

This chapter is about the new wave of reform efforts—called Progressivism—that swept the country in the early years of the twentieth century. Recalling a similar reform mentality in the 1830s and 1840s, it was aimed at the excesses of monopoly, corruption, and social injustice that were the by-products of industrial growth and urbanization. Progressives were mostly middle class people seeking to reform the capitalist system, not overthrow it. The idea was to make government an active force for good, not just a neutral bystander.

1. Roots of Progressivism (pp. 664–667)

a. On p. 664, the authors say the “battle cry” of the Progressives was to “Strengthen the _____,” not overthrow it. What do they conclude was the “real heart” of the movement?

b. Economist Thorstein _____ attacked the “conspicuous consumption” of the rich and journalist Jacob A. _____ exposed the sordid lives of urban slum-dwellers. Theodore Roosevelt called these commentators who ruthlessly exposed the system’s excesses “_____.” They included people like Lincoln _____, who exposed corruption in the cities; Ida M. _____, who exposed shady dealings within the Standard Oil Company; and David G. _____, who pointed out the degree to which big-money interests controlled the Senate.

2. Political Progressivism (pp. 667–669)

a. Read the first paragraph of p. 667 carefully. It describes progressive reformers as feeling themselves “squeezed from above and below.” *** Considering the growing disparities in wealth and power between rich and poor, what pressures were these mostly middle class people feeling “from above”? What danger did they perceive “from below”?

(1) From above:

(2) From below:

b. Politically, reformers sought to take power from the “special interests” and return it to “the people.” Many states today live with “progressive” institutions such as the _____, which allows citizens to put issues directly on the ballot by petition; the _____, which allows citizens to vote on measures passed by the legislature; and the _____, which allows citizens to remove elected officials from office. U.S. senators, who had previously been elected by state _____, now were subject to direct election by the people as a result of the _____ Amendment passed in 19____. Gradually, progressive state governors such as Robert M. _____ of Wisconsin, Hiram W. _____ of California, and Charles Evans _____ of New York were able to reduce the power of special interests, turn city government over increasingly to professional managers, and pass laws controlling the excesses of capitalism.

3. Progressive Women (pp. 669–672) Middle class women, though still without the vote and direct political power, became active in the movement for reform, generally focusing on working conditions (particularly after the 1911 fire at the Triangle _____ Company) and other issues of family concern. As a result, new laws were passed protecting women workers. *** Do you approve of the results of the 1908 Supreme Court case of _____ v. *Oregon*? What do you think of the Court’s reasoning that “woman’s peculiar structure” requires special protections (i.e. do you see a conflict between “special protection” and the concept of “equality”)?

(1) Results:

(2) Reasoning:

4. Roosevelt and Reform (pp. 672–676)

a. Roosevelt, though a sturdy friend of business, was swept up in the need for some basic reforms. He called his program the “_____ Deal” and his program centered on the “three Cs”—control of _____, protection for the _____, and _____ of natural resources. Roosevelt’s threat to “call out the troops” during the anthracite _____ strike of 1902 was significant because it was the first time that the federal government had intervened on behalf of _____ (owners or labor). The section called “Corralling the Corporations” points out that Roosevelt did take on the railroad barons by strengthening the Interstate _____ Commission and by successfully breaking up the northwestern railroad monopoly called the _____ Securities Company, headed by moguls J. P. _____ and James J. _____, and by initiating some forty antitrust lawsuits. Did Roosevelt believe that large business combinations were bad by definition? What was his view of the proper relationship between government and business?

(1) Roosevelt’s view of “trusts”:

(2) Government and business view:

b. Roosevelt took action to protect consumers in 1906 through passage of the Meat _____ Act and the Pure _____ and _____ Act. This resulted directly from an expose of the meat-packing industry called *The _____* written by novelist Upton _____.

5. Roosevelt and the Environment (pp. 676–681) Roosevelt, and his forestry chief Gifford _____, saw the need both to conserve natural resources for future generations and to develop them. The _____ Act of 1902, for example, started the massive damming of western rivers and associated irrigation projects. *** After reading the essay about “The Environmentalists” and the summary of Roosevelt’s “conservation” philosophy, how do you compare that philosophy to that of someone such as John Muir, who might be called a true “environmentalist”?

(1) Roosevelt the “conservationist”:

(2) Muir the “environmentalist”:

6. Summing up Roosevelt (pp. 681–683) Note that in the election of 1908, Socialist Eugene Debs polled nearly half a million votes. Socialism was gaining wide popularity in Europe as an alternative to the excesses of free-market capitalism. *** Under socialism, _____ (government, individuals, or corporations) own(s) the “means of production” (like factories) and _____ (government, individuals, or corporations) make(s) the key economic decisions about allocation of resources (like who makes how much of what product). The authors sum up Roosevelt on p. 682 by saying that he was “the cowboy who started to tame the bucking bronco of adolescent capitalism, thus ensuring it a long adult life.” *** In your own words, what do you think they mean by this metaphor?

7. The Taft Years, 1909–1913 (pp. 683–686) Taft worked to expand American investments abroad, called “_____ Diplomacy,” and he initiated many antitrust lawsuits, including one against the U.S. _____ Company that infuriated Roosevelt, further splitting the Republicans into the Progressive and “_____ Guard” wings. His actions brought Roosevelt back to challenge for the presidency in the election of 19_____.

