889	New Mexico	1912
Idaho	1890	Arizona	1912

## POPULATION of the United States of America



\*assassinated while in office

**communist** (käm' yə nəst). (In the 1890s and early 1900s) A person who advocated following the teachings of Marx, who believed that private property should be eliminated by a rebellion of the working class. Then, all goods should be owned in common and be available to all as needed. (This was before the totalitarian communist Soviet Union had been created. Thus, communism was not at this time a type of treason that favored the expansion of Soviet power. It was an unrealistic hope for a perfect society created by a class war in which everyone had the same things and was absolutely equal.)

**creditor** (kred' ət ər). One to whom a debt is owed.

**injunction** (in jənk' shən). A writ issued by a court which orders a person to do or refrain from doing a specific act.

**largess** (lär jes'). Liberal giving to others.

**monopoly** (mə näp' ə lē). Complete control of a product or service.

**philanthropy** (fə lan' thər pē). Goodwill to fellow man, often accomplished by giving large gifts for the benefit of others.

**socialist** (sōsh' ə ləst). Person or system that advocates collective or government ownership of the means of production and distribution. It is usually less extreme than communism in that it allows some private property.

**Note:** All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAAC appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are not sure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

**Pronunciation Key:** hat, āge, cāre, fār; let, ēqual, tērm; it, īce; hot, ōpen, ōrder; oil; out; cup, pūt, rüle; child; long; thin; /ʒh/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /ə/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.

## Rise of Industry

America had always been a nation of farmers, but in the 1890s the value of the nation's manufacturing was for the first time greater than the value of its agriculture. This change was brought about by the railroads, investment capital, new inventions, and old-fashioned ingenuity. Moreover, it was a permanent change. America would never be the same again.

Railroads and the newer industries required more capital (money), than a single or a few investors could assemble. Railroads, for example, needed researchers to improve the trains, locomotives, miles of track, cars, repairmen, builders, conductors, stations, station workers, rails, ties, equipment, and supervisors, just to name a few. The amount of capital needed for such an industry was staggering, so in the late 1800s a new form of business became popular to meet this need, the corporation.

A corporation is formed when a group of people organize a company under the laws of a state and sell *stock* in it. The people who purchase the stock become the *stockholders*, who are the legal owners of the company. They are entitled to receive part of the company's profits by way of *dividends* paid on the stock. Thousands of people can contribute to forming a company this way, raising millions in capital. The stockholders vote for a board of directors who run the company for them. (Usually, the board is controlled by the people who own the most stock.)

American law treats corporations as persons. That allows them to pay taxes, enter into contracts, and sue or be sued. That also means that if a corporation goes **bankrupt**, the stockholders lose only their stock. **Creditors** cannot try to get the money they are owed from the

“owners.” The stockholders are not liable for the debts of another “person,” the corporation. Thus, a corporation is a way to raise a large amount of capital without exposing the investors to the dangers of a major business failure.

**Railroads.** The railroads were the first of the new breed of giant corporations. At the beginning of the Civil War (1860), the United States had 30,000 miles of railroad track. By 1900 it had 193,000 miles, more than all of Europe. These rivers of steel opened up all of the United States for trade. Midwestern farmers could ship their wheat to the cities of the East or to ports to go abroad. Manufactured goods could be produced in whatever part of the country had the needed raw materials and factories. From there, the goods could be sent by rail to any market in the nation. It was this huge domestic market that the new industries supplied quickly and cheaply.

A transcontinental railroad had been a major American goal for years, but there was little profit in building a railroad through miles of empty land. Such an endeavor needed government encouragement. However, competition between the North and the South for this priceless avenue had deadlocked government support before the Civil War.

The North took advantage of the absence of Southern congressmen during the war to authorize subsidies to build a railroad from Omaha, Nebraska, to Sacramento, California. The Union Pacific built west from Omaha, while the Central Pacific built east from Sacramento. Both railroads received 20 square miles of land (in 640-acre sections, on alternate sides of the track) for every mile of track they laid. On this rail line across the nation, they also received generous loans for every mile laid. The rich government benefits made it a race between the two companies to build as much as they could.

The Union Pacific Railroad built across the flat prairie and made spectacular progress. Using mainly Irish laborers, the company built 1,086

miles of track between 1862 and 1869, in one case building 10 miles in a day (using shovels and carts)! The rich government support and press for speed enabled the Crédit Mobilier scandal. Union Pacific officials had hired their own construction company (Crédit Mobilier) that overcharged for the building of the tracks, pocketing huge profits that were shared with cooperative legislators.

Building east, the Central Pacific had to deal with more treacherous terrain through the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Central Pacific used mainly unskilled Chinese workers and was able to build only 689 miles of track. Nevertheless, the Central's main investors, called the Big Four, also made huge profits hiring their own construction companies to do the work.

The two sides met in May of 1869 at Promontory Point near Ogden, Utah. At a wild, joyous ceremony a golden spike was driven into the last rail that united the nation. It was a remarkable feat of engineering and determination, in spite of the graft involved. It firmly joined the far-off Western states to the older portion of the nation and enabled the spread of commerce across the continent. By the end of the century, there would be five such lifelines crossing the nation.

Railroads meant life and prosperity for cities, towns, and states. Consequently, the state and federal governments continued for years to give land grants to railroad companies for building tracks. Cities also were expected to give land and money for the privilege of having the railroad reach their town. In the end, the railroads wound up owning millions of acres of land and controlling millions of dollars of capital.

The railroad improved in more ways than just miles during the late 1800s. Air brakes that stopped the trains more safely were put into general use in the 1870s. Rails were made of more durable steel as opposed to the older, less stable iron rails. Pullman sleeping cars and



| Transcontinental Railroad Completion

dining cars made travel comfortable, even luxurious. The railroads became safe, comfortable modes of long-distance travel.

The railroads which triggered the industrial era by opening new markets across the nation also led in the establishment of huge corporate powerhouses. Smaller railroads were increasingly bought out by larger ones which grew into huge networks. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Leland Stanford, Collis Huntington, Henry Villard, and James Hill were among the men who built fortunes by consolidating rail lines into huge corporations.

These companies increased their profits by using a whole range of various schemes. Competition was decreased by “pools” in which the railroads agreed to divide the business in a certain area. Each would be free to charge as much as they could on their share because no other company would try to take it away. The

railroads would normally charge less for carrying freight long distances, for which there was competition, than for short ones which were frequently controlled by one company. This lack of uniform rates hit small, local producers, especially farmers, the hardest. Large industries also would routinely receive rebates for putting all of their business with one company, a benefit unavailable to small operators. High railroad rates could ruin a farmer’s profit on his crop or drive a small manufacturing firm out of business, and often did.

**Steel.** The second major industry of this era was steel manufacturing. Steel is made by purifying iron to make a stronger, more versatile metal. It was rare and expensive until just prior to the Civil War. In the 1850s the Bessemer process was developed to make steel cheaply from iron. Having all the abundant natural resources needed to produce steel, America

was in a unique position to capitalize on the new discovery. By 1900 the U.S. was exceeding both Britain and Germany in steel production.

Andrew Carnegie was a poor Scottish immigrant who made his way up the ladder of success by hard work and shrewd investments. He realized the value of the Bessemer process and invested heavily in it. Moreover, he brought all of the steps needed to produce the steel under his personal control. He owned the mines that produced the iron ore, the barges and railroads that carried it, and the factories that produced it. By 1900 Carnegie was producing one-fourth of the nation's Bessemer steel. He sold his empire in 1901 to banker J.P. Morgan for \$480 million. Morgan used it to form a new corporation, U.S. Steel, which was the first billion-dollar corporation in American history.

**Standard Oil.** Perhaps the most controversial of the new corporations was John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil. Petroleum (oil), was increasingly being used for lubrication of machines, heating, fuel, and especially kerosene for lighting. This new industry came to be dominated

by Rockefeller who organized his Standard Oil Company in 1870.

John D. Rockefeller practiced the kind of ruthless business suitable for a pirate. He concentrated on controlling the **refining** business as a choke point to control the entire industry. He ran his business with careful attention to costs, bringing down prices and forcing competitors out of business. He used his power to get rebates from the railroads. He even got rebates on his competitors' shipments! His ruthless practices gave him control of oil production in the U.S., but they also produced a cheaper, higher quality product for the American public.

Rockefeller formed a new type of business, the trust, to control the entire oil industry. The trust took stock from several companies and ran them together to eliminate competition.

The companies that joined the trust became rich under Rockefeller's leadership. Those that refused were driven to bankruptcy. The Standard Oil Trust eventually controlled more than 90% of the oil production in America.



| Andrew Carnegie



| John D. Rockefeller

Rockefeller's success led to the creation of new industry-wide trusts. The sugar, tobacco, leather, farm implement, and meat-packing industries (among many others) came to be dominated by trusts. This type of business, however, was successfully challenged in state courts. Eventually, the trusts became "holding companies," corporations created just to

control other corporations. Also, banking giants like J.P. Morgan gained control of whole industries by putting themselves on the board of several different companies at the same time. The public, however, continued to refer to these huge, industry-dominating, **monopoly**-seeking corporations as "trusts."



**Answer these questions.**

- 1.1 Who are the owners of a corporation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.2 Which two companies completed the first transcontinental railroad? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.3 What innovation made trains safer to stop? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.4 What innovations made trains more comfortable? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.5 Who was the leader in the American steel industry? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.6 What company and man controlled U.S. oil production? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.7 Profits paid to stockholders are called what? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.8 How did the railroads trigger industrial development? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.9 What did a real trust do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.10 What did the public refer to as a trust? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.11 Where and when was the first transcontinental railroad completed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1.12 What was unfair about the way railroads charged for hauling goods? \_\_\_\_\_

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1.13 What process made steel cheap enough for general use? \_\_\_\_\_

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1.14 What type of corporation replaced the trust? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Workers

**Immigration.** It was in the Gilded Age that America earned its reputation as the hope for the poor of the world. The rapid industrialization created jobs, and the American democracy promised freedom. The new steamer ships offered inexpensive, swift passage across the ocean. Advertisements by steamship lines, reinforced by letters from those who had already gone to America, encouraged a whole generation of poor Europeans to believe that America offered them a chance for a better life. Between the Civil War and World War I, millions came in search of that dream.

More than four million immigrants came between 1860 and 1880. In the 1880s, five million people emigrated to the United States. Most of the newcomers stayed in the industrial cities of the East. By 1910 about one-third of the population in America's eight largest cities was foreign-born.

**New Immigration.** Immigration patterns changed in the 1880s. Before that time most of the immigrants had come from northern Europe. They were primarily English, Irish, German, or Scandinavian. These people **assimilated** easily into American life. They came from cultures similar to America's, had similar physical appearances, were usually literate, and were mainly Protestant (although the Irish and some Germans were Catholic).

However, things began to change in the 1880s. Immigration patterns shifted so significantly that it was called the New Immigration. The new immigrants came from southern and eastern Europe. Poles, Italians, Croats, Slavs, Hungarians, Russian Jews, and Greeks were among the new arrivals. These people were darker-skinned than most Americans, usually poor, illiterate, and they spoke languages unrelated to those of northern Europe. They also came from cultures that had no tradition of free government and followed non-Protestant religions (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish).



| Immigrants to America

The new immigrants huddled together in the cities once they arrived in this strange new land. They formed small islands of home for themselves. Districts called “Little Italy” or “Little Poland” became common in the larger cities. There, the bewildered newcomers could speak their own language, wear their native costumes, buy their own kind of food, and worship in their own churches. It was their children who eventually entered the American mainstream. The adults usually did not, because the change was simply too great.

**Working and living conditions.** The immigrants were the backbone of the new industrial giants. Working for low wages and rarely making any demands, they were perfect workers for corporations greedy for profits. The wages they received were higher than they would get in Europe, and they knew they could be easily replaced if they made any demands. Women and children were also employed at even lower wages, but the immigrants did not object. Their families needed the money.

These unskilled industrial workers had no rights or protection on the job. Safety precautions were few, and injured workers were simply fired. Illness might also cost a man his job. Any time business was bad, the entire work force might be laid off with no promise of being rehired. Job security was non-existent.

The laborers often lived in squalid tenements, which were all they could afford. These were dark, filthy, rat-infested, fire-trap apartments grouped together in some of the worst city slums in the world. There was little or no sanitation. Diseases spread quickly. Life was harsh and often short.

The new immigrants were a boon to the political machines that ran America’s big cities. Used to autocratic government, they were ideal clients for the machine system. The political bosses would help them find jobs, give them food in hard times, help smooth over legal problems, and provide services. In exchange, the new citizens would vote as the bosses told

them. They did not understand enough about the ideals of American government to realize this was not the way it was supposed to work.

**Policy changes.** The New Immigration created a wave of anti-immigrant feeling in America. Older Americans had strong prejudices against the olive-skinned newcomers and their strange, separate ways of life. Anti-Catholicism had always been strong in Protestant America, and it added fuel to the flames. Organized labor objected to the foreigners who were often used as strike-breakers, were hard to organize because they did not speak English, and were willing to work for low wages (which seemed high to them). Pressure built to restrict immigration, which had never been done before in U.S. history.

Beginning in 1880, the open door to immigration was slowly narrowed. The first to feel the pinch were Chinese immigrants on the West Coast. European Americans felt a strong hatred for these racially different, hard-working people who emigrated to California in large numbers after the Civil War. They worked for low wages and kept their own customs. In response to public pressure in 1882, Congress barred all Chinese immigration for ten years and later extended it.

Other restrictions were not so blatant. Also in 1882, paupers and criminals were barred from emigrating. Three years later, contract-worker emigration, which brought in workers by paying their passage in exchange for low-wage employment, was banned. Later **anarchists**, insane persons, polygamists, and people with contagious diseases were barred. Many of the most vocal “nativists” also wanted a literacy test. It was passed by Congress, only to be vetoed three times. The presidents saw it as a test of opportunity, not ability. It was finally passed over the president’s veto in 1917, during the anti-foreign feeling of World War I.

**Labor movement.** The huge new industries profited their owners greatly and their workers hardly at all. Workers faced long hours, poor



| The Haymarket Riot

safety precautions, low wages, and no job security while they were making millions for their employers. The workers realized they needed to band together to force owners to improve conditions and wages. In the years after the Civil War, they began to form unions to press their demands.

Industrial leaders were strongly opposed to unions. They routinely fired workers who joined a union or tried to organize one. The owners were especially vicious in breaking up strikes (work stoppages) to force an owner to consider the workers' demands. Strikebreakers (gangs of thugs) were often hired to attack strikers picketing a business. The owners also took full advantage of their political power. The police, and sometimes the army, were called in to break up strikes. The courts were very cooperative about issuing **injunctions** against

striking unions. Labor disputes, therefore, often became violent as working men despaired of a fair chance to improve their conditions.

The violence and the way strikes interfered with commerce made most Americans suspicious of unions. This was especially true of strikes in key industries like the railroads, which delivered the nation's goods, and the coal mines, which heated its homes. Few middle-class people had ever seen the inside of a factory or a mine, nor had they ever tried to live on a laborer's wages. Also, a few anarchists, **socialists**, and **communists** were involved with the unions, and they gave the movement a bad name among the very pro-**capitalist** American public. Thus, the unions had to overcome ruthless owners, skeptical public opinion, and hostile government action while trying to organize an effective force to push their demands.

The first unions to organize after the Civil War were severely damaged by the 1873 depression. No man would risk his job by joining a union when jobs were scarce. One of the unions that did manage to survive the depression was the Knights of Labor, the first national union, which was organized in 1869. It was initially a secret society organized to protect its members from the hostility of their employers. It was intended to be a union for all workers in all trades. Moreover, it had wide social and political goals that made it more of a lobbying organization rather than a labor organization.

The Knights came to the height of their power under Terence Powderly in the early 1880s. Powderly relaxed the secrecy, discouraged strikes, and pushed a wide social agenda that included government ownership of public utilities and the end of child labor. Membership vaulted after two successful strikes against Jay Gould's railroad in 1885. (Powderly had opposed the strikes.) Membership reached a height of about 700,000.

However, 1886 proved to be a destructive year for the Knights. A third strike against the Gould railroad failed, causing a fall in membership. Powderly was criticized for failing to support the strike. Another strike against the McCormick Reaper factory in Chicago proved to be an even greater disaster. The strike became violent when non-striking workers were attacked as they left the factory on May third. The police intervened and several strikers were killed. A protest was held the next day at Haymarket Square. As the speeches were ending, the police moved in to break up the meeting. Someone threw a dynamite bomb into the crowd. A policeman was killed and several people were injured.

The Haymarket Riot caused a nationwide panic and a wave of anti-union feeling. Several anarchists were arrested, and eight were convicted in the witch-hunt that followed. The Knights of Labor never recovered from their association with the riot. After 1886 the leadership of the national labor movement was passed to the American Federation of Labor, organized in 1886 after the riot. That meant it could not be associated with the Haymarket Riot.

The AFL became a far more effective force than the Knights of Labor for several reasons. The AFL did not try to organize everyone into one large union. Instead, each trade organized its own union for the simple goal of getting the best wages and conditions for its people. These individual unions pooled their resources to form strike funds and a central support structure which allowed striking workers to hold out until businesses met their demands.

The new federation was led from 1886 until 1924 (except for one year) by Samuel Gompers, a cigar maker and an effective labor leader. Gompers concentrated on specific labor issues, such as the eight-hour work day, and avoided more utopian political ideas. He also stressed that the union supported capitalism; it just wanted more of the benefits for the workers. The AFL did engage in some political lobbying, but it was specifically for labor goals. The strongest demand was simply for the right to organize and strike peacefully without being arrested for violating anti-union laws and injunctions. These narrow, specific goals gained the support of working men. The AFL rapidly grew in strength, comfortably surviving the 1893 depression.



**Name the item, event or person.**

- 1.15

Immigration after 1880 that came from southern and eastern Europe
- 1.16

leader of the AFL, 1886-1924
- 1.17

damaged the development of unions in 1873
- 1.18

number of immigrants in the 1880s
- 1.19

leader of the Knights of Labor at its height
- 1.20

immigrant group hated in California
- 1.21

1885 events that increased Knights of Labor membership
- 1.22

political group that benefited from the ignorance of the immigrants in American cities
- 1.23

1886 event that irreparably damaged the reputation of the Knights of Labor
- 1.24

immigration test finally made into law in 1917

**Answer these questions.**

- 1.25

Why were the New Immigrants so disliked in America?
- 1.26

Why was the AFL more successful than the Knights of Labor?
- 1.27

Why did most middle-class Americans oppose unions?
- 1.28

What were the restrictions put on immigration after 1882?

## Gilded Society

**Social Darwinism.** Social and political reformers in the Gilded Age faced formidable obstacles. One of the greatest was the attitude of the American people. America had always been a nation of freedom, a land where a man could make his money without restrictions or interference. *Laissez-faire* capitalism was the dominant view of the day. This philosophy stated that a nation would prosper when government interfered as little as possible in business. Encouraged by hefty donations and bribes, the U.S. government was a warm supporter of *laissez-faire*.

Popular opinion supported not only *laissez-faire* but also the anti-reform idea of Social Darwinism. The latter was an offshoot of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, the book that described the theory of evolution. Darwin taught, among other things, that in nature each species prospers by competition in which the strongest survive and dominate. Led by a British philosopher named Herbert Spencer, this idea was applied to people. The rich were the strong who climbed to the top by their own ability. The poor, on the other hand, were poor because they were failures and they deserved to be poor! Thus, any reforms to benefit the poor would violate natural law to the harm of the human species! This contradicted the concept of Christian charity, and was never fully accepted in America, although ruthless industrialists did use it to justify their actions and impede reform.

The rich and powerful “captains of industry” were also widely admired in the Gilded Age. They were seen as the finest examples of the success of the American system. They had earned their wealth by their own cleverness and hard work. It was believed that anyone could become a millionaire in America. Andrew Carnegie, who had been a poor immigrant, was the prime example of what hard work and skill could bring to a man in this great land. Thousands of “rags to riches” stories about poor

boys who became rich filled the bookshelves and gave dreams to hard-working men and boys. It was difficult for reformers to attack these heroes and their often underhanded methods.

**New rich.** The greatest glitter of the Gilded Age came from the incredibly wealthy new industrialists. High society took the air of a European royal court as the new rich competed in ways of showing off their wealth. Fortunes were spent on antiques and art from Europe. Lavish clothes, large yachts, and expensive parties were all part of the social scene. The Vanderbilts built a 70-room mansion called The Breakers at Newport, Rhode Island as a summer home. It included two rooms that were built in France, shipped over, and reassembled. They referred to it without joking as a “cottage.” Another Vanderbilt, Consuelo, married an English Duke in exchange for a large cash settlement.

The new rich did not keep all of their money for themselves. The tradition of **philanthropy** was strong in America, despite Social Darwinism. John D. Rockefeller helped start the University of Chicago. Cornell in New York, and Stanford in California were both universities built with money from wealthy industrialists. The premier philanthropist, however, was Andrew Carnegie. He believed it was a sin to die rich; and a rich man's duty was to give away his excess money. Carnegie, therefore, dedicated the latter part of his life to philanthropy. He is best known for the many public libraries established all over America with his grants.

**American life.** Ordinary people had more money in the Gilded Age, as well. Cities were growing in population, and they began to add civic attractions for their population. With donations from wealthy individuals and other funds, large cities established libraries, museums, operas, and symphony orchestras. The first large department stores were built in the late

1800s by John Wanamaker in Philadelphia and Marshall Field in Chicago. Professional police and fire departments were established to protect city property. Sanitation laws, boards of health, safe water supplies, sewage systems, and trash removal added to the comfort and safety of city life.

Middle-class America had time and money for new amusements in the late 1800s. Vaudeville with its acrobats, singers, and comics became popular. The circus emerged as a favorite family amusement, led by P. T. Barnum, the master showman who founded the Barnum & Bailey Circus in 1881. “Buffalo Bill” Cody’s Wild West Show with live buffalo, staged Indian fights and stunt shooting toured the country beginning in the 1880s. Americans had discovered the business of amusing themselves and, in the process, they gave the last decade of the century the title “the Gay 90s.” (“Gay,” as in happy and frivolous.)

Sports also began their climb to the height of popularity in the Gilded Age. Baseball had been a popular game even before the Civil War. The National League of professional teams was started in 1876. Football, boxing, and horse racing were popular. The low-framed “safety” bicycle created a national craze as cycling clubs spread all over the nation. Tennis, imported from England, gained a following. For the less active, croquet and archery offered a pass at friendly competition. Thus, many of the activities that are part of modern American life had their foundations in the Gilded Age.

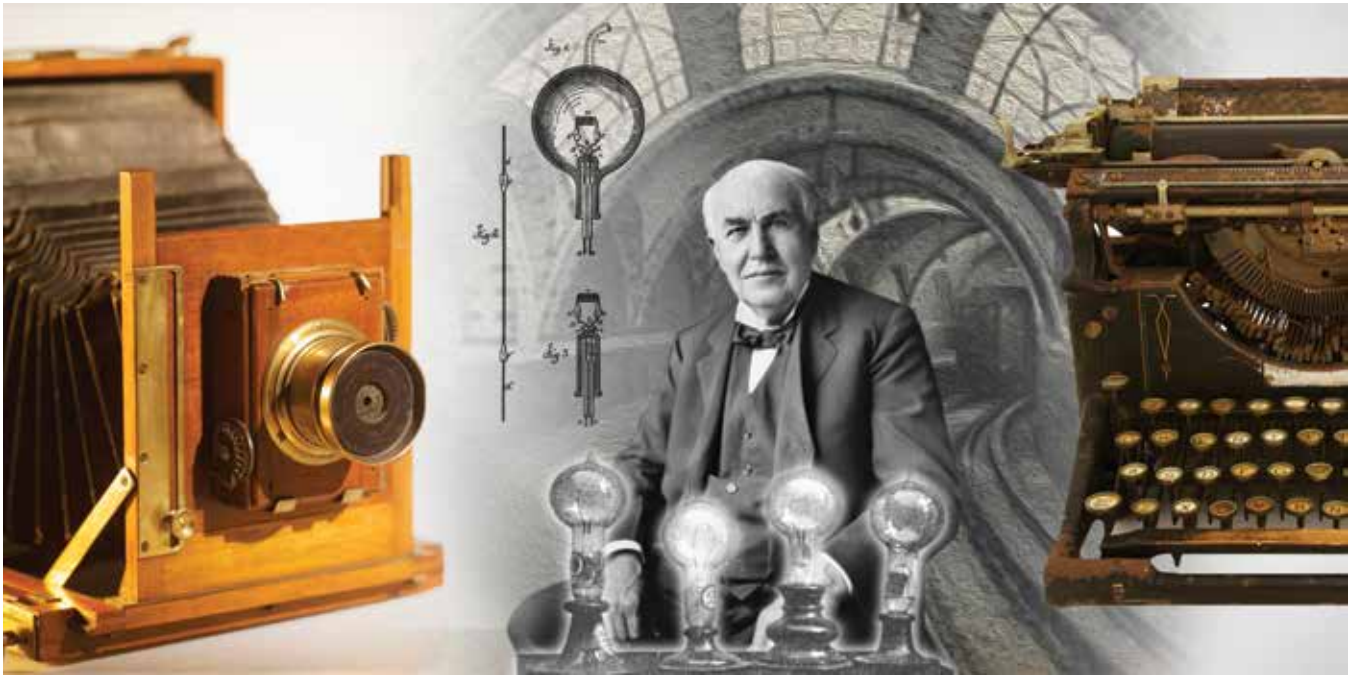
**Inventions.** Life in America was transformed in the late 1800s by a cornucopia of new and improved inventions. The typewriter (1867), cash register (1879), adding machine (1891), and telephone (1875) transformed the business office. Electric streetcars allowed cities to spread out in all directions and still bring



| “The Breakers”

people in for business or pleasure. Refrigeration and better canning techniques improved the supply of healthy food. The Kodak camera (1888) made photography available to everyone and gave us a record of American life.

The most famous inventor of the turn of the century was Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931). Edison was a creative genius who approached inventing like a business. He set up a laboratory, and had a group of paid assistants who worked on creating useful inventions. He decided what he wanted to create, and experimented until he found a way to do it. He was not dismayed by failures. He thought of them as discoveries of what did not work. He invented the phonograph, the electric light bulb, the storage battery, and a duplicating machine. He also made improvements on the typewriter, the stock ticker machine, motion pictures, the electric generator, and the electric train. He patented 1,093 inventions in his lifetime and left a brighter, more automated America as his legacy.



| A Collage of Invention: A Kodak Camera, Edison and his Light Bulb, the First Typewriter, the First Subway



**Match these items.**

- |                   |                       |                                                                                                             |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1.29</b> _____ | Social Darwinism      | a. Vanderbilt summer cottage                                                                                |
| <b>1.30</b> _____ | Gay 90s               | b. decade in which Americans began investing in large professional amusements                               |
| <b>1.31</b> _____ | Kodak                 | c. business with a minimum of government interference                                                       |
| <b>1.32</b> _____ | laissez-faire         | d. professional baseball organization                                                                       |
| <b>1.33</b> _____ | University of Chicago | e. made photography available to everyone                                                                   |
| <b>1.34</b> _____ | The Breakers          | f. theory based on evolution that the rich were superior and the poor were inferior; interfered with reform |
| <b>1.35</b> _____ | National League       | g. founded with money from John D. Rockefeller                                                              |

**Match these people.**

- |                                     |                                       |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>1.36</b> _____ John Wanamaker    | a. creator of the theory of evolution |
| <b>1.37</b> _____ P. T. Barnum      | b. Wild West Show                     |
| <b>1.38</b> _____ Thomas Edison     | c. department store, Philadelphia     |
| <b>1.39</b> _____ Herbert Spencer   | d. great philanthropist               |
| <b>1.40</b> _____ Andrew Carnegie   | e. philosopher, Social Darwinism      |
| <b>1.41</b> _____ Buffalo Bill Cody | f. inventor, 1,093 patents            |
| <b>1.42</b> _____ Charles Darwin    | g. master showman, circus founder     |

**Complete these items.**

- 1.43** Name five of the important inventions of the late 1800s. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.44** Name three things invented by Thomas Edison. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.45** Name three things improved by Thomas Edison. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.46** Name three reasons why the attitude of the American people did not support reform in the Gilded Age.  
 a. \_\_\_\_\_  
 b. \_\_\_\_\_  
 c. \_\_\_\_\_

**Wild West**

The Gilded Age was the era of the Wild West that is usually shown on TV and in the movies. This was the opening of the last frontier of the contiguous states, the Great Plains. It was the time of the Indian Wars, America's final drive to take the land from its original owners. It was the time of the great cattle drives, wild mining

towns, and rough frontier justice. It was the arrival of the Gilded Age homesteaders that transformed this wild prairie into America's breadbasket.

**Plains Indians.** Much of the land between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains had been set aside as a home for the Indians by Andrew

Jackson. The land known as the “Great American Desert” was believed to be worthless for farming. However, after the Civil War, Americans decided they wanted the land after all. In 1867 Congress decided to put all of the Indians there onto two reservations (Oklahoma and the Black Hills of North Dakota).

The Plains Indians were nomadic and war-like. They fought harder and more effectively against forced confinement to reservations than their farming cousins east of the Mississippi River had. Between 1865 and 1890, the U.S. army fought hundreds of battles with the Indians of the plains. In the end, repeating rifles (which did not have to be reloaded after every shot), the mobility of the railroad, the extermination of the buffalo (the Indian’s main source of food), and European diseases finally subdued the last of the Native American tribes. Several of the battles and their leaders have become legend.

In 1875 the land given to the Sioux people was invaded by hordes of greedy miners after gold was discovered there. Led by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, the Sioux fought back. In 1876 Lieutenant-Colonel George A. Custer rashly attacked a group of well-armed warriors near the Little Big Horn River in Montana. He and his entire command of 264 men were killed, but reinforcements drove the Sioux into Canada where hunger forced them to surrender.

Chief Joseph was the leader of the Nez Percé Indians. In 1877 he and his people refused to surrender their land and began to fight with the troops sent to force the move. Chief Joseph realized he could not win and began a skillful retreat toward Canada. He was finally cornered less than 50 miles from the border. With his people cold and hungry, he agreed to move to a reservation.

The most notorious Indian leader was Geronimo of the Apache people. He was placed on reservations several times in his life. He repeatedly escaped and led raids against white



| Nez Percé Indians

settlements in the U.S. and Mexico, using the mountains to hide. He proved very difficult to find. He finally surrendered for the last time in 1886 and was sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where he lived the rest of his life.

The unofficial policy of the army and the government during these years was extermination of the Indians. That was not the announced policy, but it was the effect. Incidents of soldiers murdering peaceful tribes, including women and children, were all too common. In 1881 Helen Hunt Jackson wrote *A Century of Dishonor*, which detailed the fraud, murder, and deceit practiced on the Native Americans in the previous hundred years. This book touched the conscience of the nation, and reform pressures eventually brought about the Dawes Act of 1887.

The Dawes Act ended tribal ownership of land, gave every Indian family its own land, and promised them full title to the land and citizenship after twenty-five years. It was an improvement over the policy of consolidation and destruction. However, the law ignored the

Indian culture and their way of land management. (It was eventually reversed in 1934.) A lack of respect for non-European cultures was a common trait of all Western peoples before the middle of the 20th century. Even Christians made this error, not recognizing that the love of Christ does not require Western ways of worship and life.

**Pioneer Miners.** The leaders in the white settlement of the Wild West were the miners. The discovery of gold and silver brought waves of miners to Colorado, Montana, Nevada, and Idaho. These men established wild boomtowns near the strikes. After the surface metal was exhausted, the individual prospectors wandered away or found new occupations. They were followed, however, by corporations who set up major industries to get at the deeper metals. Industrial mining brought in jobs for miners, engineers, machine specialists and shopkeepers. Gold, silver and copper were the leading reasons for the growth of cities and towns in

the mountain states of the West. Railroads followed to take out the ore and bring in supplies. Mining took the lead in the Western mountains, while it was cattle that did so on the plains.

**Cattle drives.** After the Civil War, the plains were covered with herds of wild cattle (escaped remnants of those brought over by Spain). The herds were worthless in the sparsely populated Western states, but very valuable to beef-hungry Eastern cities. The problem was how to get them back East. After the Civil War, the railroads provided the solution.

Under the leadership of clever businessmen, stations were set up on the transcontinental railroad to collect cattle for shipment to meat-processing centers in Kansas City and Chicago. The herds were brought to “cowtowns” like Abilene, Kansas by long “drives.” Cattlemen would raise the cows on the unfenced, government-owned prairie land at virtually no cost. Then, the herds would be slowly driven to the rail junctions along established routes like the



| Cattle Drive Trails

Chisholm and Goodnight-Loving Trails. Huge profits were reaped by the cattle owners who completed the long drives in the 1870s and early 1880s.

This was the heyday of the American cowboy. These hard-working men entered American folklore on the long drives to market. It was their job to guard, move, brand, and control the huge herds. To do this, they lived out on the prairie with their charges, only rarely coming to town to spend their pay with wild abandon. Novels and short stories written in the East popularized the life of a cowboy on the open range. Later, movies and TV did the same.

It was all over in a short time, however. Open-range cattle raising was so profitable that hundreds of people and corporations jumped into the business. The result was an oversupply of beef, a drop in beef prices, and the over-grazing of good grasslands. The railroads were also bringing in settlers who bought up and fenced the range lands. The death blow came during the winter of 1886–87. Freezing temperatures and harsh blizzards killed thousands of cattle. The stockmen who survived did so by getting legal title to grasslands, growing feed for the winter, and investing in higher quality breeds of cattle. The spread of the railroad brought transport to all areas of the West, eliminating the need for the long drive. Cowboys lost their major function and became ranch hands, but they never lost their mystique for generations of Americans.

**Homesteaders.** The millions of acres of land in the last part of the West were settled with inordinate speed. Americans settled more acres between 1870 and 1900 than they had in the previous two hundred and fifty years! The Homestead Act and the railroads were the reasons for this incredible achievement.

The Homestead Act was passed by the Republican Congress during the Civil War. It gave 160 acres of free land to any citizen who lived on it for five years and improved it. (The South had

previously opposed homestead laws as a way to increase the number of free states.) By 1900 about 80 million acres of land had been given away. However, even more land had been sold outright or given to railroads and states under various grants. This land was sold to settlers, speculators, or developers. In all, 500 million acres of land was disposed of by the U.S. government by 1900.

The railroads allowed the people to reach this **largess** quickly and easily. The dangerous months of travel by covered wagon were replaced by days of travel in relative comfort. Services and supplies were within easy reach of the new settlers. They no longer had to survive unaided on the “frontier.” In fact, by the time of the 1890 census (American law requires a census every ten years), there no longer was a discernable frontier. For the first time in American history, there was no longer a line of settlement with open land to the West. There was still a tremendous amount of land available, but it was spread out in between established cities and towns. The frontier was gone.

The farmers of the plains faced major problems in establishing agriculture. The region was much drier than the East and needed special equipment to work the heavy soil. This equipment was expensive. More than 160 acres was needed in the drier regions to have a profitable farm. Nevertheless, the Great Plains quickly became a wheat- and corn-growing region, supplying American and foreign cities with grain. These business farms depended upon a single cash crop and bought their own food from local stores.

Western farmers were hurt in the late 1800s by a variety of problems. The vast productive power of the plains produced huge crops that forced prices down. Railroads took a hefty cut of farmer’s profits, sometimes eliminating them entirely. While manufactured goods were protected and overpriced due to high tariffs, farm products had no protection from competition. Farmers who went into debt to pay for expensive machinery often lacked the means to

repay. They either sold out or carried debt and interest payments for years.

The problems of debt and railroad extortion forced the incredibly independent American farmers to organize. In 1867 they formed the Grange which became an important social/political organization for farmers. The Grange

worked at first for self-improvement for farmers and later tackled some of the thorny issues of late 19th century agriculture. Its work for railroad regulation and debt relief was largely ineffective. However, its torch was taken up by the Farmer's Alliance, the Populists, and later, by the Progressive Movement.



### Complete these sentences.

- 1.47 \_\_\_\_\_ was the leader of the Nez Percé Indians who tried to retreat to Canada.
- 1.48 The pioneer settlers in the Western mountain states were \_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.49 Helen Hunt Jackson's book, \_\_\_\_\_, pricked the American conscience about the treatment of the Indians.
- 1.50 The Homestead Act gave any citizen \_\_\_\_\_ acres of free land if they lived on it for \_\_\_\_\_ years.
- 1.51 The American \_\_\_\_\_ became a folk hero during the cattle drives of the 1870s and 1880s.
- 1.52 The \_\_\_\_\_ Indians fought back when their land was invaded by gold-hungry miners in 1875.
- 1.53 Cattle were taken to railroad "cowtowns" along trails like the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.54 Overproduction of open-range cattle caused a \_\_\_\_\_ in prices and \_\_\_\_\_ of grassland.
- 1.55 The \_\_\_\_\_ was a social/political organization for farmers.
- 1.56 The things that contributed to the conquest of the plains Indians were:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.57 The Apache leader who proved difficult to confine was \_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.58 The death blow to the open-range cattle business was \_\_\_\_\_.

- 1.59** The American frontier had disappeared by the census of \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.60** \_\_\_\_\_ and all of his men were killed at Little Big Horn in 1876.
- 1.61** The \_\_\_\_\_ Act ended tribal ownership of land and tried to make the Indians into independent farmers.
- 1.62** The farms of the Great Plains specialized in growing \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.63** The major political issues of the Grange were \_\_\_\_\_ relief and control of the \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.64** The two reasons for the speed of settlement on the Great Plains were the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ .



**Review the material in this section in preparation for the Self Test.** The Self Test will check your mastery of this particular section. The items missed on this Self Test will indicate specific areas where restudy is needed for mastery.

## SELF TEST 1

**Match these people** (each answer, 2 points).

- |              |                            |                                               |
|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <b>1.01</b>  | _____ Andrew Carnegie      | a. master circus showman                      |
| <b>1.02</b>  | _____ Samuel Gompers       | b. author of the <i>Gilded Age</i>            |
| <b>1.03</b>  | _____ P. T. Barnum         | c. leader of Nez Percé people                 |
| <b>1.04</b>  | _____ John D. Rockefeller  | d. founder of Standard Oil                    |
| <b>1.05</b>  | _____ Geronimo             | e. leader of AFL                              |
| <b>1.06</b>  | _____ Thomas Edison        | f. wealthy railroad man, built The Breakers   |
| <b>1.07</b>  | _____ Terence Powderly     | g. philanthropist, steel-making industrialist |
| <b>1.08</b>  | _____ Chief Joseph         | h. leader of the Knights of Labor             |
| <b>1.09</b>  | _____ Mark Twain           | i. Apache leader                              |
| <b>1.010</b> | _____ Cornelius Vanderbilt | j. inventor                                   |

**Complete these sentences** (each answer, 3 points).

- 1.011** Large corporations that controlled a certain industry with a near monopoly were called \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.012** The first of the large, post Civil War corporate industries was the \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.013** The \_\_\_\_\_ gave the Indians land as individuals, not as a tribe, and tried to make them into independent farmers.
- 1.014** The \_\_\_\_\_ was a shift of people coming to America from South and East Europe instead of the North.
- 1.015** The Knights of Labor never recovered from their association with the \_\_\_\_\_ in 1886.
- 1.016** \_\_\_\_\_ was a philosophy that a nation would prosper when government interfered as little as possible with business.
- 1.017** The \_\_\_\_\_ gave 160 acres to any citizen who improved it and lived on it for five years.
- 1.018** \_\_\_\_\_ was a philosophy which taught that the poor were failures that deserved to be poor because they could not compete successfully.
- 1.019** The era from 1865 to 1900 was called the \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.020** The census of 1890 showed that America no longer had a \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer these questions** (each number, 3 points).

- 1.021** What made open-range cattle raising profitable? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.022** Who are the owners of a corporation and who runs it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.023** What two railroads completed the first transcontinental railroad? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1.024** Why did organized labor oppose immigration? \_\_\_\_\_

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**1.025** Why was the AFL more effective than the Knights of Labor? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**1.026** What two things contributed to the rapid settlement of the plains? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**1.027** Why were the railroads a problem for Midwestern farmers? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**1.028** Why were immigrants considered ideal employees for the industrial giants? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**1.029** How would the industries fight strikes? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**1.030** Why were the captains of industry admired in America? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Match these items (each answer, 2 points).

- 1.031

\_\_\_\_\_

Gay 90s
- 1.032

\_\_\_\_\_

dividend
- 1.033

\_\_\_\_\_

Grange
- 1.034

\_\_\_\_\_

Promontory Point
- 1.035

\_\_\_\_\_

U.S. Steel
- 1.036

\_\_\_\_\_

Standard Oil
- 1.037

\_\_\_\_\_

capitalism
- 1.038

\_\_\_\_\_

Bessemer
- 1.039

\_\_\_\_\_

*A Century of Dishonor*
- 1.040

\_\_\_\_\_

Chisholm
- a.

controlled more than 90% of American petroleum production
- b.

process to make steel cheaply
- c.

company profits paid on stock
- d.

book that detailed abuse of the Indians
- e.

system of private ownership as a means of production
- f.

long drive cattle trail
- g.

people spend money on professional amusements
- h.

first billion-dollar corporation
- i.

sought debt relief and railroad regulation
- j.

place where the two sides of the first transcontinental railroad met

80

100

SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_

initials

date



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