



LESSON 1

The Rise of Reform Politics

OVERVIEW

Between 1870 and 1920, the American government grew exponentially in its power and reach. At the beginning of the era, the federal government was small and citizens generally governed themselves at the state and local level with little oversight from the federal government. However, towards the end of the era, the federal government would employ ten times the number of workers and exercise much greater regulatory power. Many progressives sought to secure greater power for the federal government to attempt to provide solutions to the challenges of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization. During this time, progressives would also advocate for many democratic reforms that would give citizens new ways to participate in government: initiatives, referendum, recall, party primaries, secret ballots, and the direct election of U.S. Senators through the Seventeenth Amendment. Overall, based on the belief that the American principles of limited government and limited power were outdated concepts, progressives would lay the foundations of a much larger and stronger national government that they believed could solve the problems of the twentieth century.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will examine the problems associated with the political machines that controlled many urban areas during the late nineteenth century.
- Students will understand the vast array of reforms that took place between 1870 and 1920 that granted expanding power to the federal government and challenged the constitutional principles of the American Founding.
- Students will identify several progressive reforms and analyze the impact that each reform had on the lives of American citizens.
- Students will explore the debates on civil service reform and analyze primary sources to better understand the motivations of reformers in the early twentieth century.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

- “We propose, on the contrary, to extend governmental power in order to secure the liberty of the wage workers, of the men and women who toil in industry, to save the liberty of the oppressed from the oppressor. Mr. Wilson stands for the liberty of the oppressor to oppress. We stand for the limitation of his liberty not to oppress those who are weaker than himself.” **William Howard Taft, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1909**

RECOMMENDED TIME

120 minutes

MATERIALS LIST

- **Handout A: Background Essay: The Rise of Reform Politics**
- **Handout B: Debating Tammany Hall and Civil Service Reform**
- **Handout C: Thomas Nast Cartoons on Boss Tweed**
- **Handout D: The New Nationalism and the New Freedom**
- **Handout E: Comparing the New Nationalism and the New Freedom**

CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES

- Checks and balances
- Federalism
- Limited government
- Private property
- Separation of powers

CIVIC VIRTUES

- Contribution
- Courage
- Initiative
- Justice
- Perseverance
- Vigilance

STANDARDS

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

- 1) Thematic Standards
 - II. Time, Continuity, and Change
 - VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
 - VII. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
 - VIII. Science, Technology, and Society
 - X. Civic Ideals and Practices
- 2) Disciplinary Standards
 - 1. History
 - 3. Civics and Government
 - 4. Economics

Center for Civic Education

- 9-12 Content Standards
 - V. What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?

UCLA Department of History (NCHS)

- US History Content Standards
 - United States Era 6: The Development of the Industrial United States (1870 – 1900)
 - United States Era 7: The Emergence of Modern America (1890 – 1930)

KEY TERMS

- Urbanization
- Machine politics
- Boss
- Boss Tweed
- Tammany Hall
- Graft
- Municipal government
- Stalwarts
- Civil service reform
- Patronage
- Spoils system
- Mugwumps
- James G. Blaine
- Roscoe Conkling
- Rutherford B. Hayes
- James A. Garfield
- Chester Arthur
- Pendleton Act of 1883
- Agrarianism
- Populism
- Initiative
- Referendum
- Recall
- Seventeenth Amendment
- Women's suffrage movement
- National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)
- Nineteenth Amendment
- Managerial progressivism
- Woodrow Wilson
- Bureaucracy

Lesson Plan

Background/Homework » 30 minutes

Have students read **Handout A: Background Essay: The Rise of Reform Politics** and answer the review questions.

Activity I » 45 minutes

- A. Pass out **Handout B: Debating Tammany Hall and Civil Service Reform** to the class. Have students analyze the primary arguments both for and against civil service reform.
- B. Split the class into two groups for a structured debate.
 - a. One side will be pro-civil service reform and the other anti-civil service reform. Give each side fifteen minutes to prepare a five-minute speech in favor of their position, drawing from their readings. Each group should select one person to deliver this speech. The pro-civil service reform speaker should go first, followed immediately by the anti-civil service reform speaker. Give each side two minutes to cross-examine the other.
 - b. Next, give each side five minutes to create a new speech that attacks the opposite side's positions, without repeating points that others have already made. Different individuals should deliver this speech. Give each side two minutes to cross-examine the other.
 - c. Give each side one minute of preparation time to deliver a final, one-minute speech in favor of their position, taking into account previous criticisms.
 - d. After the debate is finished, conduct an anonymous poll to see which side was more persuasive.
 - e. Pass out **Handout C: Thomas Nast Cartoons on Boss Tweed**. Discuss the meaning of each cartoon with students. Ask students the following questions:
 - How does Thomas Nast portray Boss Tweed as a corrupt and greedy politician?
 - How do the political cartoons demonstrate that Boss Tweed has an unfair grip over politics in New York?
 - What threat does Boss Tweed represent to constitutional principles and a healthy civil society as portrayed by Thomas Nast?
 - What is the role of a free press in questioning the actions of the government in the American constitutional republic?

Activity II » 25 minutes

- A. Pass out **Handout D: The New Nationalism and the New Freedom** with primary sources from the two progressive political ideologies of President Theodore Roosevelt and President Woodrow Wilson. After reading the sources in **Handout D**, break the students up into groups of 3-4. Distribute **Handout E: Comparing the New Nationalism and the New Freedom** and have the students complete the Venn diagrams comparing and contrasting the two primary sources as a group after discussion.
- B. De-brief the activity by asking students to share their answers and justify them. Explore the different ideological approaches to solving the problems of American society by the two progressive presidents. Then, examine how both presidential administrations looked similar in their actual regulatory policies as shown in **Handout A**.

Homework » 20 minutes

Have students write 5-7 sentences on what they learned about civil service reform and why the issue is still important to this day.

Background Essay: The Rise of Reform Politics

Directions:

Read the background essay and answer the review questions.

The Gilded Age and Progressive Era experienced a rapid growth in the size and functions of government at all levels. Reformers expanded government to attempt to deal with the challenges of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization. The government greatly expanded its regulation of the economy and began to provide basic services once provided by private charity and civil society. This led to the rise of an “administrative state” in which executive agencies were managed by experts and staffed by civil service bureaucrats who believed they would make decisions in an objective and scientific manner, free of partisan politics and corruption. Over the next century, Americans would debate if the expanded government violated the constitutional principle of limited government or whether the government needed to meet the real needs of the people in a changing economy and society.

The rise of the industrial factory system in cities attracted millions of immigrants and migrants from the American countryside. Northern and Midwestern cities such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago grew quickly and strained the infrastructure system and resources. Self-interested politicians and their supporters expanded their political and financial power by trading basic services to the immigrants in exchange for votes. These corrupt urban politicians developed organizations commonly known as political machines controlled by a “boss.” The most infamous

political machine during and after the Civil War was New York City’s Tammany Hall, a Democrat Party organization headed by Boss William Tweed. The Tweed Ring provided jobs, housing, food, and small gifts to new immigrants or those who were unemployed, and unfamiliar with American political processes and republican principles. In return, the beneficiaries of the boss’s benevolence were expected to vote for the machine’s candidates in the next election. The machines also thrived on graft, bribery, and payoffs in doling out government contracts or land deals from which the political leaders and their friends personally benefitted, sometimes in the millions of dollars.

Over time, some Americans began to organize against the monopolistic machines which dominated the cities and called for reform of city government. They also advocated legal action against the bosses and their supporters. Often, middle and upper class citizens, called “mugwumps,” called for the reform of municipal government and legal action against the bosses and their supporters and agents. In 1871, Boss Tweed was arrested and eventually convicted of over 200 counts of various forms of corruption, spending most of the rest of his life in jail. Reformers also successfully organized to have their own pro-reform candidates elected to city office and pushed to modernize the structure of city governments in a bid to break public support for the machine. By 1900, machines had lost most of their power.

As a result of these reforms, city governments would experience a number of changes. In an effort to promote efficiency, many cities began to experiment with non-partisan elections of city managers and administrators. Under this type of system, government was structured much like a business. City administrators would report to a board of directors including a mayor and city council. This system was seen as a way of fighting the political machines as well as promoting efficiency to solve problems caused by natural disasters, economic hardships, and many other problems that could arise.

Around the turn of the century, educated, middle-class reformers called “progressives” sought a more efficient society where experts and civil service workers ran government through agencies rather than leaving the tasks of government to corrupt legislatures or machine politicians. Many progressives worked on the state level for political reforms. States passed a variety of regulations on railroads, utilities, and other businesses. Moreover, dozens of states passed reforms such as regulation of child and women’s labor, workplace health and safety regulations, and unemployment insurance. Several states successfully adopted these tools of direct democracy around the turn of the nineteenth century and still use them today. Progressives developed these new ways for Americans to participate in their government and make their voices heard. Initiatives allowed voters to propose new laws, the referendum allowed voters to vote directly on proposed laws, recalls permitted voters to remove elected state officials, party primaries granted voters a voice in selecting a party’s candidate for office, and secret ballots provided for a confidential vote. These devices gave people a more democratic voice in government and fought corruption because

voters could bypass corrupt state legislatures. An example of a notable state reformer was Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin who was a progressive reformer who won an inheritance tax, ended shipping rebates by railroads, helped to create a railroad commission to investigate railroad practices, and supported a variety of democratic voting reforms.

Political patronage, or the distribution of political offices and favors to one’s supporters upon election, became the subject of intense disagreement in Congress. Reformers led by Senator James G. Blaine championed civil service reform at the national level aimed at reducing the number of political appointees in the federal government and implementing a civil service exam to hire people of talent and merit rather than party loyalty. The fight for civil service reform led to the Pendleton Act of 1883, which made some federal jobs subject to competitive hiring.

Other progressive reforms supported direct democracy. In 1913, the states ratified the Seventeenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which provided for direct, popular election of U.S. senators. Previously, senators were elected by state legislatures according to the Constitution and the principle of federalism. Critics of this system argued that the process was undemocratic and made their representatives wholly unaccountable to the public. After ratification of the Seventeenth Amendment, all qualified voters possessed the power to cast a vote for the senatorial candidate of their choice.

In 1920, the women’s suffrage movement won a decades-long struggle for women’s right to vote. From the 1870s to the 1890s, suffragists pursued a state-based strategy to secure voting rights on the state level, because states determined a citizen’s eligibility to vote. This strategy met with

great success, especially in the West. However, by the 1910s, suffrage groups increasingly turned their attention to a constitutional amendment. Organizations like the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), led by veteran activist Alice Paul, used confrontational protests, picketing, and hunger-strikes to pressure national officials to support the women's suffrage amendment. Women also went to work in factories during World War I to aid the war effort. In 1920, the states ratified the Nineteenth Amendment, which secured women's right to vote.

Although some earlier federal reforms regulated business, such as the Interstate Commerce Act (1887) and the Sherman Antitrust Act (1890), progressive reforms were successfully implemented primarily from 1900 to 1916. During the administration of President Theodore Roosevelt, Congress and the president expanded the regulation of business. The Elkins Act (1902) banned railroad rebates, and the Hepburn Act (1906) gave the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) authority to set maximum rates for railroads. Congress also created a Bureau of Corporations to investigate violations of interstate commerce regulations. In 1906, Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*, shocked the public with its revelations about the unhealthy conditions in meat-packing plants. Congress responded by passing the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act that year in order to regulate the food industry for public health and created the Food and Drug Administration. Roosevelt also signed bills setting aside millions of acres of public land for national parks. The size and power of the national government expanded significantly under Roosevelt's administration particularly in the new administrative agencies in the executive branch.

Although President William Howard Taft (1909-1913) oversaw an expansion of ICC railroad regulatory authority and prosecuted more trusts than the previous administration, he was generally a constitutional conservative who wanted to preserve limited government and separation of powers. President Woodrow Wilson, on the other hand, was a progressive who believed in strong executive government rather than the legislative processes of Congress. He believed in an activist regulatory government he thought would control businesses to restore individual freedoms. Wilson signed into law the Federal Reserve System, creating a national banking system. He also signed the Clayton Antitrust Act (1914), which outlawed monopolistic practices, and created the Federal Trade Commission, another agency dedicated to regulating big business. Congress also passed laws lowering the tariff, granting aid to farmers, and regulating child labor. Wilson and Roosevelt had different ideological impulses for their progressive reforms, but both helped to create a national government that was much larger and controlled more aspects of the American economy and society. The Sixteenth Amendment, ratified in 1913, amended the Constitution to allow a personal income tax and funded the expanding federal state.

The apex of the progressive movement occurred after American intervention in World War I from 1917 to 1918. The federal government created several agencies that would mobilize the country for total war, in which all the resources of the nation were dedicated to the war effort. The War Industries Board controlled factory production during the war, the War Labor Board regulated workers and working conditions, the Food Administration and Fuel Administration rationed those items for the war

effort, and the Committee on Public Information managed propaganda and wartime information. Hundreds of thousands of workers and middle-class professionals staffed the new agencies to rationalize and scientifically manage the American economy.

American politics had witnessed great changes from 1870 to 1920. When the period began, the federal government only had 50,000 workers, and most of those were U.S. Post Office workers. Moreover, Americans generally governed themselves at the state and local level

with the federal government exercising a few constitutional powers. By the end of the era, the federal government had ten times the number of workers and had much greater regulatory authority. The progressives believed that the American principles of limited government and separation of powers were outdated concepts that were insufficient to address the problems of a modern industrial and urban society. Therefore, the progressives laid the foundation of a much larger and stronger national government for the twentieth century.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What were the conditions in the United States that allowed political machines to gain so much power?
2. In what ways did political machines assist citizens? How did citizens repay the machines?
3. Why was there a push for more individual influence in government through direct democracy during this time?
4. What was the reason for passing the Seventeenth Amendment? What are potential constitutional critiques of passing the amendment?
5. What changes in the size of the national government resulted from the government's regulation of industry to mobilize for World War I?
6. What did Progressives believe the purpose of government to be? Which constitutional principles of the Founding did they directly challenge?

Debating Tammany Hall and Civil Service Reform

Directions:

With your classmates, write a speech arguing either in favor of or against civil service reform depending on the group you are assigned to. Use **Handout A: Background Essay: The Rise of Reform Politics** and **Handout B: Debating Tammany Hall and Civil Service Reform** to support your arguments.

Rutherford B. Hayes, Letter Accepting Republican Nomination for President, July 8, 1876.

With a civil service organized upon a system which will secure purity, experience, efficiency, and economy, a strict regard for the public welfare, solely in appointments, and the speedy, thorough and unsparing prosecution and punishment of all public officers who betray official trusts; with a sound currency; with education unsectarian and free to all; with simplicity and frugality in public and private affairs; and with a fraternal spirit of harmony pervading the people of all sections and classes, we may reasonably hope that the second century of our existence as a Nation will, by the blessing of God, be pre-eminent as “an era of good feeling,” and a period of progress, prosperity, and happiness. Very Respectfully,

Sen. Roscoe Conkling, Speech on the Spoils System, 1877

Some of [the reformers] are men who, by insisting that it is corrupt and bad for men in office to take part in politics, are striving now to prove that the Republican party has been unclean and vicious all its life, and that the last campaign was venal and wrong and fraudulent, not in some of the States, but in all the States,

North and South. For it is no secret that in all States office-holders, in committees, in organizations and everywhere, did all that men could fairly do to uphold the candidates of our party, and that they were encouraged and urged to do so. Some of these worthies masquerade as reformers. Their vocation and ministry is to lament the sins of other people. Their stock in trade is rancid, canting self-righteousness. They are wolves in sheep’s clothing. Their real object is office and plunder. When Dr. Johnson defined patriotism as the last refuge of a scoundrel, he was unconscious of the then undeveloped capabilities and uses of the word “Reform.”

Carl Schurz, speech at Cooper Union, October 28, 1890.

Fellow-Citizens and Friends: I stand before you to-day not as a party man, but as an American citizen, and I see before me both Republicans and Democrats. ...

Why do I associate Tammany Hall with corruption? When you read Tammany’s platform and the great speeches delivered by its men you might imagine that Tammany was an academy of sciences and of patriotism. ...

But what do they really do? They give one Tammany man who has fifty votes a clerkship, although he cannot read. Another Tammany

man who has 100 votes is given a fat contract, and some proprietor of a play hall, who has a few more votes, is given free license to ply his infernal trade.

Tammany is not a political party. It is simply a gang of politicians banded together to rob the city of New-York. Have you ever heard of a reform achieved by Tammany Hall? Did you ever know an honest Democratic citizen who wanted to effect a reform who did not incur Tammany's enmity? All that Tammany's men think of is to make Tammany strong, and they regard the city as a large soup bowl that is to be kept fat and full for "the boys."

Mark Twain, Letter to the Women's Municipal League, October 16, 1903.

I should think that any humane and honest person would rather be convicted of one robbery and one murder than become a cold and deliberate confederate in wholesale robbery and wholesale murder by voting a Tammany ticket. Certainly, if anything is proven up to the hilt, Tammany's financial history and health

statistics of 1901 prove that Tammany's especial and remorseless trade is wholesale pillage and wholesale destruction of health and life.

George Washington Plunkitt, career New York politician, in *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall*, 1905.

This civil service law is the biggest fraud of the age. It is the curse of the nation. There can't be no real patriotism while it lasts. How are you goin' to interest our young men in their country if you have no offices to give them when they work for their party? Just look at things in this city today. There are ten thousand good offices, but we can't get at more than a few hundred of them. How are we goin' to provide for the thousands of men who worked for the Tammany ticket? ...

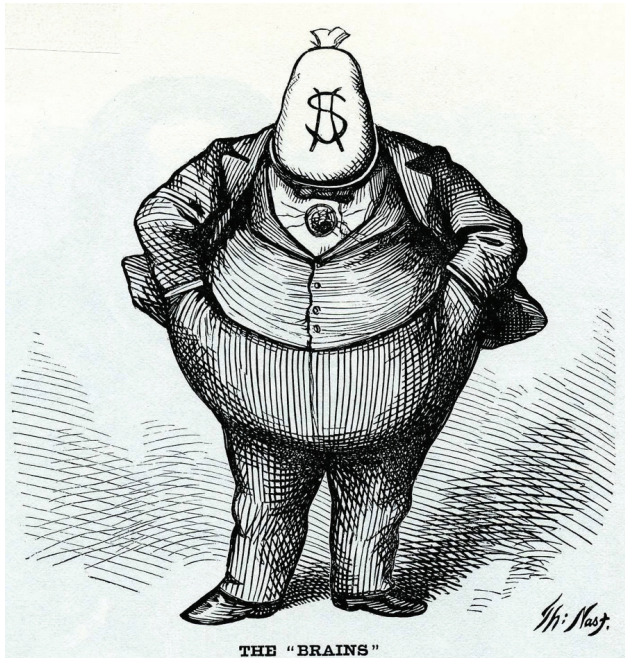
First, this great and glorious country was built up by political parties; second, parties can't hold together if their workers don't get the offices when they win; third, if the parties go to pieces, the government they built up must go to pieces, too; fourth, then there'll be h— to pay.

Thomas Nast Cartoons on Boss Tweed

Directions:

Discuss the meaning of the political cartoons of Thomas Nast, using the discussion questions below as a guide.

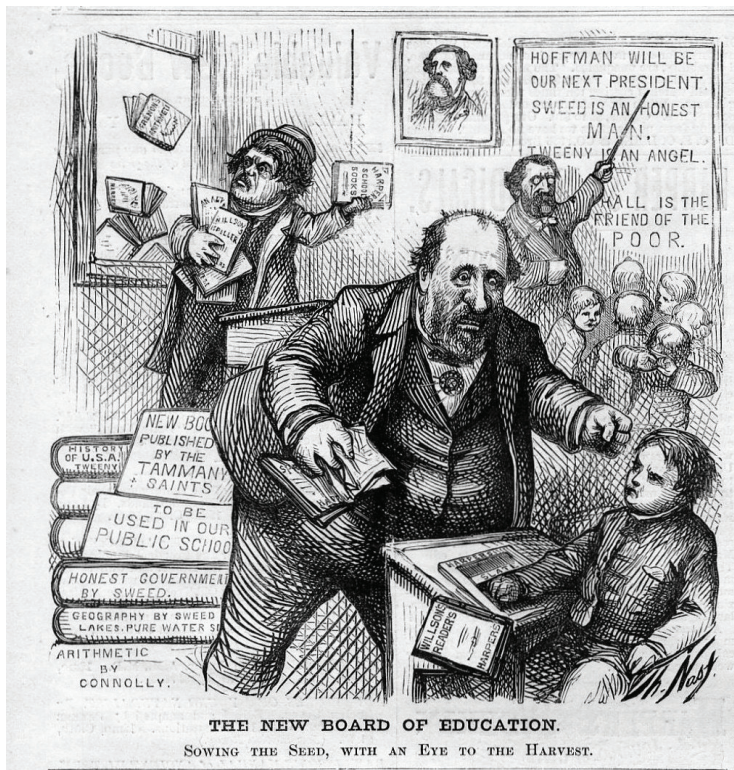
Note: For a clear and detailed digitized image, search Princeton University Digital Library (www.pudl.princeton.edu) for the title and/or date of each cartoon.



Thomas Nast, Harper's Weekly, October 21, 1871.



"Under the Thumb," Thomas Nast, Harper's Weekly, June 1871.



*"The New Board of Education,"
Thomas Nast, Harper's Weekly,
May 13, 1871.*



"The Tammany Tiger Loose," Thomas Nast, Harper's Weekly, November 11, 1871

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How does Thomas Nast portray Boss Tweed as a corrupt and greedy politician?
2. How do the political cartoons demonstrate that Boss Tweed has an unfair grip over politics in New York?
3. What threat does Boss Tweed represent to constitutional principles and a healthy civil society as portrayed by Thomas Nast?
4. What is the role of a free press in questioning the actions of the government in the American constitutional republic?

The New Nationalism and the New Freedom

Directions:

Read the excerpts below and use the information to complete **Diagram #1** and **Diagram #2** found in **Handout C**.

Theodore Roosevelt, New Nationalism, 1910

“The true friend of property, the true conservative, is he who insists that property shall be the servant and not the master of the commonwealth; who insists that the creature of man’s making shall be the servant and not the master of the man who made it. The citizens of the United States must effectively control the mighty commercial forces which they have themselves called into being.

There can be no effective control of the corporations while their political activity remains. To put an end to it will be neither a short nor an easy task, but it can be done.

We must have complete and effective publicity of corporate affairs, so that the people may know beyond peradventure whether the corporations obey the law and whether their management entitles them to the confidence of the public....

It has become entirely clear that we must have government supervision of the capitalization, not only of public service corporations, including, particularly, the railways, but of all corporations doing an interstate business. I do not wish to see the nation forced into the ownership of the railways if it can possibly be avoided, and the only alternative is thoroughgoing and effective regulation....

The absence of effective state, and, especially, national, restraint upon unfair money getting

has tended to create a small class of enormously wealthy and economically powerful men, whose chief object is to hold and increase their power.... We grudge no man a fortune which represents his own power and sagacity, when exercised with entire regard to the welfare of his fellows.... We grudge no man a fortune in civil life if it is honorably obtained and well used. It is not even enough that it should have been gained without doing damage to the community. We should permit it to be gained only so long as the gaining represents benefit to the community. This, I know, implies a policy of a far more active governmental interference with social and economic conditions in this country than we have yet had, but I think we have got to face the fact that such an increase in governmental control is now necessary....

The American people are right in demanding that New Nationalism, without which we cannot hope to deal with new problems. The New Nationalism puts the national need before sectional or personal advantage. It is impatient of the utter confusion that results from local legislatures attempting to treat national issues as local issues.... This New Nationalism regards the executive power as the steward of the public welfare. It demands of the judiciary that it shall be interested primarily in human welfare rather than in property, just as it demands that the representative body shall represent all the people rather than any one class or section of the people.”

Woodrow Wilson, “The New Freedom,” 1913

“We have come upon a very different age from any that preceded us. We have come upon an age when we do not do business in the way in which we used to do business...There is a sense in which in our day the individual has been submerged. In most parts of our country men work, not for themselves, not as partners in the old way in which they used to work, but generally as employees—in a higher or lower grade—of great corporations. There was a time when corporations played a very minor part of our business affairs, but now they play the chief part, and most men are the servants of the corporation.....

Your individuality is swallowed up in the individuality and purpose of a great organization. It is true that, while most men are thus submerged in the corporation, a few, a very few, are exalted to a power which as individuals they could never have wielded. Through the great organizations of which they are the heads, a few are enabled to play a part unprecedented by anything in history in the control of the business operations of the country and in the determination of the happiness of great numbers of people.

Yesterday and ever since history began, men were related to one another as individuals. To be sure there were the family, the Church, and the State, institutions which associated men in certain wide circles of relationship. But in the ordinary concerns of life, in the ordinary work, in the daily round, men dealt freely and directly with one another. Today, the everyday relationships of men are largely with great impersonal concerns, with organizations, not with other individual men. Now this is nothing

short of a new social age, a new era of human relationships, a new stage-setting for the drama of life....

They know that America is not a place of which it can be said, as it used to be, that a man may choose his own calling and pursue it just as far as his abilities enable him to pursue it; because today, if he enters certain fields, there are organizations which will use means against him that will prevent his building up a business which they do not want to have built up; organizations will see to it that the ground is cut from under him and the markets shut against him.

American industry is not free, as once it was free; American enterprise is not free; the man with only a little capital is finding it harder to get into the field, more and more impossible to compete with the big fellow. Why? Because the laws of this country do not prevent the strong from crushing the weak. That is the reason, and because the strong have crushed the weak the strong dominate the industry and the economic life of this country....

No country can afford to have its prosperity originated by a small controlling class....

There has come over the land that un-American set of conditions which enables a small number of men who control the government to get favors from the government; by those favors to exclude their fellows from equal business opportunity; by those favors to extend a network of control that will presently dominate every industry in the country....

We used to think in the old-fashioned days when life was simple that all that government had to do was to put on a policeman’s uniform, and say, ‘Now don’t anybody hurt anybody else.’ We used to say that the ideal of government was for every man to be left alone and not

interfered with, except when he interfered with somebody else; and that the best government was the government that did as little governing as possible. That was the ideal that obtained in Jefferson's time. But we are coming now to realize that life is so complicated that we are not dealing with the old conditions, and that the law has to step in and create new conditions under which we may live....

Shall we withhold our hand and say monopoly is inevitable, that all that we can do is to regulate it?....

The Roosevelt plan is that there shall be an industrial commission charged with the supervision of the great monopolistic combinations....I find, then, the proposition to be this: That there shall be two masters, the great corporation, and over it the government of the United States; and I ask who is going to be the master of the government....

I don't care how benevolent the master is going to be. I will not live under a master. That is not what America was created for. America was created in order that every man should have the same chance as every other man to exercise mastery over his own fortunes."

Comparing the New Nationalism and the New Freedom

Directions:

Fill in the pairs of Venn diagrams to compare and contrast the views of the New Nationalism and New Freedom.

Diagram #1

Using the respective sources in **Handout C**, list the problems each saw in American society and the economy in the circle. The problems they shared in common should be listed in the space between.

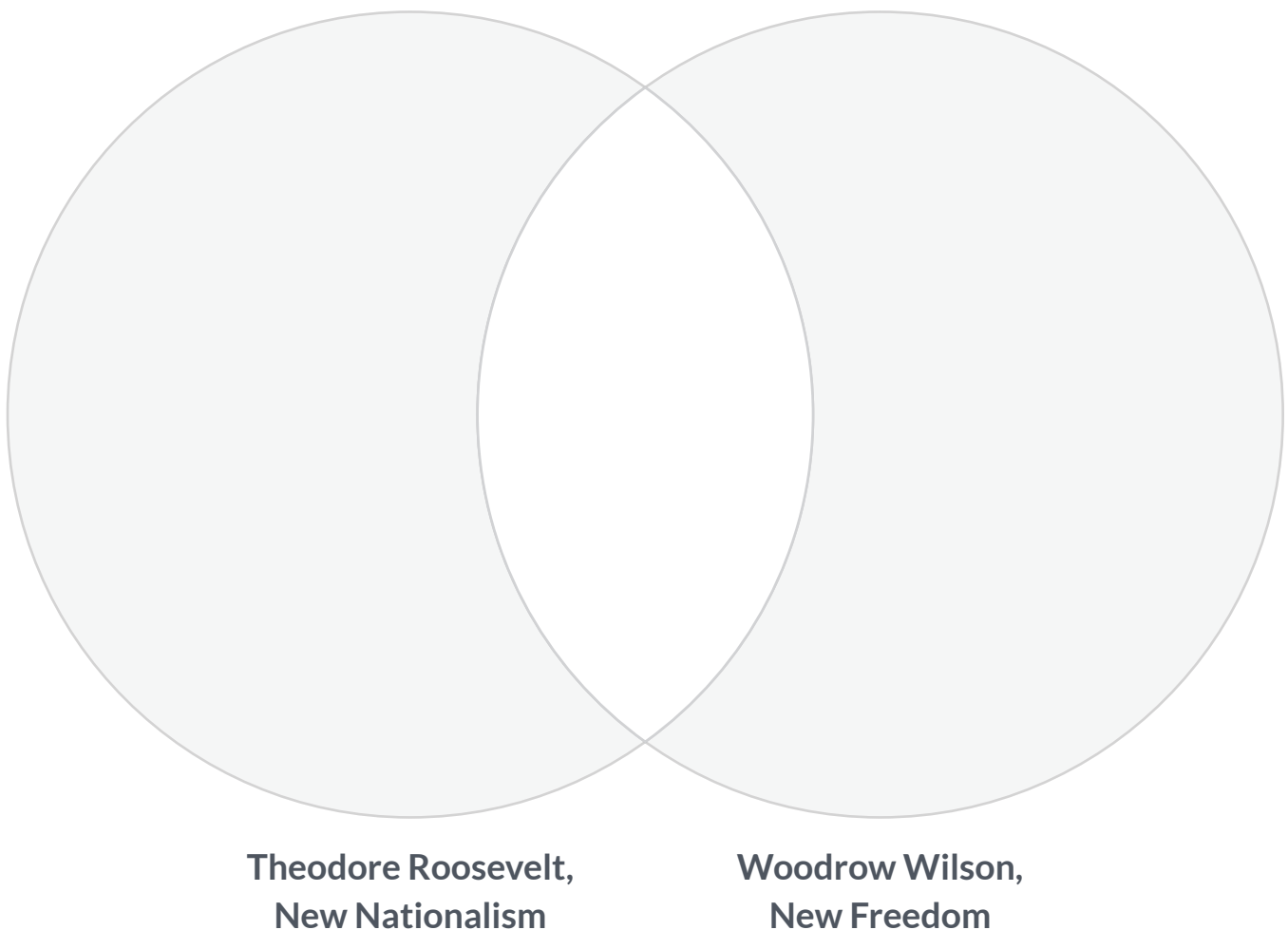
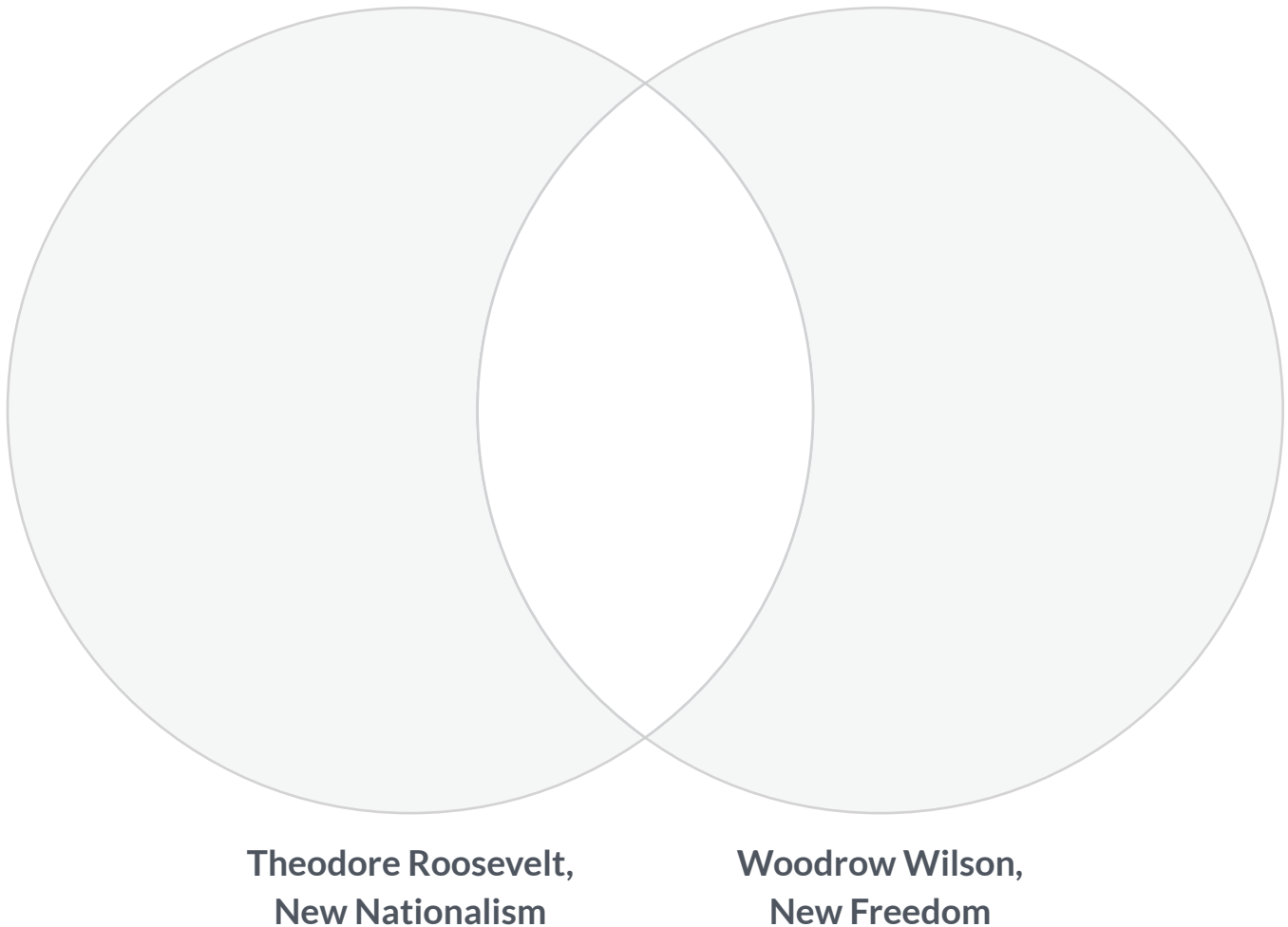


Diagram #2

Using the respective sources in **Handout C**, list the solutions each saw to solving the problems in American society and the economy in the circle. The solutions they shared in common should be listed in the space between.



Handout A: Background Essay: The Rise of Reform Politics Answer Key

1. In the late nineteenth century, the industrial factory system was growing and drawing millions of immigrants into large cities in the Northeast and Midwest. As millions of new migrants flocked to these cities, infrastructure and resources became strained. As a result, many were desperately searching for both work and a share of the available resources. These immigrants were easily preyed upon by machine bosses who were able to leverage their finances in exchange for political power through votes.
2. Political machines assisted citizens by providing jobs, housing, food, and a number of other small gifts. These were given with the expectation that those given gifts would support and vote for the machine's candidates in the next election. These machines also thrived on graft, bribery, and payoffs in doling out government contracts or land deals in which they personally would benefit.
3. Following a period in which politics were dominated by corrupt political machines, progressives desired to provide the framework that would allow citizens to participate in the political process. These devices were designed to give people more democratic voice in government. Additionally, they were intended to fight corruption because voters could bypass the state legislatures that many progressives saw as corrupt. The frameworks of initiative, recall, and referendum especially, allowed citizens to directly impact and influence government.
4. Prior to the Seventeenth Amendment, many progressive reformers felt that the election of senators by the state legislature was undemocratic. Furthermore, they believed that it prevented senators from having to be accountable to the people they were supposed to represent. However, current and past critics of the Seventeenth Amendment often point out that the system of senators being elected by the state legislatures was entirely intentional and established for a specific reason.
5. In an effort to better mobilize following American intervention in World War I, the federal government would create a number of agencies that would move the country towards greater efficiency centered on the war effort. However, some of the government regulations that would come into existence during this era would never fully leave. Following World War I, new regulatory agencies would come into existence to fill the void left by those organized specifically for the war. These agencies sought to continue the type of efficiency that the nation benefited from during the war-time efforts.
6. The progressives largely believed that the American principles of limited government and separation of powers were outdated concepts that were insufficient to address the problems of a modern industrial and urban society. Progressive reformers would expand government to attempt to deal with the challenges of modern society. They hoped to establish agencies that would make decisions, free from partisan politics, which would provide basic services that had only been provided by private charity and civil society. Overall, Progressives saw the role of government as needing to meet the real needs of the people in a changing economy and society.

Handout E: Comparing the New Nationalism and New Freedom Answer Key

Diagram #1

Theodore Roosevelt, The New Nationalism: self-interest, property used selfishly, and other reasonable answers.

Woodrow Wilson, The New Freedom: individualism in decline, no equal opportunity, no real competition, and other reasonable answers.

Ideas in common: great inequality of wealth, wealthy few have all the power, and other reasonable answers.

Diagram #2

Theodore Roosevelt, the New Nationalism: federal regulation of business, federal regulation of the use of property and wealth, strong executive power, publicize corporate activities, possible government ownership of industry, community over the individual, and other reasonable answers.

Woodrow Wilson, the New Freedom: restore individualism, restore competition, destroy business rather than regulating it, and other reasonable answers.

Ideas in common: control wealth, increased federal power, and other reasonable answers.

Introductory Essay

The decades after the American Civil War witnessed a vast array of social, economic, technological, cultural, and political changes in the American landscape. These changes transformed the United States from a largely local to a national society. This new society was characterized by a more integrated nation with large institutions and a broad, national outlook.

The economy experienced significant growth during the late nineteenth century that built on the beginnings of the industrial revolution that had begun before the Civil War. The rise of the factory system depended on technological change and new power sources that made the mass production of goods possible. The expansion of the railroad created a national distribution network for the goods. The modern business corporation grew as a response to managing the national production and distribution of goods. The practices of big business came under media and regulatory scrutiny as equal opportunity seemed to shrink. The great wealth of several industrialists was also scrutinized by those who feared their influence and were concerned about growing inequality.

American workers were the backbone of this new industrial economy as they worked with machines to secure the raw materials from the earth and used them to create a finished product. Millions of workers saw great changes in the nature of their work in the factory system. They earned higher wages and enjoyed greater standards of living but sometimes at a great cost due to dangerous, unhealthy conditions. Workers organized into labor unions to meet the growing power of big business. The labor unions

gave workers a sense of solidarity and a greater bargaining position with employers. Waves of strikes and industrial violence convulsed the country, and led to an uncertain future for organized labor.

American farmers were caught between two competing trends in the new industrial economy. The future seemed bright as new western lands were brought under cultivation and new technology allowed farmers to achieve much greater production. However, banks and railroads offered mixed blessings as they often hurt the farmers' economic position. Farmers organized into groups to protect their interests and participate in the growing prosperity of the rapidly industrializing American economy. At the same time, difficult times led many to give up on farming and find work in factories.

American cities became larger throughout the period as the factory system drew millions of workers from the American countryside and tens of millions of immigrants from other countries. The large cities created immense markets that demanded mass-produced goods and agricultural products from American farms. The cities were large, impersonal places for the newcomers and were centers of diversity thanks to the mingling of many different cultures. The urban areas lacked basic services and were often run by corrupt bosses, but the period witnessed the growth of more effective urban government that offered basic services to improve life for millions of people.

The tens of millions of immigrants that came to the United States primarily settled in urban areas and worked in the factories. They came for the opportunities afforded by large, industrial

economies and provided essential low-skill labor. The “new immigrants” were mostly from southeastern Europe, Asia, and Mexico. They had to adapt to a strange new world, and in turn brought with them new ethnicities, languages, religious practices, foods, and cultures. This tension over assimilation led to debates about American values and the Americanization of immigrants. Some native-born Americans wanted to restrict the number of immigrants coming into the country, while others defended the newcomers.

The changes in the economy and society created opportunities and challenges for millions of other Americans. The status and equal rights of women experienced a general, long-term growth. Many women enjoyed new opportunities to become educated and work in society, though these opportunities were still limited when compared with men. The history of women during the late nineteenth century was not monolithic as white, middle-class women often had a very different experience than women who were poor, or from a minority or immigrant background. Because many women entered the workforce, a debate occurred over the kinds and amount of work that women performed, which led to legal protections. The women’s suffrage movement won the biggest success for equal rights in the period with the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, granting women the right to vote.

African Americans did not participate in the growing opportunities and prosperity that other groups in American society did. The long and bloody Civil War had ended with the freeing of African Americans from slavery. This was followed by further gains of constitutional and legal protections, however, many of these rights would soon evaporate. During the late

nineteenth century, African Americans found inequality and racism in the segregation of the South, but they were also victimized by inequality and racism in northern cities in the early twentieth century as they moved there in increasing numbers. Black leaders debated the right path to full equality, civic participation, and economic opportunity in American life.

The changes that affected the American economy and society led to a growth in the federal government. The important issues of the nineteenth century were increasingly contested on the national rather than local levels. Businesses, organized labor, farmers, and interest groups turned to the national government to resolve their disputes. The executive branch saw an expansion of its role and influence as it increased its regulatory power over the many aspects of American life. A widespread reform movement called “progressivism” introduced many reforms that were intended to address the changes in society resulting from the modern industrial economy and society. This increased government’s responsiveness but also dramatically increased the size and powers of the federal government. The national government therefore began to supplant the local and state governments in the minds of many Americans and in the American constitutional system.

The late nineteenth century also ushered in great changes in how the United States interacted with the rest of the world. For the first century of its existence, the United States traded with other countries, acquired territory for continental expansion, and fought in a few major wars. However, the United States was generally neutral in world affairs and focused on its domestic situation. That changed as America entered the world stage as a major global

power. This expansion in world affairs led to an internal debate over international powers and responsibilities. Americans also struggled over the character of its foreign affairs. Debates raged over the growth of American military power and whether Americans had a duty to spread democracy around the world.

The changes in the late nineteenth century were bewildering to most Americans who experienced them. Many debates took place to make sense of the changes and to consider how to respond to them. Americans rarely found easy answers and often conflicted with one another on the different solutions. The vast changes that occurred laid the foundation of modern America. The questions and challenges that they faced are still relevant and are debated by Americans

today in the twenty-first century. Americans continue to discuss the power and regulation of banks and large corporations. Workers grapple with the globalization of the economy, stagnant wages, and changing technology. Farmers still struggle to make an income amid distant markets determining commodity prices while keeping up with changing consumer tastes about organic and locally-sourced food. Headlines are filled with news of African Americans suffering racism and police brutality. Issues related to the equality of women continue to be debated even as women run for president. Smartphones, social media, the internet, and other technologies change our lives, the culture, and the world economy every day. After more than a century since the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, the fundamental challenges of the era still face us today.