

The Progressive Era

*The Emergence of Modern
America (1890–1930)*



The Progressive movement

Equal rights?

Progressive presidencies

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

Icons: For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will learn about the Progressive movement and be able to answer these key questions:

- What was the Progressive movement and how did it begin?
- What were the aims of Progressivism?
- Why did so many political and social changes occur at this time?



Looking back timeline



In order to contextualize the Progressive era, use this timeline to recap previous key historical events.

Either press on a date or drag the pointer along the timeline to find out information about what happened in each year.

Press **start** to begin.

start





At the turn of the 20th century, great changes were underway. Industrialization pulled people towards cities with new factory and bureaucratic jobs. Immigration also helped boost the population.

Press the buttons to examine these graphs showing the changes and trends in population in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Press **start** to begin.

start

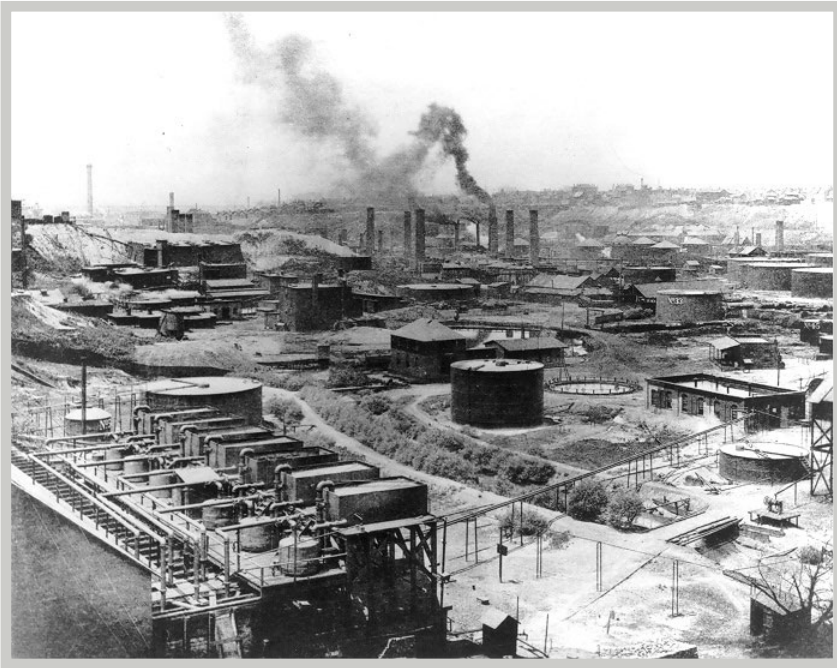




Life at the turn of the century



During this period of rapid **industrialization** and growth, **corporations** expanded massively. They bought out competition, set prices, and cut costs by ignoring workers' pay and conditions. A smaller number of individuals were amassing wealth in unprecedented amounts.



These rapid shifts in U.S. culture led to a great deal of discontent. This opened the door to re-evaluate many of America's social, economic, and political systems.



The Progressive movement

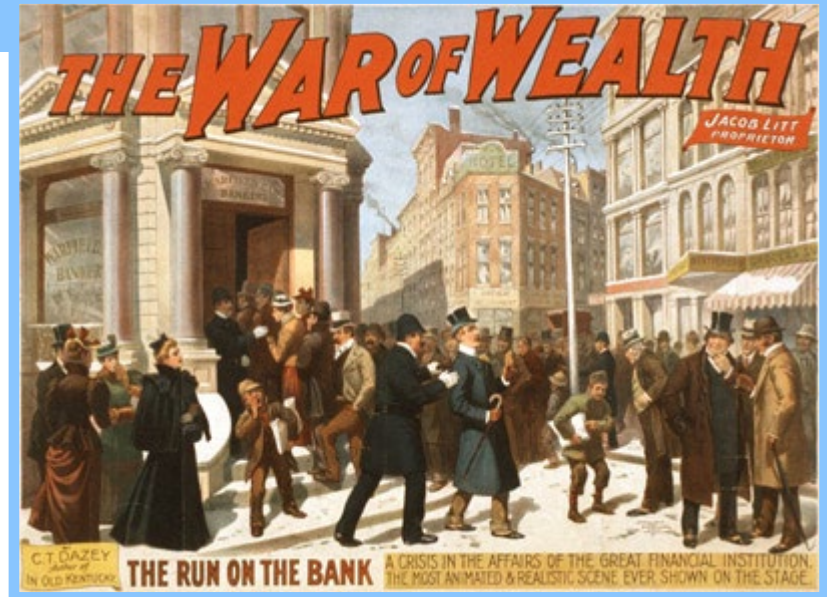


The **Progressive** movement formed in the 1890s in order to address various problems and enact reform.

However, there is significant debate over what the movement specifically was. When historians have tried to define it, they have run up against many divergent opinions from within the Progressive movement itself.

In general, the Progressives wanted the following things:

- regulation of wealth
- fair treatment of citizens
- efficiency and sanitation.





While Progressives had many things in common, there were also differences, making defining the movement difficult.



As a movement that was for the people rather than big business, how do we account for Wilson, a “Progressive” president, who only grudgingly supported women’s suffrage? How about the “Progressive” businessman who supported economic regulation, but did not believe in the rights of man? Movements are rarely as neat and easily defined as we would like them to be.



How would you define the Progressive movement?





The Progressive movement had many individual aims that fell under three broad categories.

Can you match these key objectives to the examples of individual aims?

Press **start** to begin.

start





How did the movement start?



The movement started at the local level. As cities grew, local bosses gained more and more clout. Workers wanted better pay and conditions and protection from big business.

Others, especially among the Protestant middle class, wanted to rid city governments of corruption. They wanted to apply Frederick Taylor's ideas of **scientific management** and efficiency to government in order to provide better services.

There were also movements for women's rights and equality for African Americans. These groups were all broadly termed "Progressive."





Gaining a political voice



Some Progressives began winning seats in prominent government positions. Robert “Fighting Bob” La Follette was elected Governor of Wisconsin in 1900 and made significant reforms, including regulating banks, taxing corporations and introducing graduated **income tax**.



Wisconsin was called “the laboratory of democracy” by **Theodore Roosevelt**. The “Wisconsin Idea” was adopted by other governors, including **Woodrow Wilson** of New Jersey.

Graduated income tax is still in use today.
Do you think it is a fair law? Why?

