



Chapter 7 The Progressive Period

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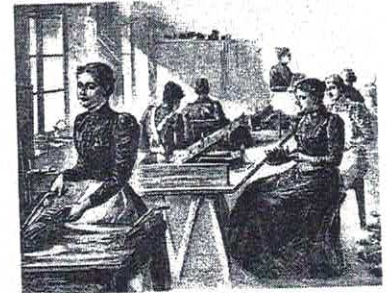
I. THE RISE OF PROGRESSIVISM

Objective 7.01

THE NEED FOR REFORM

As the 1800s came to a close, the United States entered what is known as the **Progressive Period**. Both government officials and citizens called for reforms in business, politics, and society as a whole. As a result, many political, social, and economic reforms came about during this period. Entering the Progressive Period, only a handful of people enjoyed wealth and prosperity while immigrants and poor laborers continued to live and work under harsh conditions. **Urban slums** consisting of **tenements** (overcrowded apartments that housed several families of immigrants or poor laborers) arose in the cities. Overcrowded and impoverished, these slums often had open sewers that attracted rats and other disease-spreading pests. The air was usually dark and polluted with soot from coal-fired steam engines and boilers. Conditions like these led many in the US to demand progressive changes. (Review chapter 5, section 1 regarding tenements and Jacob Riis.)

Working conditions were also bad. One event that greatly increased the public outcry for reform was the **Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire** of 1911. On March 25 of that year, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company in New York City. Many of the exit doors to the factory were locked to prevent employees from stealing. The fire killed 146 people and led to increased demands for safer working conditions. Sadly, some eighty years later, a similar tragedy



Factory Workers

Act was so modified by Congress that it actually raised tariffs when it was finally signed into law. This outraged Progressives, including Theodore Roosevelt. As a result, the Republican Party split in 1912. Taft won the Republican nomination, while Progressives formed a new party and nominated Roosevelt. Nicknamed the **Bull Moose Party**, the **Progressive Party's** platform reminded many of the Populist movement of the 1890s. The Progressives wanted improved working conditions, more government regulation of business, women's suffrage, and an end to child labor. In addition, the Progressives also wanted the direct election of public officials by the people. Large numbers of women flocked to the party and, in some states, even ran for office as Progressive candidates. When the election was over, both Roosevelt and Taft came up short. By splitting the Republican vote between them, they allowed Democrat Woodrow Wilson to win the **election of 1912**. In 1913, Woodrow Wilson became the twenty-eighth president of the United States.

Wilson ran for president as a candidate who opposed both big business *and* big government. He desired to enforce antitrust laws without threatening free economic competition. In 1913, he supported Congress in passing the **Federal Reserve Act**. This act established a Federal Reserve to oversee banking in the United States. The Federal Reserve gave the federal government greater control over the circulation of money and helped prevent bank failures. Wilson also signed the **Clayton Antitrust Act** in 1914. This act served to make strikes, peaceful picketing, and boycotts legal. It also meant that employers could no longer use antitrust laws to put down strikes or break up labor unions.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS DURING THE PROGRESSIVE PERIOD

During the Progressive Period, calls for reform resulted in several amendments to the US Constitution:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Sixteenth Amendment (1913) | Congress now had the power to collect taxes on the incomes of businesses and individuals. This amendment increased the federal government's revenue and eliminated the need to tax according to the proportions of state populations. |
| Seventeenth Amendment (1913) | This law established that US senators would be elected directly by the people, rather than by state legislatures. |
| Eighteenth Amendment (1919) | The government prohibited the making, selling, or transporting of alcoholic beverages. This amendment was later repealed by the twenty-first Amendment. |
| Nineteenth Amendment (1920) | Gave women the right to vote. |

REFORMS IN STATE GOVERNMENT



Robert La Follette

As changes were going on at the federal level, Progressives were making their presence known within state and local politics, as well. One of the most famous figures known for reforming state government was **Robert La Follette** (1855 – 1925). Known as “Fighting Bob,” La Follette was governor of Wisconsin from 1901 to 1906 and gained national attention as a reformer. In 1903, his state adopted the **direct primary**. This meant that the people would choose the candidates for public office, rather than having them be selected by party bosses. Within ten years of La Follette’s reform, almost every state had a similar law. Referred to by many as the “Wisconsin idea,” La Follette’s program included a merit system for state civil service and instituted state regulations and taxes on railroads. Because of men like La Follette, states began adopting reforms such as the **referendum** (allowing citizens to vote directly on government proposals), the **initiative** (allowing for citizens of the state to force a vote on a particular issue), the **recall** (holding special elections to remove corrupt officials from office before their term has expired), and the **secret (Australian) ballot** (allowing individuals to vote secretly, thereby removing the fear of reprisal if they vote against certain candidates).

REFORMS IN CITY GOVERNMENT

Political machines and corrupt bosses like William Tweed had left many calling for reforms in city governments as well as state and federal. City governments also had to adapt to the modern needs of its citizens. For these reasons, some cities began experimenting with new models of government during the Progressive Period. One model involved having a **commission** run the city rather than a mayor or individual leader. Another arrangement was to have the city hire a **city manager**. The city manager would be hired rather than elected, and was answerable to a commission, or **city council**, elected by the people. By the early 1920s, roughly 300 cities had city managers. Meanwhile, city councils came to be used in many places to hold elected leaders, such as mayors, accountable as well.

Practice 2: Efforts at Political, Economic, and Social Reform

1. Roosevelt’s suit against the Northern Securities Company, Wilson’s support of the Federal Reserve and Clayton Antitrust acts, and Taft’s support for the Mann-Elkins Act, are all examples of which of the following?
 - A. reform in city government
 - B. greater freedom for big business
 - C. the changing attitude of the executive branch regarding the role of government
 - D. laws added to the US Constitution during the Progressive period

2. Of the following, which person would have been LEAST likely to vote for the Progressive Party in 1912?
 - A. a supporter of the "Bull-Moose" Party
 - B. those who believed in a laissez-faire approach to economics
 - C. a woman who believed she deserved the right to vote
 - D. a citizen living in New York who longed for reform

3. How was Theodore Roosevelt's handling of the Anthracite Coal Mine Strike seen as a major switch from past positions taken by the government regarding labor disputes?

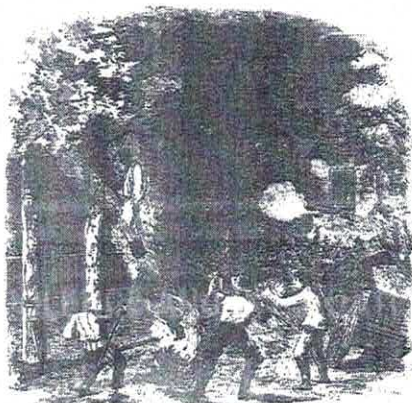
III. RACIAL SEGREGATION DURING THE PROGRESSIVE PERIOD

Objective 7.03

DISENFRANCHISEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

Following the Civil War, African Americans still faced racism and discrimination, especially in the South. One of the primary means used to suppress blacks was **disenfranchisement**. Disenfranchisement means to deny a certain group of people the right to vote. Since African Americans had been granted citizenship under the Fourteenth Amendment and guaranteed their right to vote under the fifteenth, some states came up with creative ways to keep them from participating in elections. Since blacks tended to be less educated, **literacy tests** were often enacted as a voting requirement. Under this restriction, a person had to prove they could read before they could vote. **Poll taxes** required citizens of a state to pay a special tax in order to vote. Since most blacks were too poor to pay, these taxes were another effective means for keeping African Americans from voting. In order to protect poor and illiterate whites from being restricted by such measures, states would often implement **grandfather clauses**. These clauses stated that anyone who had voted, or whose ancestors had voted, in past elections was exempt from any new voting requirements. Since these conditions only applied to whites, grandfather clauses allowed nearly all whites to vote while disqualifying most blacks.

VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION



A Lynching

When laws were not effective in keeping African Americans from voting or exercising their civil rights, some whites turned to violence as a means of intimidation. In the South, the **Ku Klux Klan** used violence and **lynchings** (mob killings) to keep blacks from pursuing equality with whites. African Americans who were lynched were often kidnapped, tortured and then hanged. Often their bodies were badly mutilated in order to further intimidate others in the black community. Although lynchings were most heard of in the South, African Americans were known to be lynched in northern cities as well.

THE WILMINGTON RACE RIOTS

During the late 1800s, African Americans gained increased political and social influence in the city of Wilmington, North Carolina. Much of these gains were due largely to the fact that Republicans and Populists had cooperated to prevent white-supremacist Democrats from winning power. Following a controversial news article printed by a black editor and a general election that resulted in the Democrats winning firm control of the General Assembly, the **Wilmington Race Riots** erupted in 1898. White Democrats launched a number of violent attacks against African Americans. They overthrew Wilmington's Republican government and replaced it with a Democratic council and mayor. Shortly thereafter, the state of North Carolina passed a number of Jim Crow laws (see next paragraph and review chapter 3, section 3). The Wilmington Race Riots are viewed by many historians as a major event in the demise of African American rights following the end of Reconstruction.

SEGREGATION



Homer Plessy

Following the end of Reconstruction, states began to pass **Jim Crow laws**. These were laws that established racial **segregation** (separation based on race) in restaurants, hospitals, schools, public transportation, etc. There are two kinds of segregation: De jure and de facto. **De jure segregation** is segregation based on law. In 1896, the Supreme Court upheld de jure segregation in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The case involved a 30 year old man named Homer Plessy. Plessy, who was one-eighth African American, was jailed for sitting in a "whites only" railway car. Under Louisiana law at the time, Plessy was guilty of a crime. He sued, claiming the law was unconstitutional. After considering the case, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation was

lawful as long as the separate facilities and services were equal. The lone dissenter, Justice John Harlan, disagreed and stated that segregation violated the spirit of the Constitution. The case set the precedent that segregation was legal so long as separate facilities held to the standard of "separate but equal." In reality, however, the facilities for whites were usually far superior to those of blacks.

De facto segregation is segregation that is not officially instituted by law. It evolves due to economic or social factors. In the years involving World War I, de facto segregation became more evident in northern cities. This was in large part due to the **Great Migration**, a period in which thousands of African Americans left the South in search of industrial jobs created by the war. As urban neighborhoods became even more divided due to poverty, race, and cultural differences blacks flocked to the cities.

NOTABLE AFRICAN AMERICANS OF THE PROGRESSIVE PERIOD

Booker T. Washington (1856 – 1915): During this period in US history, there were a number of notable African Americans who emerged. One of these was a former slave named Booker T. Washington. Washington founded the **Tuskegee Institute** in Alabama. Tuskegee served to train African Americans in a trade so that they could achieve economic freedom and escape the oppression often suffered by uneducated blacks. Washington taught his students that if blacks excelled in teaching, agriculture, and blue collar fields (trades requiring manual labor), they would eventually be treated as equal citizens. His school became an important center for technical education in the South.



Booker T. Washington

Washington's dedication despite the threats and many obstacles he faced, inspired African Americans everywhere. At the same time, however, some blacks found his philosophies controversial. Washington, for instance, saw no problem with segregation. In a famous speech given in Atlanta in 1895, Washington stated, "In all things that are purely social we (whites and blacks) can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress."

W.E.B. Du Bois (1868 – 1963): Another African American leader of the day was W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois was the first black Ph.D. graduate from Harvard University and adamantly disagreed with Booker T. Washington. He was offended by the ideas expressed in Washington's Atlanta speech and viewed Washington as someone who had sold out to try and please the white community. For this reason, he labeled the speech the **Atlanta Compromise**. Instead of accepting segregation and "settling" for achieving in blue collar fields, Du Bois argued that blacks should pursue occupations in the humanities and in white collar (managerial or professional) fields. Du Bois, unlike Washington, believed that blacks must be politically, legally, and socially active in order to obtain true equality. Du Bois helped to organize a group of black intellectuals known as the **Niagara Movement**. Their goal was to outline an agenda for African American progress in the United States. In 1905, these leaders met on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls after being denied hotel accommodations in the US. In 1909, Du Bois was instrumental in founding the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**. The organization devoted itself to the progress of the African American community. It also founded an official magazine



W.E.B. Du Bois

The Progressive Period

called *The Crisis*, which featured journalism, editorials calling for social reform, and even poetry. Today, the NAACP continues to be a prominent political voice for the African American community in the United States.



Ida Wells-Barnett

Ida Wells-Barnett (1862 – 1931): A fearless advocate of civil rights (those rights guaranteed to citizens under the US Constitution), Ida Wells Barnett was one of the most important African American women of her day. She was especially noted for her campaign against segregation on railway cars prior to the *Plessy* decision and her courageous fight against lynchings in the South. As an advocate for women's rights, she became known for her unwillingness to stand at the back of women's suffrage parades simply because she was African American. She also helped W.E.B. Du Bois form both the Niagara Movement and the NAACP.

Marcus Garvey (1887 – 1940): A Jamaican by birth, Marcus Garvey came to be an important African American figure in the United States during the Progressive Period. Garvey inspired a great sense of "black pride" among African Americans and amassed a following of more than 500,000 people. He was perhaps best known for his "Back to Africa" movement, in which he advocated blacks leaving the United States to found a homeland in Africa. Although his vision of a "black homeland" never became a reality, Garvey helped arouse a sense of cultural pride that many in the African American community had not felt before.



Marcus Garvey

NATIVE AMERICANS AND CITIZENSHIP



Chief Joseph

In addition to blacks, Native Americans also suffered from discrimination and prejudice. By 1871, the United States no longer recognized Native Americans as members of distinctive tribes or nations. Yet, at the same time, they were not granted the rights of US citizenship either. Finally, in 1924, Congress passed the **Snyder Act**, which granted full citizenship to Native Americans. This act also has been called the **Native American Suffrage Act** because, with citizenship, Native Americans were given the right to vote.

Practice 3: Racial Segregation During the Progressive Period

1. Which of the following would be supported by the decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*?
 - A. It is ok to have separate schools for blacks and whites, so long as both have qualified teachers.
 - B. It is illegal to separate people by race because it violates the spirit of the Constitution.
 - C. African Americans cannot be denied the right to vote.
 - D. De facto segregation is less acceptable than de jure segregation.
2. On which of the following points would W.E.B. Du Bois likely DISAGREE with Booker T. Washington?
 - A. what fields African Americans should concentrate on excelling in
 - B. the need for African Americans to take steps to better themselves and become economically independent
 - C. the need for African Americans to be better trained and educated
 - D. the belief that whites enjoy certain advantages in society
3. How are de jure and de facto segregation different?

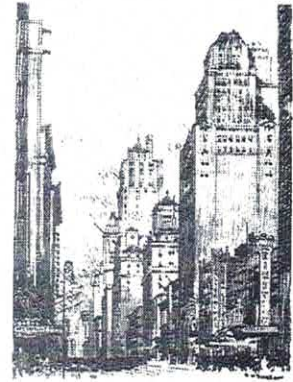
IV. TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS DURING THE PROGRESSIVE PERIOD

Objective 7.04

Progressivism rose out of the same time period as big business and industrialization. Therefore, it was a time that saw many technological advances in US society. A number of these advances helped influence the progressive spirit and served to greatly transform US culture. **Electricity** meant that factories could operate more efficiently and for longer hours. Production increased as factories stayed open later and used electrically powered machines. The **electric sewing machine** greatly transformed the market for pre-made clothes. Before electricity, garments had to be made on sewing machines operated by a foot pump. The work was slow and tiring. With the electric sewing machine, more could be produced quicker and with less physical energy. At home, electricity brought the invention of the **refrigerator**, allowing food to be kept longer without spoiling. Electricity also changed the face of urban life. **Electric trolleys** made it possible for people to travel from one part of the city to another in a reasonable amount of time. This created a market for mass transit and helped give rise to the development of suburbs. It also helped give birth to a profitable entertainment industry, allowing people to attend events in the evening.

SKYSCRAPERS

As the number of people living in cities continued to increase, land to accommodate them became less available. Fortunately, in the late 1850s, the **Bessemer process** made it easier and more affordable to produce large amounts of steel. Steel made it possible to build multi-level buildings. This availability of steel, combined with the need to fit more buildings and people into less space, led to the birth of **skyscrapers**. These buildings were so named because they were so high that they seemed to touch the sky itself.

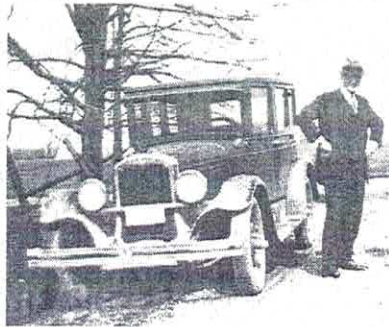


Early Skyscraper

AUTOMOBILES AND AIRPLANES



Henry Ford



Ford's Model T

Although he was not the first to invent the automobile, **Henry Ford** (1863 – 1947) was the first to perfect and successfully market it. In 1907, Ford sold 30,000 of his first, mass-produced car — the **Model T**. What truly set Ford apart was his vision for mass production. He decided to produce enough automobiles that he could afford to sell them at greatly reduced prices. He wanted “ordinary people” to be able to afford his cars.

To achieve this goal, Ford relied on the **assembly line**. Assembly lines had existed before; but Ford's was innovative because it had the employees stay in one spot while the assembly line moved the parts. Up until that time, parts remained stationary while employees moved from station to station. Ford also saw his **workers as consumers**. In other words, he wanted those who made his cars to also be able to buy them. For this reason, Ford paid his workers an unheard of **\$5 per day wage**. From 1907 until 1926, Ford built half the automobiles in the world (16,750,000 cars).

While Ford revolutionized the auto industry, the **airline industry** was coming into being as well. Born in 1903 when brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright successfully conducted the first flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, airplanes were soon used for military service and to carry the US mail. In 1926, the nation saw the birth of **commercial air travel** that carried passengers for the purposes of business and /or leisure cross-country and abroad faster than ever before.

BIRTH OF A MASS CULTURE

Many of the technological advances happening at the turn of the century served to contribute to the creation of a **mass culture**. Before the 1900s, values and attitudes tended to be defined regionally. As the inventions of the late 1800s and early 1900s made mass communication easier and exposed more people to more things, US culture began to be defined more by

national trends. The introduction of **mail order catalogs** meant that consumers could purchase products from stores in far away cities. As a result, people in different parts of the country could wear the same fashions and buy the same products. The invention of the **movie camera** also played a huge role. The first motion-picture, *The Great Train Robbery*, was released in 1903. Soon after, almost every city in the United States had a movie theater. People all over the country watched as their favorite movie actors drove the latest cars, wore the latest clothes, and danced the newest dances. As a result, the United States began to develop a national culture.

Meanwhile, certain companies contributed to the transformation as well. **Kodak™** introduced cameras that could be owned and operated by average consumers. For the first time, people other than professional photographers could regularly take photos of individuals and events. Initially introduced as a medicine (it originally contained cocaine), **Coca Cola™** became well known, introducing the concept of a bottled soft drink to the US public as it launched one of the country's first nationwide advertising campaigns. Such innovative practices also helped develop the new mass culture of the United States.



The Coca-Cola Logo

Practice 4: Technological Innovations During the Progressive Period

1. Of the following, which one was LEAST influenced directly by the invention of electricity?
 - A. Production increased as machines became more efficient and factories stayed open longer.
 - B. Public transportation improved and helped give rise to suburbs.
 - C. For the first time, workers were seen as consumers.
 - D. Food could be stored for longer periods of time in peoples' homes without spoiling.
2. Which of the following might be a quote from Henry Ford?
 - A. "Now that we have airplanes, all other forms of transportation will eventually be obsolete."
 - B. "It is essential that workers be paid enough to buy the products they make."
 - C. "If America's economy collapses, it will be because we have sacrificed the quality of our products in favor of mass-production."
 - D. "US businesses should beware of innovations that tamper with modes of production."
3. What are some factors that contributed to the development of a "mass culture" in the United States during the early years of the twentieth century?

CHAPTER 7 REVIEW

Key Terms, People, and Concepts

Progressive Period
urban slums
tenements
Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire
muckrakers
Lincoln Steffens
Ida Tarbell
Upton Sinclair
Jacob Riis
Jane Addams
Hull House
Carrie Nation
Anthracite Coal Mine Strike
Sherman Antitrust Act
United States v. EC Knight Co.
Northern Securities v. US
Elkins Act
Mann-Elkins Act
American Tobacco v US
Payne-Aldrich Tariff
Marcus Garvey
election of 1912
Federal Reserve Act
Clayton Antitrust Act
Sixteenth, Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and
Nineteenth Amendments
city council
Robert La Follette
direct primary
referendum
initiative
recall
secret (Australian) ballot
commission
city manager
poll taxes

Ku Klux Klan
Jim Crow laws
segregation
de jure segregation
de facto segregation
Plessy v. Ferguson
Great Migration
Booker T. Washington
Tuskegee Institute
W.E.B. Du Bois
Niagara Movement
NAACP
disenfranchisement
The Crisis
Ida Wells-Barnett
civil rights
Coca Cola™
Kodak™
literacy tests
electric sewing machine
refrigerator
back to Africa movement
electricity
movie camera
mass culture

electric trolleys
Bessemer process
skyscrapers
Henry Ford
Model T
assembly line
commercial air travel
workers as consumers
\$5/day wage
airline industry

grandfather clauses
lynchings
Wilmington Race Riots

Progressive ("Bull Moose") Party
mail order catalogs

Multiple Choice

1. The period at the beginning of the twentieth century that saw an increase in calls for reform and a number of changes in government was known as which of the following?
A. the Reform Era
B. the Progressive Period
C. the Progressive Agenda
D. the Reformist Movement
2. Which of the following statements BEST describes what the Progressives were trying to do in the early twentieth century?
A. promote imperialism
B. support Democrats over Republicans for public office
C. support big business
D. promote changes they thought would better society
3. A person who wrote stories in the early 1900s which shined light on the corrupt practices of a particular industry would have MOST likely been considered what by President Roosevelt?
A. an anti-progressive
B. a yellow journalist
C. a muckraker
D. a "bull moose"
4. Which of the following BEST describes Carrie Nation?
A. A woman who cared about others; that's why she helped found Hull House.
B. A woman determined to get the right to vote; she refused to let the color of her skin keep her from taking her place near the front of suffrage parades.
C. A woman of conviction and courage; she took on the nation's first trust and exposed the abuses within big business.
D. A lady with passion and a hatchet; she'd smash bottles of liquor while she and her cohorts sang hymns and prayed.

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“It might have seemed weak after the EC Knight ruling, but this shows that this law does indeed have some teeth. God bless Teddy Roosevelt for using it to go after that railroad monopoly.”

5. The above statement is referring to which of the following?
 - A. the Clayton Antitrust Act following the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*
 - B. the Sherman Antitrust Act following the Supreme Court’s ruling in *American Tobacco v US*
 - C. the Sherman Antitrust Act following the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Northern Securities v. US*
 - D. the Clayton Antitrust Act following passage of the Mann-Elkins Act
6. Theodore Roosevelt’s run for president in 1912 had which of the following effects?
 - A. He became the first president in history to serve three terms.
 - B. Woodrow Wilson was elected president.
 - C. The muckrakers were arrested.
 - D. Taft became president.
7. How would a Progressive Republican have MOST likely responded to the Payne-Aldrich tariff?
 - A. With pleasure, believing that it was about time the government did more to protect US industry and the jobs of poor workers.
 - B. With outrage, seeing it as just one more example of the government bowing to the demands of big business.
 - C. With indifference, because the tariff had little to do with the social issues that concerned Progressives.
 - D. With anger, because they were tired of the government using the Sherman Antitrust Act to go after poor workers.
8. Which of the following amendments to the Constitution would have been MOST upsetting to the wealthy?
 - A. the Sixteenth Amendment
 - B. the Seventeenth Amendment
 - C. the Eighteenth Amendment
 - D. the Nineteenth Amendment

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9. Which of the following amendments would have been the MOST upsetting to state political party bosses?
- A. the Sixteenth Amendment
 - B. the Seventeenth Amendment
 - C. the Eighteenth Amendment
 - D. the Nineteenth Amendment

“Oh, if only Abigail Adams had lived to see this day. It may have taken a hundred plus years, ‘Abby’, but we got there.”

10. The above quote is MOST likely which of the following?
- A. a woman commenting on passage of the Eighteenth Amendment
 - B. a woman commenting on passage of the Nineteenth Amendment
 - C. a woman commenting on the passage of the Seventeenth Amendment
 - D. an African American commenting on the Fifteenth Amendment
11. Robert La Follette is MOST identified with which of the following?
- A. the Temperance Movement
 - B. establishing the “city manager” model to prevent corruption in city governments
 - C. implementation of the direct primary to allow the people of a state to select political candidates
 - D. ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment

“Even though he could not win the Republican Party’s nomination, he insists that he’s as ‘healthy as a bull moose’ and ready to run for president.”

12. The above quote is talking about whom?
- A. Theodore Roosevelt
 - B. William Taft
 - C. Woodrow Wilson
 - D. William Jennings Bryan

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13. Poll taxes, grandfather clauses, and literacy tests were all examples of what?
- A. laws put in place to make sure whites and blacks used separate facilities
 - B. laws overturned by the Sixteenth Amendment
 - C. laws designed to keep blacks disenfranchised
 - D. laws designed to disenfranchise wealthy whites from blacks and poor immigrants
14. Which of the following individuals would have agreed the MOST with *Plessy v. Ferguson*?
- A. Ida Wells Barnett
 - B. Booker T. Washington
 - C. W.E.B. Du Bois
 - D. Homer Plessy
15. In what way did Henry Ford revolutionize the auto industry?
- A. He invented the automobile.
 - B. He invented the assembly line.
 - C. He introduced innovations that allowed for mass production and affordable prices for cars.
 - D. He perfected the Model T by focusing on producing a few quality automobiles rather than producing a large quantity of mediocre cars.