

# 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 be able to explain how each of these aspects of Progressivism had an impact on U.S. society:

- Progressivism becomes a national movement
- The policies and reforms introduced by Presidents Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson
- Whether Progressivism was a success or a failure.



Theodore Roosevelt, a Colonel in the Spanish-American War, became the Governor of New York in 1898. He carried out his version of the Wisconsin idea and rooted out corruption.



However, a New York **political “boss”** did not much care for Roosevelt’s moralizing. He was able to arrange for Roosevelt to fill the seat of the Vice Presidency, considered a weak position, as **William McKinley’s** running mate in the 1900 election.

How did Theodore Roosevelt find it difficult in his position as Vice President to reform government?



However, President McKinley was assassinated in office, leaving Roosevelt the new president of the United States. With him Progressivism had reached the national stage.

With Roosevelt in office, followed by Presidents Taft and Wilson, many progressive reforms were passed through Congress. These helped to:

- regulate business
- develop fairer treatment for citizens
- foster efficiency and remove corruption in all walks of life.





In 1908, Roosevelt decided not to run for a third term and nominated **William Taft** to run. Taft won, but was not seen as progressive enough by some Republicans.

Roosevelt announced he would run again in 1912, but after some political maneuvering Taft won the Republican nomination. Roosevelt formed his own party, the **Progressive Party**, also known as the **Bull Moose Party**.



However, the split in the Republicans allowed the Democrats to take advantage, and their progressive candidate Woodrow Wilson was elected comfortably.

Why are the 1908 and 1912 elections considered as Progressive victories despite the presidential changes?



Due to changes in people's lifestyles, the consumption of food and drugs became a health issue. Some progressive legislation was passed in order to regulate this. Watch the animation to find out more about it.

Press **start** to begin.

start



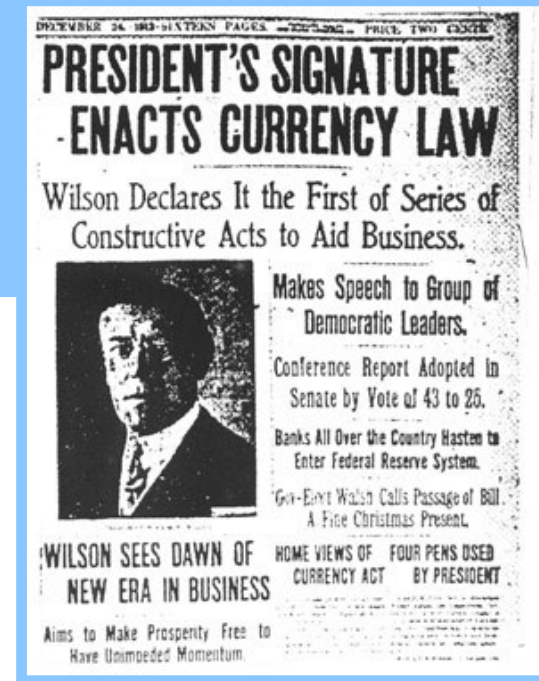
Are these Acts still relevant today?



Roosevelt worked hard to curb the actions of **trusts**, which controlled 80% of U.S. industry by 1900. In **trust-busting** and his other reforms, he wanted to give the public a **Square Deal**.

The most significant antitrust legislation was the **Clayton Antitrust Act** passed by Wilson in 1914. It prevented price fixing, regulated mergers and acquisitions, and stopped other anti-competitive practices.

Wilson also introduced the **Federal Reserve System** in 1913. This created the central banking system of the U.S. and is still the basis of the system used today.







Progressive legislation was introduced in many different areas. Labor legislation limited working hours and regulated child labor practices. More direct political power was given to the public via government reforms. Senators became directly elected with the passage of the **17<sup>th</sup> Amendment** in 1913.



Roosevelt introduced conservation measures in order to combat the many negative side-effects of industrialization. Natural resources were also preserved for future use.

Can you name some of this legislation?



# Summary of reforms



Many different reforms and pieces of legislation were passed during the Progressive era and various campaign groups were formed.

Press on each button to find out reforms, legislation and organizations in that category and when they occurred.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**





# Three Progressive Presidents



All three of the presidents during the Progressive era – Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson – are responsible for signing into law significant progressive legislation. Can you match each president to their photograph and achievements?

Press **start** to begin.

**start**





The Progressive era was a time of shifting lifestyles and public awareness. It resulted in numerous changes across a variety of different spheres.



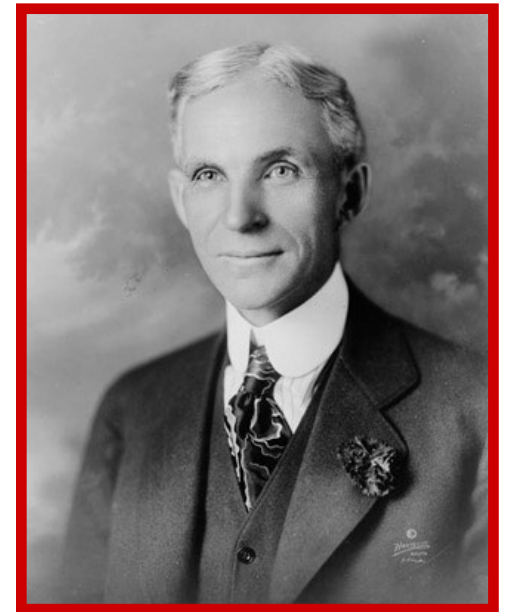
Many of the progressive reforms were aimed at safety, fairness, and equality. They were supported by a diverse group of people, both citizens and those wielding political and economic power and influence.

Can you think of examples for all of these reforms?



Progressive reforms called on businesses to be responsible toward the people. They had to look after their employees better and have a greater responsibility to their customers.

“There is one rule for the industrialist and that is: Make the best quality of goods possible at the lowest cost possible, paying the highest wages possible.”



It is from this era that the vision of the “noble industrialist” is formed. As an idea, Henry Ford’s quote still holds true today.



# Was Progressivism a success?



Judging the success of the Progressive era is difficult. There were some positive, tangible changes, but also some failures. Drag each statement to the correct place, depending on whether it was a success or a failure of Progressivism.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**



Can you think of any other successes and failures?



The Progressive era saw many changes in different aspects of life for a lot of people.

Can you sort these key events of the Progressive era into chronological order?

More information about each of them can be found by pressing the orange information buttons.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Test your understanding of the Progressive era by recapping key terms and important people using this glossary.

Press on the tabs and then each term to see a definition.

Press **start** to begin.

start

