

Contextualization & Synthesis... Social Darwinism

From the Revised 2015 Framework:

Students will...

CONTEXTUALIZE...

Situate historical events, developments, or processes within the broader regional, national, or global context in which they occurred in order to draw conclusions about their relative significance.

SYNTHESIZE...

Make connections between a given historical issue and related developments in a different historical context, geographical area, period, or era, including the present.

Make connections between different course themes and/or approaches to history (such as political, economic, social, cultural, or intellectual) for a given historical issue.

Key Concept 6.3: The Gilded Age produced new cultural and intellectual movements, public reform efforts, and political debates over economic and social policies.

- I. New **cultural and intellectual movements** both buttressed and challenged the **social order** of the **Gilded Age**.
 - A) **Social commentators** advocated theories later described as **Social Darwinism** to justify the success of those at the top of the **socioeconomic structure** as both appropriate and inevitable.
 - B) Some **business leaders** argued that the wealthy had a **moral obligation** to help the less fortunate and improve society, as articulated in the idea known as the **Gospel of Wealth**, and they made **philanthropic contributions** that enhanced **educational opportunities and urban environments**.
 - C) A number of **artists and critics**, including **agrarians, utopians, socialists**, and advocates of the **Social Gospel**, championed **alternative visions** for the economy and U.S. society.

Social Darwinism: Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)

- societies evolve from lower (barbarian) to higher (civilized) forms
- “natural selection”: most capable surviving, least capable dying out
- wrong to interfere with this process



Walter Rauschenbusch, leading thinker of the Social Gospel, whose 1907 book, “Christianity and the Social Crisis,” interpreted Christ’s purpose to have been the regeneration of the social order. (Georgetown College)

The Gospel of Wealth

- Advanced by Andrew Carnegie and other wealthy people
- Stated people of great wealth should set aside any money in excess of their needs for the good of the community
 - This allowed the wealthy to give as they see fit
 - It also toned down any feelings of guilt in acquiring such large fortunes

Contextualization & Synthesis... *Social Darwinism*

Directions: Complete the activity by considering context and synthesis as well as the historical significance of Social Darwinism. Write in complete sentences and include at least one specific piece of evidence for each answer.

Local Context
(Who, What, When, Where)

Broad Context
Why, How
What is the
"Big Picture?"
What is the theme?

Other Context
Similar in Kind From an Earlier or Later Time (connect your BROAD context to another era /event)

Extension: On a separate sheet of paper explain thoroughly the differences between Social Darwinism, Social Gospel, and Gospel of Wealth. Include what they were, what they were responding to, and how they impacted society. These three items are all explicit and are frequent topics confused by students. Don't get them "mixed up!" 😊