



HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **8th Grade** | Unit 7

HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY 807

Gilded Age to Progressive Era (1880–1915)

INTRODUCTION | **3**

1. THE GILDED AGE **5**

RISE OF INDUSTRY | **7**

WORKERS | **12**

GILDED SOCIETY | **17**

WILD WEST | **20**

SELF TEST 1 | **25**

2. GILDED POLITICS **29**

GARFIELD TO FIRST CLEVELAND | **30**

HARRISON TO MCKINLEY | **36**

AMERICA BECOMES A WORLD POWER | **44**

SELF TEST 2 | **50**

3. THE PROGRESSIVE ERA **53**

ROOSEVELT | **54**

TAFT | **64**

WILSON | **68**

SELF TEST 3 | **72**



LIFEPAC Test is located in the center of the booklet. Please remove before starting the unit.

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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 LIFEPAC® 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 LIFEPAC. When you have finished this LIFEPAC, 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.

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



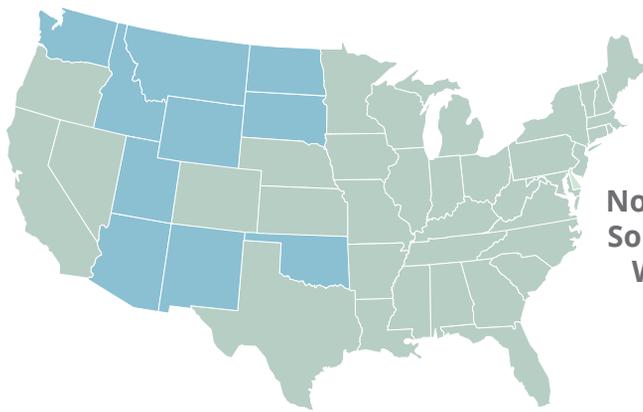
Theodore Roosevelt
1901-1909
Republican



William H. Taft
1909-1913
Republican



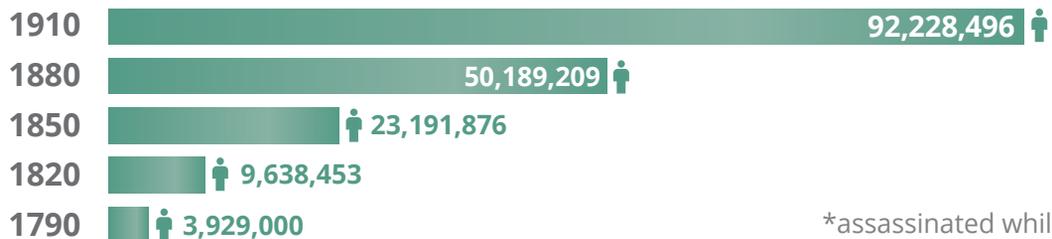
Woodrow Wilson
1913-1921
Democratic



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 nöp' 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 LIFEPAC 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; /ʃh/ 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? _____

1.13 What process made steel cheap enough for general use? _____

1.14 What type of corporation replaced the trust? _____

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

- 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).

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

Match these items (each answer, 2 points).

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|------------------------------|----|--|
| 1.031 | _____ | Gay 90s | a. | controlled more than 90% of American petroleum production |
| 1.032 | _____ | dividend | b. | process to make steel cheaply |
| 1.033 | _____ | Grange | c. | company profits paid on stock |
| 1.034 | _____ | Promontory Point | d. | book that detailed abuse of the Indians |
| 1.035 | _____ | U.S. Steel | e. | system of private ownership as a means of production |
| 1.036 | _____ | Standard Oil | f. | long drive cattle trail |
| 1.037 | _____ | capitalism | g. | people spend money on professional amusements |
| 1.038 | _____ | Bessemer | h. | first billion-dollar corporation |
| 1.039 | _____ | <i>A Century of Dishonor</i> | i. | sought debt relief and railroad regulation |
| 1.040 | _____ | Chisholm | j. | place where the two sides of the first transcontinental railroad met |

	SCORE _____	TEACHER _____	initials	date
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HIS0807 - May '14 Printing

ISBN 978-0-7403-0034-9



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PUBLICATIONS

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