



Unit 6; 1870-1920

Period 6 Review, 1865-1898 – *Populists*

Period 7 Part 1, 1898-1920

The Populists, Imperialism, Progressive Era, WWI, & the Roaring Twenties



Brief Summary

This summary is not meant to replace your reading and study time in your AMSCO guide, and it by no means covers every significant fact from the era... but it will provide a simple overview/review of the era with some of the major terms in bold as a reminder of those items most likely to show up on the exam. Consider it an introduction to the era or a simple review of the era. This summary focuses on the first half of Period 7 from the College Board framework, but it also includes some information from Period 6, mainly regarding the Populists.

The new railroads crisscrossing the country were the only way for farmers to get their crops to market. The railroads took advantage of the farmers by overcharging them for shipping and storing the crops. The disgruntled farmers organized into a group called the **Grange**, aka the Patrons of Husbandry. They pushed congress to regulate the railroads. The **farmer's alliance** later took up the call and put more pressure on the government to stop the railroads from taking advantage of farmers. Eventually, the **Interstate Commerce Commission** was set up to regulate the railroads. It was the first time the government regulated an industry. The discontented farmers eventually formed a third national political party called the **Populist Party**. They ran **William Jennings Bryan** for president in 1892 and 1896. They wanted a **direct election of senators**, a **graduated income tax**, and public ownership of the railroads. The biggest issue they pushed was the use of silver for currency exchange in addition to gold. This would lower interest rates and help the cash strapped, in debt farmers.

A **third wave of immigration** occurred from 1890-1915. These new immigrants arrived from southern and eastern Europe. They were looked down upon by the more established English, German, and Irish immigrants. The new immigrants were usually poor and possessed limited skills. They typically went to work in factories where they were treated poorly, working long hours for very low pay. This situation led to them putting their entire family to work just to survive. Unfortunately, the children didn't get an education which would doom them to a life of working in factories themselves with out a chance for improvement.

Outraged workers began to organize into **unions** to increase their rights and benefits at work. [Examples were: **National Labor Union**, **Knights of Labor**, & **AF of L**. The big businessmen violently crushed any labor movement because they didn't want to pay workers more due to the fact that it would cut into their profits. Any **strike** by labor would be broken up by night stick wielding policemen who were usually paid by the businessmen. The newspapers didn't help the unions by painting the strikers as **socialists** and **anarchists**, bent on destroying society. One of the most successful unions was the **American Federation of Labor** or the **AFL**. It was composed of skilled workers who couldn't be easily replaced by **scab labor**. They pushed for tangible benefits such as shorter work hours and better pay.

Two groups in society faced special discrimination. The Chinese out west were constantly harassed. In 1882, the **Chinese Exclusion Act** was passed that outlawed Chinese immigration for ten years, later extended to twenty years. African Americans were treated little better than during slavery. They faced a time of **legal or de jure segregation** called **Jim Crow**. A Supreme Court case called **Plessy vs. Ferguson** ruled that **separate but equal** facilities in the south were fine. This was the law until the 1954 case of **Brown vs. Board**, which overturned the **separate but equal doctrine** and began the Civil Rights Movement. During the 1890's there were two prominent African Americans who became spokesman for their race. **Booker T. Washington**, who founded the **Tuskegee Institute**, was more conciliatory toward white society and wanted African Americans to get an education before demanding equal rights. **W.E.B. DuBois**, a Harvard graduate, wanted the top ten percent of African Americans to be given total equality with whites. He advocated for a more progressive and more aggressive form of civil rights.

The idea of globalization was a reality in the 1890's. **Telegraph** wires connected the world since 1867 and steam ships offered fast, reliable world wide travel. The United States was now competing for markets and resources with all countries. The country had healed its Civil War wounds and had begun to look outward, in a **new version of Manifest Destiny**. The result of the way industrialization treated the working class caused a backlash against business owners and an indifferent society. The **Progressive Movement** was an attempt to improve society, business, and government. It had many diverse goals including women's rights, better working conditions, eradicating child labor, improving efficiency in businesses and government, helping the incoming immigrants become acclimated to society, and abolishing alcohol.

Imperialism, the belief that a country should expand to other lands for economic, cultural, and political reasons, took root in the late 1880's. Admiral **Alfred T. Mahan** wrote a book called **The Influence of Sea Power in History**. It argued that without a powerful navy, a country would be shut out of the lucrative world trade markets and natural resources. During the 1890's the United States embarked on carving out an empire for itself. The reasons were Economic (new markets and resources), as well as Political (to spread democracy) and Cultural (to spread Christianity). The island of **Hawaii** was America's first foray into **Imperialism**. Hawaii was ideally situated for a naval coaling station. American planters took the government over. It languished from 1893 until it was finally **annexed** to the United States in 1898. **Cuba**, ninety miles to the south, was the next Imperialistic move. The Cubans had been fighting for their freedom from Spain for years. The press would exaggerate stories of Spanish atrocities in order to increase newspaper circulation and increase their profits. This **yellow journalism** whipped the American people into a jingoistic fever bent on going to war with Spain to spread democracy to Cuba. The explosion of the U.S.S. Maine in Havana harbor began the **Spanish American War** or the **War of 1898**. It was called the "splendid little war" because the U.S. thrashed the hapless Spanish within three months. The **Treaty of Paris 1898** gave the United States Puerto Rico, Guam, Cuba, and the Philippines. Cuba became an **American protectorate** until it could self rule. The Philippines began a **guerrilla war** against the United States that took more lives than the war. The Philippines were given their independence in 1946.

China was very weak by this time and many countries were carving out **spheres of influence**, in which they essentially controlled parts of the country. The U.S. didn't have one and sent the **Open Door Notes** proclaiming that **China** should be able to rule its own country, free from interference from other countries.

Upon the assassination of President McKinley, **Theodore Roosevelt** became president. T.R. was a larger than life personality who wanted to see the United States become a world power. He introduced the **Roosevelt Corollary** to the **Monroe Doctrine**. This stated that the U.S. can intervene in the affairs of Latin American Countries if we see they are governing their country improperly. The most prominent use of the **Roosevelt Corollary** came when T.R. helped Panama gets its independence from Columbia. This enabled the United States to build the Panama Canal, which shortened the trip from the east coast to the west coast by nearly two months. As he stated, "I took the canal".

Progressivism, or the belief that government should help fix society's problems, was a period from 1889-1914. There are many different types of reforms that progressives wanted to employ. They ranged from a more efficient and less corrupt government, to improving conditions for immigrants, food safety, child labor laws, and regulating big business to compete fairly. Leading the **Progressive Movement** was a group of crusading journalists known as **muckrakers**. These journalists uncovered societal problems and exposed the corrupt and dirty side of society.

The most influential book of the time was **The Jungle** by **Upton Sinclair**. It exposed the meat packing industry and caused congress to pass the **Meat Inspection Act**, set up the **Food and Drug Administration** or **FDA**, and passed the **Pure Food and Drug Act**. The fire at the **Triangle Shirtwaist Company** that caused the deaths of nearly 150 young garment workers galvanized the labor movement into seeking more protection on the job such as sprinklers.

The **Sherman Anti Trust Act** of 1890 made monopolies in business illegal. The law was scarcely enforced until "trust busting Teddy" Roosevelt became president. He broke up trusts that harmed the public economically. With World War I looming, Americans turned their attention away from improving society to getting ready for war and the Progressive Era came to a close.

Socially, the last two achievements of the Progressive Era occurred with the passage of the 18th and 19th amendments. The **18th amendment, prohibition**, was passed in 1920 and made alcohol illegal in the United States. It was later repealed with the **21st amendment** in 1933. The 19th amendment passed in 1920 gave **women the right to vote**.

World War I started in 1914 in Europe. There was a very strong **isolationist** sentiment in the United States. The United States attempted to avoid involvement in World War I by adhering to George Washington's strict policy of neutrality. Eventually, due to **unrestricted submarine warfare**, and the **Zimmerman note** the United States became embroiled in Europe's conflict. The fundamental causes of the war were: **nationalism, imperialism, militarism, fanaticism, & a celebrated cause**. The combatants began using new weapons, the U-boat or **submarine** against allied shipping, **the tank**, and **the airplane** as weapons of war. They sank some vessels with American passengers, most notably the **Lusitania**, which enraged Americans. It wasn't until Germany sent the **Zimmerman Note**, a secret telegram to Mexico that encouraged them to attack the United States in return for the land that they lost in the Mexican American War, that we finally entered the war in April 1917. The government began a large publicity drive to encourage popular support for the war and make Germans look evil. The **Selective Service Act** was the first draft since the Civil War, sixty years earlier. The **Espionage Act** made spying illegal, and the **Sedition Act** made it illegal to speak out against the war. Scores of Americans were jailed for violating the Sedition Act which the Supreme Court ruled was legal during war. The war ended on November 11, 1918. The **Treaty of Versailles** imposed a harsh peace on the defeated Germans. They were forced to pay **war reparations** which ruined their economy, and allowed **Hitler** to rise to power as a savior. The terms of the treaty laid the seeds for World War II. The farthest reaching peace provision was the **League of Nations**. This organization, the brainchild of **President Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points for peace**, was the forerunner of the United Nations. Unfortunately, the **isolationist** minded Senators opposed it. The fight between the Senate **reservationists** and President Wilson killed any United States involvement in the **League of Nations**.

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The 1920 election was a "**return to normalcy**" as stated by the new president, Warren Harding. This meant that Americans were turning away from the tumultuous **Progressivism** and involvement in international affairs toward a calmer, more **isolationist** time. Americans had also tired of the teeming refuse (immigrant hordes) from foreign shores. The congress passed strict **anti-immigration laws**. The trial of immigrant anarchists **Sacco and Vanzetti** highlighted to the world just how **nativist** and anti-immigrant that America had become. The pair were executed in a highly biased court case (the judge had made racial slurs in front of the jury). The new **Ku Klux Klan** was revived in 1915. This new incarnation of the Klan added immigrants, Jews, and Catholics to its hate list in addition to African Americans. It gained strength in the North and Midwest by espousing "traditional values". In a show of extreme arrogance, Klansmen and women marched from the Capital to the White House in Washington D.C. It all fell apart for the Klan when top members were caught embezzling (stealing) millions. By the end of the decade the Klan was a mere shell of its former strength.

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African Americans in New York City, specifically the borough of Harlem, began a literary, artistic, and musical movement that was dubbed the **Harlem Renaissance**. **Langston Hughes, Duke Ellington, and Louie Armstrong** led the surge in the black artistic movement. Many white people came to Harlem to hear the new music of **jazz**. The **movies** were very popular, having begun at the turn of the century. They were silent until the movie **The Jazz Singer** debuted in 1927 as the first talking picture. **Radio** was king for the decade though, with at least 90% of homes having at least one radio. People listened to the radio approximately four hours a day. The **automobile** dominated the decade, with one out of every eight workers employed by an automobile related industry. Most people had a car due to the **assembly line**, which produced large numbers of cars which lowered the price. This made the car affordable for the middle class. Young people enjoyed new social freedoms on dates away from parental chaperones. They engaged in a naughty practice known as **petting** which quite naturally led to pre-marital sex. Modern young women who wore short hair, short skirts, smoked, caroused with men, and challenged social mores were known as **flappers**. **Prohibition** gave rise to **bootlegging** alcohol. Everyday people began breaking the law by **smuggling** and making booze. The mob or gangsters took over **bootlegging** making millions in the illicit trade. It also increased violence with **Al Capone's** gang gunning down any rivals. **Charles Lindbergh**, who visited **Thomas Edison** in Fort Myers, was the first person to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. Air travel had begun in 1903 with the **Wright Brothers** flying the first airplane in **Kitty Hawk** North Carolina, but it was not a safe, practical machine until the 1920's. The **Scopes "monkey" Trial** put Darwin's theory of evolution on trial. It was a dramatic demonstration of old beliefs and new ideas that were struggling for dominance... The new **Darwin** vs. the old **fundamentalist** belief in the Bible. New modern conveniences such as refrigerators, washing machines, vacuums, ovens, toasters, and radios were advertised very heavily. People loved how the new conveniences made life easier and bought as many items as they could in a practice known as **consumerism**. Buying on an **installment plan** or **credit** made it seem affordable ("only a dollar down and a dollar forever"). There were writers and critics named the **Lost Generation** of this new **consumerism** and **conformity**, most prominent among them were **F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, John Steinbeck, Gertrude Stein, and Earnest Hemingway**.

Big Business ruled in the 1920's. The official policy of the government was to assist business, not to regulate it. **President Coolidge** even said that a man who works in a factory worships in a temple. The business owners got rich, but the workers didn't fair as well. The **gap between rich and poor widened**. The **stock market** was **unregulated** which led everyday people to **speculate** in the red hot market. People could **buy on the margin**, which is to place a small amount of money as a down payment. People also invested in Florida real estate (largely unseen swamp land). Florida had experienced a land boom in the 1920's until two hurricanes put the breaks on. Small farmers were also hit hard in the 1920's; they owed a tremendous amount of money that they borrowed and began losing their farms to foreclosure. The **Stock Market Crash of 1929** signaled the end of the roaring 20's and the beginning of the Great Depression. The causes of the **Great Depression** were: **Stock Speculation, Buying on the Margin, Overproduction, debt (due to buying on credit)**, and the yawning, monetary **gap between rich and poor**.