U.S. II Honors

Summer Work 2019

- Read and annotate the chapters 15, 16, 17 from United States History: Preparing for the Advanced Placement Examination

- In the uploaded PDF, these are pages 321-381 ONLY

- After reading, complete for all 3 chapters (unless noted):

  1. Key Names, Events and Terms
  2. Multiple Choice Questions
  3. Analyzing the Documents Questions (there are none for Ch. 17)

- All work should be typed, and turned in on the first day of school. Your teacher will then give you directions as to how to upload your work online so it can be checked for authenticity and plagiarism. Therefore, YOUR WORK SHOULD BE SAVED in order to do this. Any plagiarism will be handled as per the student handbook.

- Any questions about summer work, please e-mail Mrs. Holland aholand@rbrhs.org or Mrs. Matto amatto@rbrhs.org.

- This is a requirement for any student taking U.S. II Honors in the 2019-2020 school year. It will count as your first test grade of the 1st marking period.
Though slavery was abolished, the wrongs of my people were not ended. Though they were not slaves, they were not yet quite free. No man can be truly free whose liberty is dependent upon the thought, feeling, and action of others, and who has no means in his own hands for guarding, protecting, defending, and maintaining his liberty.

Frederick Douglass, 1882

The silencing of the cannons of war left the victorious United States with a new set of problems no less challenging than the war itself. How would the South rebuild its shattered society and economy after the damage inflicted by four years of war? What would be the place in that society of 4 million freed blacks, and to what extent, if at all, was the federal government responsible for helping them to adjust to freedom? Should the former states of the Confederacy be treated as states that had never really left the Union (Lincoln’s position) or as conquered territory subject to continued military occupation? Under what conditions would the southern states be fully accepted as coequal partners in the restored Union? Finally, who had the authority to decide these questions of Reconstruction: the president or the Congress?

The conflicts that existed before and during the Civil War—between regional sections, political parties, and economic interests—continued after the war. Republicans in the North wanted to continue the economic progress begun during the war. The southern aristocracy still needed a cheap labor force to work its plantations. The freedmen and women hoped to achieve independence and equal rights. However, traditional beliefs limited the actions of the federal government. Constitutional concepts of limited government and states’ rights discouraged national leaders from taking bold action. Little economic help was given to either whites or blacks in the South, because most Americans believed that free people in a free society had both an opportunity and a responsibility to provide for themselves. The physical rebuilding of the South was largely left up to the states and individuals, while the federal government concentrated on political issues.
Reconstruction Plans of Lincoln and Johnson

Throughout his presidency, Abraham Lincoln held firmly to the belief that the southern states could not constitutionally leave the Union and therefore never did leave. The Confederates in his view represented only a disloyal minority. After Lincoln’s assassination, Andrew Johnson attempted to carry out Lincoln’s plan for the political Reconstruction of the 11 former states of the Confederacy.

Lincoln’s Policies

During the war years, Lincoln hoped that the southern states could be reestablished (though technically, in his view, they had never left) by meeting a minimum test of political loyalty.

Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction (1863). As early as December 1863, Lincoln set up an apparently simple process for political Reconstruction—that is, for reconstructing the state governments in the South so that Unionists were in charge rather than secessionists. The president’s Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction provided for the following:

- Full presidential pardons would be granted to most southerners who (1) took an oath of allegiance to the Union and the U.S. Constitution and (2) accepted the emancipation of slaves.
- A state government could be reestablished and accepted as legitimate by the U.S. president as soon as at least 10 percent of the voters in that state took the loyalty oath.

In practice, Lincoln’s proclamation meant that each southern state would be required to rewrite its state constitution to eliminate the existence of slavery. Lincoln’s seemingly lenient policy was designed both to shorten the war and to give added weight to his Emancipation Proclamation. (At that time, late 1863, Lincoln feared that if the Democrats won the 1864 election, they would overturn the proclamation.)

Wade-Davis Bill (1864). Many Republicans in Congress objected to Lincoln’s 10 percent plan, arguing that it would allow a supposedly reconstructed state government to fall under the domination of disloyal secessionists. In 1864 Congress passed the Wade-Davis Bill, which proposed far more demanding and stringent terms for Reconstruction. The bill required 50 percent of the voters of a state to take a loyalty oath and permitted only non-Confederates to vote for a new state constitution. Lincoln refused to sign the bill, pocket-vetoing it after Congress adjourned. How serious was the conflict between President Lincoln and the Republican Congress over Reconstruction policy? Historians still debate this question. In any case, Congress was no doubt ready to reassert its powers in 1865, as Congresses traditionally do after a war.
**Freedmen’s Bureau.** In March 1865, Congress created an important new agency: the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, better known simply as the Freedmen’s Bureau. The bureau acted as a kind of early welfare agency, providing food, shelter, and medical aid for those made destitute by the war—both blacks (chiefly freed slaves) and homeless whites. At first, the Freedmen’s Bureau had authority to resettle freed blacks on confiscated farmlands in the South. Its efforts at resettlement, however, were later frustrated when President Johnson pardoned Confederate owners of the confiscated lands, and courts then restored most of the lands to their original owners.

The bureau’s greatest success was in education. Under the able leadership of General Oliver O. Howard, it helped to establish nearly 3,000 schools for freed blacks, including several black colleges. Before federal funding was stopped in 1870, the bureau’s schools taught an estimated 200,000 African Americans how to read.

**Lincoln’s last speech.** In his last public address, on April 11, 1865, Lincoln encouraged northerners to accept Louisiana as a reconstructed state. (Louisiana had already drawn up a new constitution that abolished slavery in the state and provided for African Americans’ education.) The president also addressed the question—highly controversial at the time—of whether freedmen should be granted the right to vote. Lincoln said: “I myself prefer that it were now conferred on the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers.” Three days later, Lincoln’s evolving plans for Reconstruction were ended with his assassination. His last speech suggested that, had he lived, he probably would have moved closer to the position taken by the progressive, or Radical Republicans. In any event, hope for lasting reform was dealt a devastating blow by the sudden removal of Lincoln’s intelligent and flexible leadership.

**Johnson and Reconstruction**

Andrew Johnson’s origins were as humble as Lincoln’s. A self-taught tailor, he rose in Tennessee politics by championing the interests of poor whites in their economic conflict with rich planters. Johnson was the only senator from a Confederate state who remained loyal to the Union. After Tennessee was occupied by Union troops, he was appointed that state’s war governor. Johnson was a southern Democrat, but Republicans picked him to be Lincoln’s running mate in 1864 in order to encourage pro-Union Democrats to vote for the Union (Republican) party. In one of the accidents of history, Johnson became the wrong man for the job. As a white supremacist, the new president was bound to clash with Republicans in Congress who believed that the war was fought not just to preserve the Union but also to liberate blacks from slavery.

**Johnson’s Reconstruction policy.** At first, many Republicans in Congress welcomed Johnson’s presidency because of his apparent hatred for the
southern aristocrats who had led the Confederacy. In May 1865, Johnson issued his own Reconstruction proclamation that was very similar to Lincoln’s 10 percent plan. In addition to Lincoln’s terms, it provided for the disfranchisement (loss of the right to vote and hold office) of (1) all former leaders and officeholders of the Confederacy and (2) Confederates with more than $20,000 in taxable property. However, the president retained the power to grant individual pardons to “disloyal” southerners. This was an escape clause for the wealthy planters, and Johnson made frequent use of it. As a result of the president’s pardons, many former Confederate leaders were back in office by the fall of 1865.

**Southern governments of 1865.** Just eight months after Johnson took office, all 11 of the ex-Confederate states qualified under the president’s Reconstruction plan to become functioning parts of the Union. The southern states drew up constitutions that repudiated secession, negated the debts of the Confederate government, and ratified the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery. On the other hand, none of the new constitutions extended voting rights to blacks. Furthermore, to the dismay of Republicans, former leaders of the Confederacy were elected to seats in Congress. For example, Alexander Stephens, the former Confederate vice president, was elected U.S. senator from Georgia.

**Black Codes.** The Republicans became further disillusioned with Johnson when the southern state legislatures adopted Black Codes that restricted the rights and movements of the newly freed African Americans. The codes (1) prohibited blacks from either renting land or borrowing money to buy land; (2) placed freedmen into a form of semibondage by forcing them, as “vagrants” and “apprentices,” to sign work contracts; and (3) prohibited blacks from testifying against whites in court. The contract-labor system, in which blacks worked the cotton fields under white supervision for deferred wages, seemed little different from slavery.

Appalled by reports of what was happening in the South, Republicans began to ask, “Who won the war?” In early 1866, Congress’ unhappiness with Johnson developed into an open rift when the northern Republicans in Congress challenged the results of elections in the South. They refused to seat Alexander Stephens and other duly elected representatives and senators from ex-Confederate states.

**Johnson’s vetoes.** Johnson alienated even moderate Republicans when, in early 1866, he vetoed two important bills: (1) a bill increasing the services and protection offered by the Freedmen’s Bureau and (2) a civil rights bill that nullified the Black Codes and guaranteed full citizenship and equal rights to blacks.

**The Election of 1866.** Unable to work with Congress, Johnson took to the road in the fall of 1866 in his infamous “swing around the circle” to attack his congressional opponents. His speeches appealed to the racial prejudices of whites by arguing that equal rights for blacks would result in an “Africanized”
society. Republicans counterattacked by accusing Johnson of being a drunkard and a traitor. They appealed to antisouthern prejudices by employing a campaign tactic known as “waving the bloody shirt”—inflaming the hatreds of northern voters by reminding them of the hardships of war. Republican propaganda made much of the fact that southerners were Democrats and, by a gross jump in logic, branded the entire Democratic party as a party of rebellion and treason.

Election results gave the Republicans an overwhelming victory. After 1866, Johnson’s political enemies—both moderate and radical Republicans—would have commanding control of Congress with more than a two-thirds majority in both the House and the Senate.

Congressional Reconstruction

Reconstruction can be confusing unless we recognize that there were three rounds of Reconstruction, not just one. The first round (1863–spring 1866) was directed by presidents Lincoln and Johnson who, through executive powers, restored the 11 ex-Confederate states to their former position in the Union. Then came the congressional reaction against the Reconstruction achieved by the presidents. The return of ex-Confederates to high offices and the passage of the Black Codes by southern legislatures angered the Republicans in Congress. Thus began a second phase, or second round, in which Congress imposed upon the South its own version of Reconstruction. Rejecting presidential Reconstruction, Congress adopted a plan that was harsher on southern whites and more protective of freed blacks.

Radical Republicans

There had long been a division in Republican ranks between (1) moderates, who were chiefly concerned with economic gains for the white middle class, and (2) radicals, who championed civil rights for blacks. Although most Republicans were moderates, they shifted toward the radical position in 1866 partly out of fear that a reunified Democratic party might again become dominant. After all, now that the federal census counted blacks as equal to whites (no longer applying the old three-fifths rule for slaves), the South would have more representatives in Congress than before the war and more strength in the electoral college in future presidential elections.

The leading Radical Republican in the Senate was Charles Sumner of Massachusetts (now fully recovered from his earlier caning by Brooks). In the House, Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania hoped to revolutionize southern society through an extended period of military rule in which blacks would be free to exercise their civil rights, would be educated in schools operated by the federal government, and would receive lands confiscated from the planter class. A number of Radical Republicans, including Benjamin Wade of Ohio, endorsed other liberal causes: women’s suffrage, rights for labor unions, and
civil rights for northern blacks. Although their program was never fully implemented, the Radical Republicans struggled for about four years, 1866 to 1870, to extend equal rights to all Americans.

**Enacting the Radical Program**

Presidential Reconstruction began to shift toward round two, congressional Reconstruction, in the spring of 1866. It was then that Congress prevailed in a struggle to enact two pieces of legislation vetoed by President Johnson.

**Civil Rights Act of 1866.** With some modifications, Republicans were able to override Johnson’s vetoes of both the Freedmen’s Bureau Act and the first Civil Rights Act. The Civil Rights Act pronounced all African Americans to be U.S. citizens (thereby repudiating the decision in the Dred Scott case) and also attempted to provide a legal shield against the operation of the southern states’ Black Codes. Republicans feared, however, that the law could be repealed if the Democrats ever won control of Congress. They therefore looked for a more permanent solution in the form of a constitutional amendment.

**Fourteenth Amendment.** Late in 1866, Congress passed and sent to the states an amendment that, when ratified in 1868, was to have both immediate and long-term significance for all segments of American society. The Fourteenth Amendment

- Declared that all persons born or naturalized in the United States were citizens
- Obligated the states to respect the rights of U.S. citizens and provide them with “equal protection of the laws” and “due process of law” (clauses full of meaning for future generations)

For the first time, in other words, the states (not just the U.S. government) were required by the U.S. Constitution to uphold the rights of citizens. The amendment’s key clauses concerning citizenship and rights produced mixed results in 19th-century courtrooms. In the 1950s and thereafter, however, the Supreme Court would make “equal protection of the laws” and the “due process” clause the keystone of civil rights for minorities, women, children, disabled persons, and those accused of crimes.

Other parts of the Fourteenth Amendment applied specifically to Congress’ plan of Reconstruction. These clauses

- Disqualified former Confederate political leaders from holding either state or federal offices
- Repudiated the debts of the defeated governments of the Confederacy
- Penalized a state if it kept any eligible person from voting by reducing that state’s proportional representation in Congress and the electoral college
Report of the joint committee. In June 1866, a joint committee of the House and the Senate issued a report recommending that the reorganized former states of the Confederacy were not entitled to representation in Congress. Therefore, those elected from the South as senators and representatives should not be permitted to take their seats. The report further asserted that Congress, not the president, had the authority to determine the conditions for allowing reconstructed states to rejoin the Union. By this report, Congress officially rejected the presidential plan of Reconstruction and promised to substitute its own plan, part of which was embodied in the Fourteenth Amendment.

Reconstruction acts of 1867. Over Johnson’s vetoes, Congress passed three Reconstruction acts in early 1867, which took the drastic step of placing the South under military occupation. The acts divided the former Confederate states into five military districts, each under the control of the Union army. In addition, the Reconstruction acts increased the requirements for gaining readmission to the Union. To win such readmission, an ex-Confederate state had to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment and place guarantees in its constitution for granting the franchise (right to vote) to all adult males, regardless of race.

Impeachment of Andrew Johnson

Also in 1867, over Johnson’s veto, Congress passed the Tenure of Office Act. This unusual (and probably unconstitutional) law prohibited the president from removing a federal official or military commander without the approval of the Senate. The purpose of the law was strictly political. Congress wanted to protect the Radical Republicans in Johnson’s cabinet, such as Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, who was in charge of the military governments in the South.

Believing the new law to be unconstitutional, Johnson challenged it by dismissing Stanton on his own authority. The House responded by impeaching Johnson, charging him with 11 “high crimes and misdemeanors.” Johnson thus became the first president to be impeached. (Bill Clinton was impeached in 1998.) In 1868, after a three-month trial in the Senate, Johnson’s political enemies fell one vote short of the necessary two-thirds vote required to remove a president from office. Seven moderate Republicans joined the Democrats against conviction, because they thought it was a bad precedent to remove a president for political reasons.

Reforms After Grant’s Election

The impeachment and trial of Andrew Johnson occurred in 1868, a presidential election year. At their convention, the Democrats nominated another candidate, Horatio Seymour, so that Johnson’s presidency would have ended soon in any case, with or without impeachment by the Republicans.

The election of 1868. At their convention, the Republicans turned to a war hero, giving their presidential nomination to General Ulysses S. Grant,
even though Grant had no political experience. Despite Grant’s popularity in the North, he managed to win only 300,000 more popular votes than his Democratic opponent. The votes of 500,000 blacks gave the Republican ticket its margin of victory. Even the most moderate Republicans began to realize that the voting rights of the freedmen needed federal protection, if their party hoped to keep control of the White House in future elections.

**Fifteenth Amendment.** Republican majorities in Congress acted quickly in 1869 to secure the vote for African Americans. Adding one more Reconstruction amendment to those already adopted (the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, and the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868), Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment, which prohibited any state from denying or abridging a citizen’s right to vote “on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

**Civil Rights Act of 1875.** The last of many civil rights reforms enacted by Congress in the Reconstruction era was the Civil Rights Act of 1875. This law guaranteed equal accommodations in public places (hotels, railroads, and theaters) and prohibited courts from excluding African Americans from juries. The law was poorly enforced, however, because by this time, moderate and conservative Republicans had become frustrated with trying to reform an unwilling South—and also were afraid of losing white votes in the North. As we shall see, the abandonment of Reconstruction was only two years away.

**Reconstruction in the South**

During the second round of Reconstruction, dictated by Congress, the Republican party in the South reorganized and dominated the governments of the ex-Confederate states. Beginning in 1867, each Republican-controlled government was under the military protection of the U.S. Army until such time as Congress was satisfied that a state had met its Reconstruction requirements. Then the troops were withdrawn. The period of Republican rule in a southern state lasted from as little as one year (Tennessee) to as much as nine years (Florida), depending on how long it took conservative Democrats to regain control.

**Composition of the Reconstruction Governments**

In every radical, or Republican, state government in the South except one, whites were in the majority in both houses of the legislature. The exception was South Carolina, where the freedmen controlled the lower house in 1873. Republican legislators included native-born white southerners, freemen, and recently arrived northerners.

“Scalawags” and “carpetbaggers.” Democratic opponents gave nicknames to their hated Republican rivals. They called southern Republicans “scalawags” and northern newcomers “carpetbaggers.” Southern whites who supported the Republican governments were usually former Whigs who were
interested in economic development for their state and peace between the sections. Northerners went South after the war for various reasons. Some were investors interested in setting up new businesses, while others were missionaries and teachers who went with humanitarian goals. In an age of greed and graft, no doubt some also went to plunder.

**African-American legislators.** Most of the blacks who held elective office in the reconstructed state governments were educated property holders who took moderate positions on most issues. During the Reconstruction era, Republicans in the South sent two black senators (Blanche K. Bruce and Hiram Revels) and more than a dozen black representatives to Congress. Revels was elected in 1870 to take the Senate seat from Mississippi once held by Jefferson Davis. The fact that blacks and former slaves were in positions of power in the South caused bitter resentment among disfranchised ex-Confederates.

**Evaluating the Republican Record**

Much controversy still surrounds the legislative record of the Republicans during their brief control of southern state politics. Did they abuse their power for selfish ends (plunder and corruption), or did they govern responsibly in the public interest? The judgment of history is that they did some of both.

**Accomplishments.** On the positive side of the ledger, Republican legislators liberalized state constitutions in the South by providing for universal male suffrage, property rights for women, debt relief, and modernized penal codes. They also promoted the building of roads, bridges, railroads, and other internal improvements. They established such needed state institutions as hospitals and asylums for the care of the handicapped. The reformers established state-supported public school systems in the South, which benefited whites and blacks alike. To pay for these measures, tax systems were overhauled and bonds were issued.

**Failures.** After Reconstruction ended, it was long popular in the South (and even among some northern historians) to depict Republican rule as utterly wasteful and corrupt. To be sure, instances of graft and wasteful spending did occur, as Republican politicians took advantage of their power to take kickbacks and bribes from contractors who did business with the state. It is also clear that such corrupt practices in the South were no worse than the corruption practiced in the Grant administration in Washington; nor were they worse than the graft that was rife in the northern states and cities. No geographic section, political party, or ethnic group was immune to the general decline in ethics in government that marked the postwar era.

**African Americans Adjusting to Freedom**

Undoubtedly, the group of southerners who had the greatest adjustment to make during the Reconstruction era were the freedmen and freedwomen.
Having been so recently emancipated from slavery, they were faced with the challenge of securing their economic survival as well as their political rights as citizens.

**Building black communities.** Freedom meant many things to southern blacks: reuniting families, learning to read and write, migrating to cities where “freedom was free-er”—but most of all, emancipation was viewed as an opportunity for achieving independence from white control. This drive for autonomy was most evident in the founding of hundreds of independent black churches after the war. By the hundreds of thousands, African Americans left white-dominated churches for the Negro Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal churches. It was during Reconstruction that black ministers became leading figures in the black community.

The desire for education induced large numbers of African Americans to use their scarce resources to establish independent schools for their children and to pay educated blacks to become their teachers. Black colleges such as Howard, Atlanta, Fisk, and Morehouse were established during Reconstruction to train black ministers and teachers.

Another aspect of blacks’ search for independence and self-sufficiency was the decision of many freedmen to migrate from the South and establish new black communities in frontier states such as Kansas.

**Sharecropping.** The South’s agricultural economy was in turmoil after the war, in part because a compulsory labor force was gone. At first, white landowners attempted to force freed blacks into signing contracts to work the fields. These contracts set terms that nearly bound the signer to permanent and unrestricted labor—in effect, slavery by a different name. Black insistence on autonomy, however, combined with changes in the postwar economy, led white landowners to adopt a system based on tenancy and sharecropping. Under sharecropping, the landlord provided the seed and other needed farm supplies in return for a share (usually half) of the harvest. While this system gave poor people of the rural South (whites as well as blacks) the opportunity to work a piece of land for themselves, sharecroppers usually remained either dependent on the landowners or in debt to local merchants. By 1880, no more than 5 percent of southern blacks had managed to realize their dreams of becoming independent landowners. In a sense, sharecropping had evolved into a new form of servitude.

**The North During Reconstruction**

The North’s economy in the postwar years continued to be driven by the Industrial Revolution and the probusiness policies of the Republicans. As the South struggled to reorganize its house, the main concern of northerners seemed to be railroads, steel, labor problems, and money.
Greed and Corruption

During the Grant administration, as the material interests of the age (see Chapter 19) took center stage, the idealism of Lincoln’s generation and the radical Republicans’ crusade for civil rights were pushed aside.

Rise of the spoilsmen. In the early 1870s, leadership of the Republican party passed from the reformers (Thaddeus Stevens, Charles Sumner, and Benjamin Wade) to political manipulators such as Senators Roscoe Conklin of New York and James Blaine of Maine. These politicians were masters of the game of patronage—giving jobs and government favors (spoils) to their supporters.

Corruption in business and government. The postwar years were notorious for the number of corrupt schemes devised by business bosses and political bosses to enrich themselves at the public’s expense. In 1869, for example, two Wall Street financiers, Jay Gould and James Fisk, obtained the help of President Grant’s brother-in-law in a scheme to corner the gold market. The Treasury Department broke the scheme but not before Gould had made a huge profit.

In the Crédit Mobilier affair, insiders gave stock to influential members of Congress to avoid investigation of the profits they were making—as high as 348 percent—from government subsidies for building the transcontinental railroad. In the case of the Whiskey Ring, federal revenue agents conspired with the liquor industry to defraud the government of millions in taxes. While Grant himself did not personally profit from the corruption, his loyalty to dishonest men around him badly tarnished his presidency.

Local politics in the Grant years was equally scandalous. In New York City, William Tweed, the boss of the local Democratic party, masterminded dozens of schemes for helping himself and cronies to large chunks of graft. The Tweed Ring virtually stole about $200 million from New York’s taxpayers before The New York Times and the cartoonist Thomas Nast exposed “Boss” Tweed and brought about his arrest and imprisonment in 1871.

The Election of 1872

The scandals of the Grant administration drove reform-minded Republicans to break with the party in 1872 and select Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune, as their presidential candidate. The Liberal Republicans advocated civil service reform, an end of railroad subsidies, withdrawal of troops from the South, reduced tariffs, and free trade. Surprisingly, the Democrats joined them and also nominated Greeley.

The regular Republicans countered by merely “waving the bloody shirt” again—and it worked. Grant was reelected in a landslide. Weeks after his overwhelming defeat, the luckless Horace Greeley died.
**The Panic of 1873**

Grant’s second term began with an economic disaster that rendered thousands of northern laborers both jobless and homeless. In 1873 overspeculation by financiers and overbuilding by industry and railroads led to widespread business failures and depression. Debtors on the farms and in the cities sought an inflationary, easy-money solution by demanding Greenback paper money that was not supported by gold. In 1874, Grant finally decided to side with the hard-money bankers and creditors who wanted a stable money supply backed by gold and vetoed a bill calling for the release of additional Greenbacks.

**The End of Reconstruction**

During Grant’s second term, it was apparent that Reconstruction had entered another phase, which proved to be its third and final round. With Radical Republicanism on the wane, southern conservatives—known as re-deemers—took control of one state government after another. This process was completed by 1877. The redeemers had different social and economic backgrounds, but they agreed on their political program: states’ rights, reduced taxes, reduced spending on social programs, and white supremacy.

**White Supremacy and the Ku Klux Klan**

During the period that Republicans controlled state governments in the South, groups of southern whites organized various secret societies to intimidate blacks and white reformers. The most prominent of these was the Ku Klux Klan, founded in 1867 by an ex-Confederate general, Nathaniel Bedford Forrest. The “invisible empire” burned black-owned buildings and flogged and murdered freedmen to keep them from exercising their voting rights. In 1870, Congress in the Force Acts of 1870 and 1871 gave power to federal authorities to stop Ku Klux Klan violence and to protect the civil rights of citizens in the South.

**The Amnesty Act of 1872**

Seven years after Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, many northerners were ready to put hatred of the Confederacy behind them. As a sign of the changing times, Congress in 1872 passed a general amnesty act that removed the last of the restrictions on ex-Confederates, except for the top leaders. The chief political consequence of the Amnesty Act was that it allowed southern conservatives to vote for Democrats to retake control of state governments.

**The Election of 1876**

By 1876, federal troops had been withdrawn from all but three southern states—South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana. The Democrats had returned to power in all ex-Confederate states except these. This fact was to play a critical role in the presidential election.
At their convention, the Republicans looked for someone untouched by the corruption of the Grant administration and nominated the governor of Ohio, Rutherford B. Hayes. The Democrats chose New York’s reform governor, Samuel J. Tilden, who had made a name for himself fighting the corrupt Tweed Ring. When the popular votes were counted, the Democrats had won a clear majority and expected to put Tilden in the White House. In three southern states, however, the returns were contested. To win the election, Tilden needed only one electoral vote from the contested returns of South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana.

A special electoral commission was created to determine who was entitled to the disputed votes of the three states. In a straight party vote of 8–7, the commission gave all the electoral votes to Hayes, the Republican. Outraged Democrats threatened to filibuster the results and send the election to the House of Representatives, which they controlled.

**The Compromise of 1877**

An informal deal was finally worked out between the two parties. Hayes would become president on the condition that he would (1) immediately end federal support for the Republicans in the South and also (2) support the building
of a southern transcontinental railroad. Shortly after his inauguration, President Hayes fulfilled his part in the Compromise of 1877. He promptly withdrew the last of the federal troops protecting blacks and other Republicans.

The end of federal military presence in the South was not the only thing that brought Reconstruction to an end. In a series of decisions in the 1880s and 1890s, the Supreme Court struck down one Reconstruction law after another that protected blacks from discrimination. Supporters of the New South promised a future of industrial development, but most southern blacks and whites in the decades after the Civil War remained poor farmers, and they fell further behind the rest of the nation.

**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WAS RECONSTRUCTION A FAILURE?**

Reconstruction is probably the most controversial period in U.S. history. Generations of both northern and southern historians, starting with William Dunning in the early 1900s, portrayed Reconstruction as a failure. According to this traditional interpretation, illiterate blacks and corrupt northern carpetbaggers abused the rights of southern whites and stole vast sums from the state governments. The Radical Republicans brought on these conditions when, in an effort to punish the South, they gave the former slaves too many rights too soon. The Dunning school of historical thought provided a rationale for policies of racial segregation in the early 20th century. It was given popular expression in a 1915 movie, D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*, which pictured the Ku Klux Klanmen as the heroes coming to the rescue of southern whites oppressed by vindictive northern radicals and blacks.

Black historians such as W. E. B. Du Bois and John Hope Franklin countered this interpretation by highlighting the positive achievements of the Reconstruction governments and black leaders. Their view was supported and expanded upon in 1965 with the publication of Kenneth Stampp’s *Era of Reconstruction*. Other historians of the 1960s and 1970s followed Stampp’s lead in stressing the significance of the civil rights legislation passed by the Radical Republicans and pointing out the humanitarian work performed by northern reformers.

By the 1980s, some historians criticized Congress’ approach to Reconstruction, not for being too radical, but for not being radical enough. They argued that the Radical Republicans neglected to provide land for African Americans, which would have enabled them to achieve economic independence. Furthermore, according to these liberal critics, the military occupation of the South should have lasted longer to protect the freedmen’s political rights. Eric Foner’s
Reconstruction, 1863–1877

comprehensive Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution (1988) acknowledged the limitations of Reconstruction in achieving lasting reforms but also pointed out that, in the post-Civil War years, the freedmen established many of the institutions in the black community upon which later progress depended. According to Foner, it took a “second Reconstruction” after World War II (the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s) to achieve the promise of the “first Reconstruction.”

KEY NAMES, EVENTS, AND TERMS

presidential Reconstruction
Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction (1863)
Wade-Davis Bill (1864)
Andrew Johnson
Freedmen’s Bureau
Black Codes
congressional Reconstruction
Radical Republicans
Charles Sumner
Thaddeus Stephens
Benjamin Wade
Civil Rights Act of 1866
Fourteenth Amendment
equal protection of the laws
due process of law
Reconstruction Acts (1867)
Tenure of Office Act (1867)
Edwin Stanton
impeachment
Fifteenth Amendment
Civil Rights Act of 1875
scalawags
carpetbaggers
Blanche K. Bruce
Hiram Revels
sharecropping
patronage
Jay Gould

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. The purpose of Lincoln’s and Johnson’s plan for Reconstruction was to
   (A) punish the South for causing the Civil War
   (B) give Congress the final authority in the process of Reconstruction
   (C) give equal voting rights for both white and black males in the South
   (D) provide financial aid to rebuild the South
   (E) encourage rapid readmission of ex-Confederate states into the Union

2. In 1865, a number of southern states passed Black Codes in order to
   (A) control movement and provide a stable workforce for the plantations
   (B) keep the two races segregated in public places
   (C) limit the educational opportunities of recently freed slaves
3. The Freedmen’s Bureau provided all of the following EXCEPT
(A) food, shelter, and medical aid for the victims of the war
(B) resettlement of some freed slaves on confiscated lands
(C) protection from sharecropping agreements
(D) schools to promote literacy among blacks
(E) colleges for blacks

4. Which of the following was NOT provided for African Americans by congressional Reconstruction?
(A) guarantee of U.S. citizenship
(B) equal protection of the laws
(C) distribution of confiscated Confederate farmlands
(D) protection for voting rights
(E) equal access to public accommodations

5. President Andrew Johnson was impeached for
(A) vetoing the Civil Rights Act of 1866
(B) refusing to support the Thirteenth Amendment
(C) taking a controversial position on states’ rights
(D) removing a Radical Republican from his cabinet
(E) attempting to break up the Republican party

6. An analysis of the election of 1868 best supports the conclusion that
(A) the Republicans had given up on gaining the black vote
(B) the weakened Democratic party had little chance to elect a president
(C) northerners overwhelmingly approved the policies of the Radical Republicans
(D) voters approved the impeachment of Andrew Johnson
(E) Republican victory depended on the votes of African Americans

7. The Republican Reconstruction governments in the South accomplished all of the following EXCEPT
(A) developing state-supported public school systems for whites and blacks
(B) reducing waste and corruption in local and state governments
(C) founding state institutions to care for the sick and handicapped
(D) building of roads, bridges, harbors, and railroads
(E) adopting liberalized state constitutions

8. By the end of Reconstruction, most blacks in the South
(A) had migrated to lands in the West
(B) owned small family farms
(C) earned wages as factory workers in the new industries
(D) worked on farms as renters and sharecroppers
(E) operated independent businesses in the black community

9. The “redeemers” in the South supported
(A) integrated schools and public places
(B) states’ rights and white supremacy
(C) increased state spending for internal improvements
(D) continued cooperation with the military to protect the freedmen
(E) redemption of Greenback dollars with gold

10. Congressional Reconstruction ended in 1877 because
(A) it was part of a compromise to resolve the disputed election of 1876
(B) African Americans in the South no longer needed federal protection of their civil rights
(C) the Supreme Court ignored the requirements of the Fourteenth Amendment
(D) the newly elected president was a moderate Republican
(E) the Union army had succeeded in suppressing the Ku Klux Klan

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Analyze the goals and strategies of Reconstruction of TWO of the following:
   President Lincoln
   President Johnson
   Congressional Republicans

2. In what ways and to what extent did the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments change the relationship between the federal government and the state governments?

3. What political, economic, and social changes were implemented by Republican governments in the southern states between 1865 and 1877?

4. How were politics and business affected by corruption and scandals in the era from 1865 to 1880?

5. What were the long-term political and economic effects of Reconstruction and southern reaction on African Americans?
As the following documents reveal, the policies of Reconstruction expressed the complex interaction of politics, economics, reform, race, and sectionalism.

**DOCUMENT A. THE REPORT OF A NORTHERN OBSERVER**

Carl Schurz, a liberal Republican and German-American reformer, sent the following report of postwar attitudes in the South to a Boston newspaper in July 1865. His friendship with reform-minded Republicans may have shaped what he thought worthy of reporting.

But there is another class of people here [in Savannah], mostly younger men, who are still in the swearing mood. You can overhear their conversations as you pass them on the streets or even sit near them on the stoop of a hotel. They are “not conquered but only overpowered.” They are only smothered for a time. They want to fight the war over again, and they are sure in five years they are going to have a war bigger than any we have seen yet. They are meaning to get rid of this d----d military despotism. . . . They have a rope ready for this and that Union man when the Yankee bayonets are gone. They will show the northern interlopers that have settled down here to live on their substance the way home. They will deal largely in tar and feathers. They have been in the country and visited this and that place where a fine business is done in the way of killing Negroes. They will let the Negro know what freedom is, only let the Yankee soldiers be withdrawn.

Unfortunately, this spirit receives much encouragement from the fair sex. We have heard so much of the bitter resentment of the southern ladies that the tale becomes stale by frequent repetition, but when inquiring into the feelings of the people, this element must not be omitted. . . . But there is a large number of southern women who are as vindictive and defiant as ever, and whose temper does not permit them to lay their tongues under any restraint. . . . A day or two ago a Union officer yielding to an impulse of politeness, handed a dish of pickles to a southern lady at the dinner-table of a hotel in this city. A look of unspeakable scorn and indignation met him. “So you think,” said the lady, “a southern woman will take a dish of pickles from a hand that is dripping with the blood of her countrymen?”

Carl Schurz,
*Boston Advertiser,* July 31, 1865
DOCUMENT B. BLACK CODES

The following are examples of the Black Codes enacted by two southern state governments in 1865 and early 1866.

Sec. 2. All freedmen, free negroes and mulattoes . . . over the age of eighteen years found on the second Monday in January, 1866, or there after, with no lawful employment or business . . . shall be deemed vagrants, and on conviction thereof shall be fined . . . fifty dollars . . . and imprisoned at the discretion of the court.

Sec. 7. If any freedman, free negro or mulatto shall fail . . . to pay any tax . . . it shall be the duty of the sheriff to arrest such freedman, free negro or mulatto . . . and proceed at once to hire for the shortest time such delinquent tax-payers to any one who will pay the said tax. . . .

Laws of Mississippi, 1865

Sec. 2 . . . Every laborer . . . shall not be allowed to leave his place of employment until the fulfillment of his contract. . . .

Sec. 8 . . . in case of sickness of the laborer, wages for the time lost shall be deducted, and where the sickness is feigned . . . double the amount of wages shall be deducted for the time lost . . . and should the refusal to work continue beyond three days, the offender . . . shall be forced to labor on roads, levees, and other public works, without pay, until the offender consents to return to his labor.

Acts of the General Assembly of Louisiana, 1865

DOCUMENT C. THE ARGUMENT OF A RADICAL REPUBLICAN

The Joint Committee on Reconstruction drafted the Fourteenth Amendment in part to protect the freedmen against the Black Codes. In a speech to the House, Thaddeus Stevens argued for the amendment in the following terms:

The first section [of the amendment] prohibits the States from abridging the privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States, or unlawfully depriving them of life, liberty, or property, or denying to any person within their jurisdiction the “equal” protection of the laws.

I can hardly believe that any person can be found who will not admit that every one of these provisions is just. They are all asserted, in some form or other, in our DECLARATION or organic law. But the Constitution limits only the action of Congress, and is not a
limitation on the States. This amendment supplies that defect, and allows Congress to correct the unjust legislation of the States, so far that the law operated upon one man shall operate equally upon all. Whatever law punishes a white man for a crime shall punish the black man precisely in the same way and to the same degree. Whatever law protects the white man shall afford “equal” protection to the black man. Whatever means to redress is afforded to one shall be afforded to all. Whatever law allows the white man to testify in court shall allow the man of color to do the same. These are great advantages over the present codes. Now different degrees of punishment are inflicted, not on account of the magnitude of the crime, but according to the color of the skin. I need not enumerate these partial and oppressive laws. Unless the Constitution should restrain them those States will all, I fear, keep up this discrimination, and crush to death the hated freedmen. Some answer, “Your civil rights bill secures the same things.” That is partly true, but a law is repealable by a majority. And I need hardly say that the first time that the South and their copperhead allies obtain the command of Congress it will be repealed. The veto of the President and their votes on the bill are conclusive evidence of that.

Thaddeus Stevens,
Speech in Congress, May 8, 1866

**DOCUMENT D. FREDERICK DOUGLASS LOOKS BACK ON RECONSTRUCTION**

In this 1883 speech, Douglass challenged black Americans to have “sufficient spirit and wisdom to organize and combine to defend themselves from outrage, discrimination, and oppression,” and not to depend on the Republican party. “Parties were made for men, not men for parties.” He also looked back with both regret and hope to the Reconstruction Era.

Though we have had war, reconstruction, and abolition as a nation, we still linger in the shadow and blight of an extinct institution. Though the colored man is no longer subject to be bought and sold, he is still surrounded by an adverse sentiment which fetters all his movements. In his downward course he meets no resistance, but his course upward is resented and resisted at every step of his progress. . . . The color line meets him everywhere, and in a measure shuts him out from all respectable and profitable trades and callings. . . .

If liberty, with us, is yet but a name, our citizenship is but a sham, and our suffrage thus far only a cruel mockery, we may yet
congratulate ourselves upon the fact that the laws and institutions of the country are sound, just, and liberal. There is hope for a people when their laws are righteous, whether for the moment they conform to their requirements or not. But until this nation shall make its practice accord with its Constitution and its righteous laws, it will not do to reproach the colored people of this country. . . .

Frederick Douglass,
Speech of September 24, 1883

ANALYZING THE DOCUMENTS

1. How could the report of Carl Schurz be related to the later problems of Reconstruction?
2. From the point of view of southern landowners, what were the primary purposes for enacting the Black Codes?
3. According to Stevens, why was the Fourteenth amendment constitutionally and politically necessary?
4. To what was Douglass referring when he said that “the laws and the institutions of the country are sound, just, and liberal”?
5. Do the above documents support or refute the view that Reconstruction was a failure?
American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West.

Frederick Jackson Turner, 1893

As the last federal troops were withdrawn from the South in 1877, the U.S. Army had a few more battles to fight in the West on behalf of the miners and farmers who settled the last frontier. This chapter describes how two regions, the West and the South, underwent profound changes after the Civil War.

The West: Settlement of the Last Frontier

After the Civil War, many Americans turned their energies to the daunting task of settling the final western frontier: the vast arid territory that included the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, and the Western Plateau. Before 1860, these lands between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Coast were known as “the Great American Desert” by pioneers passing through on the way to the green valleys of Oregon and the goldfields of California. The plains west of the 100th meridian had few trees and usually less than 15 inches of rainfall a year, which was not considered enough moisture to support farming. While the winter blizzards and hot dry summers discouraged settlement, the open grasslands of the plains supported an estimated 15 million bison, or buffalo. The buffalo in turn provided food, clothing, shelter, and even tools for many of the 250,000 Native Americans living in the West in 1865.

In only 35 years, conditions on the Great Plains changed so much that there was virtually no more frontier. By 1900, the great buffalo herds had been wiped out. The open western lands were now fenced in by homesteads
and ranches, crisscrossed by steel rails, and modernized by new towns. By the turn of the century, ten new western states had already been carved out of the last frontier, leaving only Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma as territories awaiting statehood. Progress came at a cost. The frenzied rush for the West’s natural resources caused the near extermination of the buffalo and serious damage to the environment. The Native Americans who happened to be in the way of development also paid a high human and cultural price.

The settlement of the last frontier was achieved by three groups of pioneers: miners, cattlemen and cowboys, and farmers.

The Mining Frontier

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 caused the first flood of newcomers to the West. The California gold rush was only the beginning of a feverish quest for gold and silver that would extend well into the 1890s and would help to settle much of the West. A series of gold strikes and silver strikes in what became the states of Colorado, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Arizona, and South Dakota kept a steady flow of hopeful young prospectors pushing into the western mountains. The discovery of gold near Pike’s Peak in 1859 brought nearly 100,000 miners to Colorado. In the same year, the discovery of the fabulous Comstock Lode (which produced over $340 million in gold
and silver by 1890) was responsible for Nevada entering the Union in 1864. Idaho and Montana were also granted early statehood, largely because of the mining boom.

California’s great gold rush of 1849 set the pattern for what happened elsewhere. First, individual prospectors would look for traces of gold in the mountain streams by a method called placer mining, using simple tools such as shovels and washing pans. Eventually, however, such methods gave way to deep-shaft mining that required expensive equipment and the resources of wealthy investors and corporations.

Rich strikes would create boomtowns almost overnight—towns that became infamous for their saloons, dance-hall girls, and vigilante justice. A few towns, such as Nevada’s Virginia City (created by the Comstock Lode), added theaters, churches, newspapers, schools, libraries, railroads, and organized law enforcement. Mark Twain started his career as a writer working on a Virginia City newspaper in the early 1860s. Many mining towns, however, became lonely ghost towns within a few years after the gold and silver ran out. Other towns that served the mines, such as San Francisco, Sacramento, and Denver, became important commercial centers.

Most of the mining towns that endured and grew were more like industrial cities than the frontier towns depicted in western films. As the mines developed, mining companies employed experienced miners from Europe, Latin America, and China. It was not unusual for half the population of a mining town to be foreign-born. About one-third of the western miners in the 1860s were Chinese immigrants. Native-born Americans resented the competition. In California, hostility to foreigners took the form of a Miner’s Tax of $20 a month on all foreign-born miners. Political pressure from western states moved Congress to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which prohibited further immigration to the United States by Chinese laborers. Renewed ten years later, this law was the first major act of Congress to restrict immigration on the basis of race and nationality.

Mining not only stimulated the settlement of the West but also had an impact on the economics and politics of the nation. First of all, a vast increase in the supply of silver created a crisis over the relative value of gold- and silver-backed currency, which became a leading political issue for both westerners and the nation in the 1880s and 1890s. The mining boom also left environmental scars that are still visible today. It had a disastrous effect on Native Americans, who lost their lands to the miners’ pursuit of instant riches.

**The Cattle Frontier**

The economic potential of the vast open grasslands that reached from Texas to Canada was realized by cattlemen and ranchers in the decades after the Civil War. Earlier, cattle had been raised and rounded up in Texas on a smaller scale by Mexican cowboys, or *vaqueros*. The traditions and techniques
of the cattle business in the late 1800s were borrowed from the Mexicans, just
as the cattle themselves, the hardy “Texas” longhorns, came originally from
Mexico. During the Civil War, after the Union army cut off Texas from the
rest of the Confederacy, wild herds of about 5 million head of cattle roamed
freely over the Texas grasslands. When the war ended, the Texas cattle business
was easy to get into because both the cattle and the grass were free.

The construction of railroads into Kansas after the war opened up eastern
markets for the Texas cattle. Joseph G. McCoy realized the huge profits to be
made at the end of the line in Chicago where cattle could be sold for $30 to
$50 a head. At the rail stop in Abilene, Kansas, McCoy built the first stockyards
to ship out cattle to Chicago. Dodge City and other cow towns were soon
established along the railroads to handle the millions of cattle driven up the
Chisholm, Goodnight-Loving, and other trails out of Texas during the 1860s
and 1870s. The cowboys, many of whom were blacks and Mexicans, received
about a dollar a day for their dangerous work.

The long cattle drives began to come to an end in the 1880s when overgraz-
ing destroyed the grass and a winter blizzard and drought of 1885–1886 killed
off 90 percent of the cattle. Another factor that closed down the cattle frontier
was the arrival of homesteaders, who used barbed wire fencing to cut off access
to the formerly open range. Wealthy cattlemen turned to developing huge
ranches and using scientific ranching techniques to raise more tender breeds
of cattle by feeding them hay and grains. The Wild West was largely tamed
by the 1890s, but not before the era changed America’s eating habits from
pork to beef and created the legend of the rugged, self-reliant American cowboy.

The Farming Frontier

The Homestead Act of 1862 encouraged farming on the Great Plains by
offering 160 acres of public land free to any family that settled on it for a
period of five years. The promise of free land combined with the promotions
of railroads and land speculators induced hundreds of thousands of native-born
and immigrant families to attempt to farm the Great Plains between 1870 and
1900. About 500,000 families took advantage of the Homestead Act, but five
times that number had to purchase their land, because the best public lands
often ended up in the hands of railroad companies and speculators.

Problems and solutions. The first “sodbusters” on the dry and treeless
plains often built their homes of sod bricks. Extremes of hot and cold weather,
plagues of grasshoppers, and the lonesome life on the plains challenged even
the most resourceful of the pioneer families. Water was scarce, and wood for
fences was almost nonexistent. The invention of barbed wire by Joseph Glidden
in 1874 helped farmers to fence in their lands on the lumber-scarce plains.
Using mail-order windmills to drill deep wells provided some water. Even so,
many homesteaders discovered too late that 160 acres was not adequate for
farming the Great Plains. Long spells of severe weather, together with falling prices for their crops and the cost of new machinery, caused the failure of two-thirds of the homesteaders’ farms on the Great Plains by 1900. Western Kansas alone lost half of its population between 1888 and 1892.

Those who managed to survive adopted “dry farming” and deep-plowing techniques to use the moisture available. They also learned to plant hardy strains of Russian wheat that withstood the extreme weather. Ultimately, dams and irrigation saved many western farmers, as humans reshaped the rivers and physical environment of the West to provide water for agriculture.

**Turner’s frontier thesis.** The Oklahoma Territory, once set aside for the use of Native Americans, was thrown open for settlement in 1889, and hundreds of prospective homesteaders took part in the last great land rush in the West. The next year, 1890, the U.S. Census Bureau declared that the entire frontier—except for a few isolated pockets—had been settled.
Reacting to this announcement of the close of the frontier, the historian Frederick Jackson Turner wrote an influential essay, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893). Turner argued that 300 years of frontier experience had played a fundamental role in shaping the unique character of American society. According to Turner’s thesis, the frontier experience had promoted a habit of independence and individualism. The frontier had also acted as a powerful social leveler, breaking down class distinctions and thus fostering social and political democracy. Furthermore, the challenges of frontier life caused Americans to be inventive and practical-minded—but also wasteful in their attitude toward natural resources.

The closing of the frontier troubled Turner. He saw the availability of free land on the frontier as a safety valve for harmlessly releasing discontent in American society. The frontier had always held out the promise of a fresh start. Once the frontier was gone, would the United States be condemned to follow the patterns of class division and social conflict that troubled the nations of Europe?

While many debate the Turner thesis, historians acknowledge that by the 1890s the largest movement of Americans was to the cities and industrialized areas. Not only was the era of the western frontier coming to a close, but the dominance of rural farming America was also on a decline.

**The Removal of Native Americans**

From the point of view of Native Americans, the frontier was nothing less than their own homeland and the source of their livelihood. As that frontier was progressively taken over by white settlers, the Native Americans lost both their land and the freedom to live according to their traditions.

The Native Americans who occupied the West in 1865 belonged to dozens of different cultural and tribal groups. In New Mexico and Arizona, Pueblo groups such as the Hopi and Zuni lived in permanent settlements as farmers raising corn and livestock. The Navajo and Apache peoples of the Southwest were nomadic hunter-gatherers who adapted a more settled way of life, not only raising crops and livestock but also producing arts and crafts. In the Pacific Northwest (Washington and Oregon), such tribes as the Chinook and Shasta developed complex communities based on abundant fish and game.

About two-thirds of the western tribal groups lived on the Great Plains. These nomadic tribes, such as the Sioux, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Crow, and Comanche, had given up farming in colonial times after the introduction of the horse by the Spanish. By the 1700s, they had become skillful horsemen and developed a way of life centered on the hunting of buffalo. Although they belonged to tribes of several thousand, they lived in smaller bands of 300–500 members. In the late 19th century, their conflicts with the U.S. government were partly the result of white Americans having little understanding of the Plains people’s loose tribal organization and nomadic lifestyle.
Reservation policy. In the 1830s, President Andrew Jackson’s policy of removing eastern Native Americans to the West was based on the belief that lands west of the Mississippi would permanently remain “Indian country.” This expectation soon proved false, as wagon trains rolled westward on the Oregon Trail, and plans were made for building a transcontinental railroad. In 1851, in councils (negotiations) at Fort Laramie and Fort Atkinson, the federal government began to assign the plains tribes large tracts of land—or reservations—with definite boundaries. Most Plains tribes, however, refused to restrict their movements to the reservations and continued to follow the migrating buffalo wherever they roamed.

Indian wars. As thousands of miners, cattlemen, and homesteaders began to settle on Native American lands, warfare became inevitable. Sporadic outbursts of fighting between U.S. troops and Plains people were characterized by brutal episodes. In 1864, the Colorado militia massacred an encampment of Cheyenne women, children, and men at Sand Creek, Colorado. In 1866, during the Sioux War, the tables were turned when an army column under Captain William Fetterman was wiped out by Sioux warriors. Following these wars, another round of treaties attempted to isolate the Native Americans of the Plains on smaller reservations with promises of government support to be provided by federal agents. However, gold miners refused to stay off Native Americans’ lands if gold was to be found on them, as indeed it was in the Dakota’s Black Hills. Soon, minor chiefs not involved in the treaty-making and younger warriors denounced the treaties and tried to return to ancestral lands.

The 1870s witnessed a new round of conflicts in the West. There was the Red River War against the Comanche and a second Sioux War led by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. Before the Sioux went down to defeat, they ambushed and destroyed Colonel George Custer’s command at Little Big Horn in 1876. Chief Joseph’s courageous effort to lead a band of the Nez Percé into Canada ended in defeat and surrender in 1877. The constant pressure of the U.S. Army forced tribe after tribe to comply with Washington’s terms. In addition, the slaughter of most of the buffalo by the early 1880s doomed the way of life of the Plains people.

Assimilationists. The injustices done to Native Americans were chronicled in a best-selling book by Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor* (1881). Although this book created sympathy for Native Americans, especially in the eastern part of the United States, most of those motivated to help Native Americans proposed assimilation as the solution. These humanitarians emphasized formal education and training and conversion to Christianity. Boarding schools such as the Carlisle School in Pennsylvania were set up to segregate Native American children from their people and teach them white culture and farming and industrial skills.

Dawes Severalty Act (1887). Reformers persuaded Congress to abandon the practice of dealing with Native American tribes as separate nations. A new
approach incorporated in the Dawes Act of 1887 was designed to break up tribal organizations, which many felt kept Native Americans from becoming “civilized” and law-abiding citizens. The Dawes Act divided the tribal lands into plots of 160 acres or less, depending on family size. U.S. citizenship was granted to those who stayed on the land for 25 years and “adopted the habits of civilized life.”

Under the Dawes Act, as intended, 47 million acres of land were distributed to Native Americans. What reformers did not anticipate, however, was that 90 million acres of former reservation land—often the best land—would be sold over the years to white settlers by the government, speculators, or Native Americans themselves. The new policy proved a failure. By the turn of the century, disease and poverty had reduced the Native American population to just 200,000 persons, most of whom lived as wards of the federal government.

**Ghost Dance movement.** The last effort of Native Americans to resist U.S. domination and drive whites from their ancestral lands came through a religious movement known as the Ghost Dance. In the government’s campaign to suppress the movement, the famous Sioux medicine man Sitting Bull was killed during his arrest. Then in December 1890, over 200 Native American men, women, and children were gunned down by the U.S. Army in the “battle” (massacre) of Wounded Knee in the Dakotas. This final tragedy marked the end of the Indian Wars on the crimsoned prairie.

**Aftermath: U.S. policy in the 20th century.** In 1924, in partial recognition of the failure of its policy of forced assimilation, the federal government granted U.S. citizenship to all Native Americans, whether or not they had complied with the Dawes Act. As part of President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal in the 1930s, Congress adopted the Indian Reorganization Act (1934), which promoted the reestablishment of tribal organization and culture. Today, over 1.8 million Native Americans, living both on and off reservations, belong to 116 tribes within the United States, each consisting of 1,000 or more members.

**The New South**

While the West was being “won” by settlers and the U.S. Army, the South was still recovering from the devastation of the Civil War. Even before Reconstruction ended in 1877, some southerners promoted a new vision for a self-sufficient southern economy built on modern capitalist values, industrial growth, and improved transportation. Chief among them was Henry Grady, the editor of the Atlanta Constitution. Grady spread the gospel of the New South with editorials that argued for economic diversity and laissez-faire capitalism. Local governments helped spur growth by offering tax exemptions to attract investors to start new industries. Cheap (low-wage) labor was another incentive for businesses to locate in the New South.
Economic Progress

A number of southern cities prospered in the late 19th century. Birmingham, Alabama, became a symbol of the New South by developing into one of the nation’s leading steel centers. Memphis, Tennessee, prospered as a center for the South’s growing lumber industry. Richmond, the former capital of the Confederacy, recovered from being burned down at the end of the Civil War to become the capital of the nation’s tobacco industry.

Cheaper labor rates enabled the states of Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina to overtake the New England states as the chief producers of textiles. By 1900, the South had 400 cotton mills employing almost 100,000 white workers.

Railroads also gave a boost to the emergence of the New South. During the postwar years, the southern railroad companies rapidly converted to the standard-gauge rails used in the North and West. As a result, by 1890, an integrated rail network was established throughout the South. The South’s rate of postwar growth from 1865 to 1900 equalled or surpassed that of the other regions of the country in terms of population, industry, and railroads.

Continued Poverty

Despite progress and growth, the South remained a largely agricultural section—and also the poorest region in the country. To a greater extent than before the war, northern financing dominated much of the southern economy. Northern investors controlled three-quarters of the southern railroads and by 1900 had control of the South’s steel industry as well. A large share of the profits from the new industries went to northern banks and financiers. Industrial workers in the South (94 percent of whom were white) earned half of the national average and worked longer hours than elsewhere. Most southerners of both races remained in traditional roles and barely got by from year to year as sharecroppers and farmers.

The poverty of the majority of southerners was not caused by northern capitalists. Two other factors were chiefly responsible: (1) the South’s late start at industrialization and (2) a poorly educated workforce. Only a small number of southerners had the technological skills needed for industrial development. The South failed to invest in technical and engineering schools as did the North. Furthermore, in the late 1800s, political leadership in the South provided little support for the education of either poor whites or poor African Americans. Without adequate education, the southern workforce was cut off from economic opportunities in the fast-changing world of the late 19th century.

Agriculture

The South’s postwar economy remained tied mainly to growing cotton. Between 1870 and 1900, the number of acres planted in cotton more than doubled. Increased productivity, however, only added to the cotton farmer’s
problems, as a glut of cotton on world markets caused cotton prices to decline by more than 50 percent by the 1890s. Per capita income in the South actually declined, and many farmers lost their farms. By 1900, over half the region’s white farmers and three-quarters of the black farmers were tenants (or sharecroppers), most of them straining to make a living from small plots of 15 to 20 acres. A shortage of credit forced farmers to borrow supplies from local merchants in the spring with a lien, or mortgage, on their crops to be paid at harvest. The combination of sharecropping and crop liens forced poor farmers to remain tenants, virtual serfs tied to the land by debt.

Some southern farmers sought to diversify their farming to escape the trap of depending entirely on cotton. George Washington Carver, an African-American scientist at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, promoted the growing of such crops as peanuts, sweet potatoes, and soybeans. His work played an important role in shifting southern agriculture toward a more diversified base.

Even so, most small farmers in the South remained in the cycle of debt and poverty. As in the North and the West, the hard times produced a harvest of discontent. By 1890, the Farmers’ Southern Alliance claimed more than 1 million members. A separate organization for African Americans, the Colored Farmers’ National Alliance, had about 250,000 members. Both organizations rallied behind political reforms to solve the farmers’ economic problems. If poor black and poor white farmers in the South could have united, they would have been a potent political force, but the upper class’ economic interests as well as powerful racial attitudes stood in their way.

**Segregation**

With the end of Reconstruction in 1877, the North withdrew its protection of the freedmen and left southerners to work out solutions to their own social and economic problems. As we have seen, the redeemers were Democratic politicians who came to power in the southern states after Reconstruction. They won support from two groups: the business community and the white supremacists. The latter group favored policies of separating, or segregating, public facilities for blacks and whites as a means of treating African Americans as social inferiors. The redeemers often used race as a rallying cry to deflect attention away from the real concerns of tenant farmers and the working poor. They discovered that they could gain and keep political power by playing on the racial fears of whites.

**Discrimination and the Supreme Court.** During Reconstruction, federal laws protected southern blacks from discriminatory acts by local and state governments. Starting in the late 1870s, however, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down one Reconstruction act after another applying to civil rights. In the *Civil Rights Cases* of 1883, the Court ruled that Congress could not legislate against the racial discrimination practiced by private citizens, which included railroads, hotels, and other businesses used by the public.
Then, in 1896, in the landmark case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court upheld a Louisiana law requiring “separate but equal accommodations” for white and black passengers on railroads. The Court ruled that the Louisiana law did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment’s guarantee of “equal protection of the laws.” Soon after this decision, a wave of segregation laws, commonly known as *Jim Crow laws*, were adopted by southern states. These laws required segregated washrooms, drinking fountains, park benches, and other facilities in virtually all public places. Only the use of streets and most stores was not restricted according to a person’s race.

**Loss of civil rights.** Other discriminatory laws resulted in the wholesale disfranchisement of black voters by 1900. In Louisiana, for example, 130,334 black voters were registered in 1896 but only 1,342 in 1904—a 99 percent decline. Various political and legal devices were invented to prevent southern blacks from voting. Among the most common obstacles were literacy tests, poll taxes, and political party primaries for whites only. Many southern states adopted so-called grandfather clauses, which allowed a man to vote only if his grandfather had cast ballots in elections before Reconstruction. The Supreme Court again gave its sanction to such laws in a case of 1898, in which it upheld a state’s right to use literacy tests to determine citizens’ qualifications for voting.

Discrimination took many forms. In southern courts, African Americans were barred from serving on juries. If convicted of crimes, they were often given stiffer penalties than whites. In some cases, African Americans accused of crimes were not even given the benefit of a court-ordered sentence. Lynch mobs killed over 1,400 men during the 1890s. Economic discrimination was also widely practiced, keeping most southern African Americans out of skilled trades and even factory jobs. Thus, while poor whites and immigrants learned the industrial skills that would help them rise into the middle class, African Americans remained engaged in dead-end farming and low-paying domestic work.

**Responding to segregation.** Disenfranchisement, segregation, and lynching left African Americans in the South in a nearly powerless condition. Some black leaders advocated leaving the oppression behind by migrating to Kansas, Oklahoma, or even to Africa. Bishop Henry Turner formed the International Migration Society in 1894 to help American blacks emigrate to Africa. Ida B. Wells, editor of the Memphis *Free Speech*, a black newspaper, devoted her efforts to campaigning against lynching and the Jim Crow laws. Death threats and the destruction of her printing press forced Wells to carry on her work in the North.

One response to discrimination that was widely accepted by whites and African Americans in the hostile racial climate of the 1880s and 1890s was proposed by Booker T. Washington, a former slave who had graduated from Hampton Institute. In 1881, Washington established an industrial and agricul-
tural school at Tuskegee, Alabama, which he built into the largest and best-known industrial school in the nation. Washington’s mission became to teach southern African Americans skilled trades, the virtues of hard work, moderation, and economic self-help. Earning money, he said, was like having “a little green ballot” that would empower African Americans more effectively than a political ballot. Speaking at an exposition in Atlanta in 1895, Washington argued that “the agitation of the questions of social equality is the extremest folly.” In 1900, he organized the National Negro Business League, which established 320 chapters across the country to support businesses owned and operated by African Americans. Largely because Washington preached racial harmony and economic cooperation, his leadership was praised by industrialist Andrew Carnegie and by President Theodore Roosevelt.

In a later era, many civil rights leaders would consider Booker T. Washington’s approach (especially his Atlanta speech) to be a sellout to segregation and discrimination. After 1900, the younger African-American leader W. E. B. Du Bois would demand an end to segregation and the granting of equal civil rights to all Americans. (See Chapter 21.)

Farm Problems: North, South, and West

In the late 1800s, all farmers faced similar problems, whether they were westerners or southerners, whether they were white or African American. For one thing, farmers were becoming a minority within American society. While the number of U.S. farms more than doubled between 1865 and 1900, people working as farmers declined from 60 percent of the working population in 1860 to less than 37 percent in 1900.

Changes in Agriculture

With every passing decade, farming became increasingly commercialized—and also more specialized. Northern and western farmers of the late 19th century concentrated on raising single cash crops, such as corn or wheat, for both national and international markets. As consumers, farmers began to procure their food from the stores in town and their manufactured goods from the mail-order catalogs sent to them by Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck. As producers, farmers became more dependent on large and expensive machines, such as steam engines, seeders, and reaper-thresher combines. Larger farms of thousands of acres were run like factories. Unable to afford the new equipment, small, marginal farms could not compete and, in many cases, were driven out of business.

Falling prices. Increased American production as well as global competition from farms in Argentina, Russia, and Canada drove prices down for wheat, cotton, and other crops. The static money supply in the United States in the
1870s and 1880s also had a deflationary impact on prices. These figures tell the depressing story:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wheat</th>
<th>Corn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
<td>$.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As prices fell, farmers with mortgages faced both high interest rates and the need to grow two or three times as much to pay off old debts. Of course, overproduction only lowered prices. The predictable results of this vicious circle were more debts, foreclosures by banks, and more independent farmers forced to become tenants and sharecroppers.

**Rising costs.** Farmers felt victimized by impersonal forces of the larger national economy. Industrial corporations were able to keep prices high on manufactured goods by forming monopolistic trusts. Middlemen (wholesalers and retailers) took their cut before selling to farmers. Railroads, warehouses, and elevators took what little profit remained by charging high or discriminatory rates for the shipment and storage of grain. Railroads would often charge more for short hauls on lines with no competition than for long hauls on lines with competition.

Taxes too seemed unfair to farmers. Local and state governments placed heavy taxes on property and land but did not tax income from stocks and bonds. The tariffs protecting various American industries were viewed as just another unfair tax paid by farmers and consumers for the benefit of the industrialists.

**Fighting Back**

A long tradition of independence and individualism restrained farmers from taking collective action. Finally, however, they began to organize for their common interests and protection.

**National Grange Movement.** The National Grange of Patrons of Husbandry was organized in 1868 by Oliver H. Kelley primarily as a social and educational organization for farmers and their families. By the 1870s, however, the Grange organized economic ventures and took political action to defend members against the middlemen, trusts, and railroads. The organization’s greatest strength was in the region formerly known as the Old Northwest, now more commonly called the Middle West, or simply Midwest. By 1873, there were Granges in almost every state, including the South and the Pacific Coast. Grangers in every part of the country established *cooperatives*—businesses owned and run by the farmers to save the costs charged by middlemen.

Storage fees assessed by grain elevators and freight rates charged by railroads became the next targets of the Grange movement. In the midwestern
The discontent of rural America was on the rise again in the late 1880s as prices for crops fell to new lows. By 1890, about 1 million farmers had joined farmers’ alliances for much the same reasons that they had earlier joined the Grange. Separate alliances were formed in different states and regions to serve farmers’ needs for education in the latest scientific methods as well as for organized economic and political action. In alliances in the South, both poor white and black farmers joined the movement. Unlike the Grange, the alliance movement had serious potential for turning into an independent political party on the national level.

**Ocala platform.** Potential nearly became reality in 1890 when a national organization of farmers—the National Alliance—met in Ocala, Florida, to address the problems of rural America. The alliance attacked both major parties as subservient to Wall Street bankers and big business. Delegates at Ocala created a platform that would have significant impact in later years. They supported (1) direct election of U.S. senators, (2) lower tariff rates, (3) a graduated income tax, and (4) a new banking system regulated by the federal government.

In addition, the alliance platform demanded that Treasury notes and silver
be used to increase the amount of money in circulation, which farmers hoped would create inflation and raise crop prices. The platform also proposed federal storage for farmers’ crops and federal loans, which would free farmers from dependency on middlemen and creditors.

The alliances stopped short of forming a political party. Even so, their backing of local and state candidates who pledged support for alliance goals often proved decisive in the elections of 1890. Many of the reform ideas of the Grange and the Farmers’ alliances would become part of the Populist movement, which would shake the foundations of the two-party system in the elections of 1892 and 1896. (The story of the Populist crusade is told in Chapter 19.)

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: STAGES OF FRONTIER DEVELOPMENT

Frederick Jackson Turner set the agenda for generations of historians with his frontier thesis. One aspect of his thesis presented the settling of the frontier as an evolutionary process. At first, according to Turner, the frontier was an open and isolated wilderness and then slowly passed through different stages of development. The hunting frontier came first, which was followed by either the mining or the cattle frontier, and then the farming frontier. Finally, the founding of towns and cities completed the process.

Later historians challenged Turner’s evolutionary view by arguing that frontier cities played an early and primary role in the development of the trans-Mississippi West. The historian Charles Glaab, for example, documented the role of town “boosters,” who tried to create settlements on the frontier overnight in the middle of nowhere. After laying out town plots on paper, boosters of different western towns would strive to establish their own town as a territory’s central hub of development by competing to capture the county seat or state capital, a state asylum, a railroad depot, or a college. Many would-be towns, promoted as the next “Athens of the West,” proved a booster’s false prophecy and died as ghost towns.

How central were cities to the development of the West? In his analysis of the growth of Chicago in the 19th century (*Nature’s Metropolis*, 1991), the historian William Cronon argued that the “frontier and the metropolis turn out to be two sides of the same coin. . . . The history of the Great West is a long dialogue between the place we call city and the place we call country.” Cronon used the early history of Chicago to show that the commerce between a city and the surrounding hinterland was the motor of frontier development. Urban markets made rural development possible. The cattlemen’s frontier developed because it was linked by the railroads
to Chicago and eastern markets. By “reading Turner backward,” Cronon demonstrated how Chicago helped to create the mining, cattle, lumber, and farming frontiers as it developed into the great city of the West, or “nature’s metropolis.”

By integrating the history of city and frontier, Cronon avoids the traditional American dualism between cities and countryside. Not only frontier history but also environmental and rural issues are clarified when we understand that, as Cronon states, “every city is nature’s metropolis and every countryside its rural hinterland.”

**KEY NAMES, EVENTS, AND TERMS**

- Great American desert
- mining frontier
- Comstock Lode
- Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
- cattle drives
- cowboys; vaqueros
- barbed wire
- farming frontier
- Great Plains
- Oklahoma Territory
- Frederick Jackson Turner; frontier thesis
- reservations
- Indian wars
- Sitting Bull
- Crazy Horse
- George Custer; Little Big Horn
- Chief Joseph
- Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor*
- assimilationists
- Dawes Severalty Act (1887)
- Ghost Dance movement
- Wounded Knee
- Indian Reorganization Act (1934)
- New South
- crop lien system
- George Washington Carver
- Tuskegee Institute
- Farmers' Southern Alliance
- Colored Farmers' National Alliance
- segregation laws
- *Civil Rights Cases of 1883*
- *Plessy v. Ferguson*
- Jim Crow laws
- grandfather clause; poll tax; literacy test
- Henry Turner
- Ida B. Wells, Memphis *Free Speech*
- Booker T. Washington
- National Negro Business League
- commercial farming
- crop-price deflation
- National Grange movement
- cooperatives
- Granger laws
- *Munn v. Illinois*
- *Wabash v. Illinois*
- Interstate Commerce Act (1886)
- farmers’ alliances
- National Alliance
- Ocala Platform

**MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS**

1. Which of the following characterized agriculture in BOTH the West and the South in the period 1870–1900?
   - (A) use of dry-farming techniques
   - (B) increased production
   - (C) introduction of sharecropping
   - (D) raising crops for subsistence, not commerce
   - (E) rising prices for farm products

2. The outbreak of the Indian Wars of the 1870s was caused by all of the following EXCEPT
(A) the U.S. government’s effort to isolate Indian tribes on smaller reservations
(B) the rejection of earlier treaties by young Sioux warriors
(C) the rush of gold miners into Indian lands
(D) perceived failure of the U.S. government to honor past treaty commitments
(E) the division of tribal lands into individual farms for tribal members

3. The goals of the assimilationists were most in conflict with which of the following?
   (A) founders of the Carlisle School
   (B) proponents of farming and industrial training
   (C) terms of the Dawes Act of 1887
   (D) terms of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934
   (E) the granting of citizenship to Native Americans

4. The chief cause of farm protest in the late 19th century was
   (A) the closing of the open range
   (B) overproduction of crops on the Great Plains
   (C) middlemen, trusts, and railroads
   (D) the increased money supply and prices
   (E) increased competition from international sources

5. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 is most closely associated with
   (A) the expensive technologies involved in deep-shaft mining
   (B) hostility to foreigners in western states
   (C) competition of a transcontinental railroad
   (D) farmers’ grievances
   (E) segregation and racial tensions in the South

6. According to the Turner thesis, the frontier encouraged all of the following EXCEPT
   (A) social and political democracy
   (B) inventive and practical approaches to problems
   (C) a safety valve for discontent
   (D) growth of class divisions
   (E) a wasteful attitude toward natural resources

7. After the Granger laws ran into legal problems and were overturned in the case of *Wabash v. Illinois*, Congress attempted to provide relief through the
   (A) Sherman Antitrust Act
   (B) Interstate Commerce Act
   (C) graduated income tax
   (D) Homestead Act
   (E) Atlanta Compromise

8. The main result of the crop lien system in the South in the late 19th century was
   (A) a fairer distribution of land ownership among whites and blacks
   (B) a decrease in the number of acres planted in cotton
   (C) a cycle of debt for tenant farmers
(D) increased credit from northern bankers
(E) greater diversification of crops

9. The New South movement promoted all of the following EXCEPT
(A) tax exemptions to attract new industries
(B) southern railroad systems integrated with the North
(C) a more self-sufficient southern economy
(D) social integration of the races
(E) investment in manufacturing

10. The Supreme Court upheld “separate but equal” accommodations for public transportation in the case of
(A) Plessy v. Ferguson
(B) Munn v. Illinois
(C) Wabash v. Illinois
(D) Dred Scott v. Sandford
(E) Brown v. Topeka

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the shifts in the federal government’s policy toward Native Americans from the 1830s to the 1930s.

2. Explain how TWO of the following influenced the development of the last West from the 1850s to 1900.
   - miners
   - cattlemen
   - farmers
   - (D) social integration of the races
   - (E) investment in manufacturing

3. Analyze the ways that the federal government contributed to the economic development of the West.

4. To what extent were the problems of American farmers in the period 1865–1900 caused (a) by big business and government policy and (b) by farmers’ own decisions?

5. To what extent did changes in the South from 1877 to 1900 reflect (a) the vision of the New South and (b) traditional attitudes and policies?

DOCUMENTS AND READINGS

For various minorities in the American population, neither the states nor the federal government offered any protection from the racial prejudice of the majority or from economic exploitation by the “money power” (railroads, banks, and corporate monopolies). The first two documents present the viewpoints of a Sioux chief (Document A) and a midwestern journalist (Document B), who expressed both bewilderment and resentment at the forces of change. On the
issue of racial segregation, two documents (C and D) present opposing opinions in the landmark Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

**DOCUMENT A. SPEECH BY CHIEF RED CLOUD**

Red Cloud, chief of the Teton Sioux Nation, traveled to Washington and New York City in 1870 to present the case for his people to the president and the public press. The following is an excerpt from his speech given at the Cooper Union in New York.

When you first came we were many, and you were few; now you are many, and we are getting very few, and we are poor. You do not know who appears before you today to speak. I am representative of the original American race, the first people of this continent. We are good and not bad. The reports that you hear concerning us are all on one side. . . . We are driven into a very little land, and we want you now, as our dear friends to help us with the government of the United States.

At the mouth of the Horse Creek in 1852, the Great Father made a treaty with us by which we agreed to let all that country open for fifty-five years for the transit of those who were going through. We kept this treaty; we never treated any man wrong; we never committed any murder or depredation until afterward the troops were sent into that country, and the troops killed our people and ill-treated them, and thus war and trouble arose; but before the troops were sent there we were quiet and peaceable, and there was no disturbance. . . .

Colonel Fitzpatrick of the government said we must go to farm, and some of the people went to Fort Laramie and were badly treated. I only want to do that which is peaceful, and the Great Fathers know it, and also the Great Father who made us both. I came to Washington to see the Great Father [President] in order to have peace and in order to have peace continue. That is all we want, and that is the reason we are here now.

In 1868 men came out and brought papers. We are ignorant and do not read papers, and they did not tell us right what was in these papers. We wanted them to take away their forts, leave our country, not make war, and give our traders something. They said we had bound ourselves to trade on the Missouri, and we said, no, we did not want that. The interpreters deceived us. . . .

Look at me, I am poor and naked, but I am the Chief of the Nation. We do not want riches, we do not ask for riches, but we want our children properly trained and brought up. We look to you
for your sympathy. Our riches will . . . do us no good; we cannot take away into the other world anything we have—we want to have love and peace. . . . We would like to know why commissioners are sent out there to do nothing but rob [us] and get the riches of this world away from us.

And I am going to leave you today, and I am going back to my home. I want to tell the people that we cannot trust [President Grant’s] agents. I don’t want strange people that we know nothing about. . . . I don’t want any more such men sent out there, who are so poor that when they come out their first thoughts are how they can fill their own pockets. . . .

Speech by Red Cloud, reported in
*The New York Times*, July 17, 1870

**DOCUMENT B. CAUSES OF FARM PROTEST**

In the following selection, an Iowa journalist explained why bankers, trusts, and especially railroads became the target for farm protests in the 1880s and 1890s.

Nothing has done more to injure the [western] region than these freight rates. The railroads have retarded its growth as much as they first hastened it. The rates are often four times as large as eastern rates. . . . The extortionate character of the freight rates has been recognized by all parties, and all have pledged themselves to lower them, but no state west of the Missouri has been able to do so.

Railways have often acquired mines and other properties by placing such high freight rates upon their products that the owner was compelled to sell at the railroad companies’ own terms. These freight rates have been especially burdensome to the farmers, who are far from their selling and buying markets, thus robbing them in both directions.

Another fact which has incited the farmer against corporations is the bold and unblushing participation of the railways in politics. At every political convention their emissaries are present with blandishments and passes and other practical arguments to secure the nomination of their friends. The sessions of these legislatures are disgusting scenes of bribery and debauchery. There is not an attorney of prominence in western towns who does not carry passes [free tickets for unlimited trips] or has had the opportunity to do so. . . . By these means, the railroads have secured an iron grip upon legislatures and officers, while no redress has been given to the farmer.

The land question also is a source of righteous complaint. Much of the land of the West, instead of being held for actual settlers, has
been bought up by speculators and eastern syndicates in large tracts. They have done nothing to improve the land and have simply waited for the inevitable settler who bought a small “patch” and proceeded to cultivate it. While he had prospered so that he needed more land, he found that his own labor had increased tremendously the value of the adjacent land.

Closely connected with the land abuse are the money grievances. As his pecuniary condition grew more serious, the farmer could not make payments on his land. Or he found that, with ruling prices, he could not sell his produce at a profit. In either case he needed money, to make the payment or maintain himself until prices should rise. When he went to the moneylenders, these men, often dishonest usurers, told him the money was very scarce, that the rate of interest was rapidly rising, etc., so that in the end the farmer paid as much interest a month as the moneylender was paying a year for the same money. In this transaction, the farmer obtained his first glimpse of the idea of “the contraction of the currency at the hands of eastern money sharks.”

F. B. Tracy, *The Forum*, October 1893

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**DOCUMENT C. MAJORITY OPINION IN PLESSY V. FERGUSON**

By a vote of 7 to 1, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of a Louisiana statute providing for “equal but separate accommodations for the white and colored races” on railroads within the state. The Court’s decision rested on its interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment.

The object of the [Fourteenth] amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but, in the nature of things, it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political, equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either. Laws permitting, and even requiring, their separation, in places where they are liable to be brought into contact, do not necessarily imply the inferiority of either race to the other, and have been generally, if not universally, recognized as within the competency of the state legislatures in the exercise of their police power.

So far, then, as a conflict with the Fourteenth amendment is concerned, the case reduces itself to the question whether the statute
of Louisiana is a reasonable regulation, and with respect to this there must necessarily be a large discretion on the part of the legislature. In determining the question of reasonableness, it is at liberty to act with reference to the established usages, customs, and traditions of the people, and with a view to the promotion of their comfort, and the preservation of the public peace and good order.

We consider the underlying fallacy in the plaintiff’s argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it.

U.S. Supreme Court,

Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896

DOCUMENT D. DISSENTING OPINION IN PLESSY V. FERGUSON

The lone dissenter in Plessy v. Ferguson was a former slaveholder from Kentucky, Justice John Marshall Harlan. The following excerpt from his dissenting opinion was partly the basis for the Supreme Court decision in 1954 (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka) that would overturn Plessy.

It was said in argument that the statute of Louisiana does not discriminate against either race, but prescribes a rule applicable to white and colored citizens. But this argument does not meet the difficulty. Everyone knows that the statute in question had its origin in the purpose, not so much to exclude white persons from railroad cars occupied by blacks as to exclude colored people from coaches occupied by or assigned to white persons.

The fundamental objection, therefore, to the statute is that it interferes with personal freedom of citizens. . . . If a white man and a black man choose to occupy the same public conveyance on a public highway, it is their right to do so, and no government proceeding alone on grounds of race can prevent it without infringing the personal liberty of each. . . . Further, if this statute of Louisiana is consistent with the personal liberty of citizens, why may not the state require the separation in railroad coaches of native and naturalized citizens of the United States, or of Protestants and Catholics?

The white race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. And so it is, in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth, and in power. So, I doubt not, it will continue to be for all time, if it remains true to its great heritage and holds fast to the principles of constitutional liberty. But in the view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior,
dominant, ruling class of citizens. Our Constitution is color-blind and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens.

In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful. The law regards man as man and take no account of his surroundings or his color when his civil rights as guaranteed by the supreme law of the land are involved. It is therefore to be regretted that this high tribunal, the final expositor of the fundamental law of the land, has reached the conclusion that it is competent for a state to regulate the enjoyment by citizens of their civil right solely upon the basis of race.

John Marshall Harlan, dissenting opinion in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896

**ANALYZING THE DOCUMENTS**

1. What government abuses against his tribe does Red Cloud identify in his speech?

2. Some historians have argued that farmers did not understand the real causes of their economic problems. Contrast Tracy’s complaints with other possible causes of declining farm profits.

3. In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, why did the majority opinion conclude that Louisiana’s “separate but equal” statute was “a reasonable regulation”?

4. What did Justice Harlan find unreasonable about the “separate but equal” ruling?

5. Were the complaints of Native Americans, western farmers, and African Americans in the later 19th century that are expressed in these readings the result of too little or too much government action?
As we view the achievements of aggregated capital, we discover the existence of trusts, combinations and monopolies, while the citizen is struggling far in the rear or is trampled to death beneath an iron heel. Corporations, which should be the carefully restrained creatures of the law and servants of the people, are fast becoming the people’s masters.

President Grover Cleveland, 1888

By 1900, the United States had emerged as the leading industrial power in the world. Its manufacturing output exceeded that of its three largest rivals, Great Britain, France, and Germany. The rapid growth of the U.S. economy, averaging 4 percent a year, was the result of a combination of factors:

- The country was a treasure-house of natural resources, including raw materials essential to industrialization—coal, iron ore, copper, lead, timber, and oil.
- An abundant labor supply was, between 1865 and 1900, supplemented yearly by the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants.
- A growing population, combined with an advanced transportation network, made the United States the largest market in the world for industrial goods.
- Capital was plentiful, as Europeans with surplus wealth recognized a good investment and joined well-to-do Americans in funding the economic expansion.
- The development of laborsaving technologies increased productivity. Over 440,000 new patents were granted by the federal government from 1860 to 1890.
- Businesses benefited from friendly government policies that protected private property, subsidized railroads with land grants and loans, supported U.S. manufacturers with protective tariffs, and refrained
from either regulating business operations or heavily taxing corporate profits.

- Talented entrepreneurs emerged during this era who were able to build and manage vast industrial and commercial enterprises.

**The Business of Railroads**

The dynamic combination of business leadership, capital, technology, markets, labor, and government support is especially evident in the development of the nation’s first big business—railroads. After the Civil War, railroad mileage increased more than fivefold in a 35-year period (from 35,000 miles in 1865 to 193,000 in 1900).

More than any other technological innovation or industrial achievement of the 19th century, the development of a nationwide railroad network had the greatest impact on American economic life. Railroads created a market for goods that was national in scale, and by so doing encouraged mass production, mass consumption, and economic specialization. The resources used in railroad-building promoted the growth of other industries, especially coal and steel. Railroads also affected the routines of daily life. Soon after the American Railroad Association divided the country into four time zones in 1883, railroad time became standard time for all Americans. Finally, the most important innovations of the railroads may have been the creation of the modern stockholder corporation and the development of complex structures in finance, business management, and the regulation of competition.

**Eastern Trunk Lines**

In the early decades of railroading (1830–1860), the building of dozens of separate local lines had resulted in different gauges (distance between tracks) and incompatible equipment. These inefficiencies were reduced after the Civil War through the consolidation of competing railroads into integrated trunk lines. (A trunk line was the major route between large cities; smaller branch lines connected the trunk line with outlying towns.) “Commodore” Cornelius Vanderbilt used his millions earned from a steamboat business to merge local railroads into the New York Central Railroad (1867), which ran from New York City to Chicago and operated more than 4,500 miles of track. Other trunk lines, such as the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the Pennsylvania Railroad, connected eastern seaports with Chicago and other midwestern cities and set standards of excellence and efficiency for the rest of the industry.

**Western Railroads**

The great age of railroad-building coincided with the settlement of the last frontier. In fact, railroads themselves played a critical role in the trans-Mississippi West by (1) promoting settlement on the Great Plains
The Rise of Industrial America, 1865–1900

and (2) linking the West with the East and thereby creating one great national market.

**Federal land grants.** Recognizing that western railroads would lead the way to settlement, the federal government provided railroad companies with huge subsidies in the form of loans and land grants. Some 80 railroad companies received more than 170 million acres of public land, more than three times the acres given away under the Homestead Act. The land was given in alternate mile-square sections in a checkerboard pattern along the proposed route of the railroad. The government expected that the railroad would make every effort to sell the land to new settlers to finance construction. Furthermore, it was hoped that the completed railroad would both increase the value of government lands and provide preferred rates for carrying the mails and transporting troops.

There were also negative consequences to the subsidies. The land grants and cash loans (1) promoted hasty and poor construction and (2) led to widespread corruption in all levels of government. Insiders used construction companies, like the notorious Crédit Mobilier (see Chapter 15), to pocket huge profits, while bribing government officials and legislators. Protests against the land grants mounted in the 1880s when citizens discovered that the railroads controlled half of the land in some western states.

**Transcontinental railroads.** During the Civil War, Congress authorized land grants and loans for the building of the first transcontinental railroad to tie California to the rest of the Union. The task was divided between two newly incorporated railroad companies. The Union Pacific was to build westward across the Great Plains, starting from Omaha, Nebraska, while the Central Pacific took on the formidable challenge of laying track across mountain passes in the Sierras by pushing eastward from Sacramento, California. General Grenville Dodge directed construction of the Union Pacific using thousands of war veterans and Irish immigrants. Charles Crocker recruited 6,000 Chinese immigrants, who at enormous risk, blasted tunnels through the Sierras for the Central Pacific. Completing one of the great engineering feats of the 1800s, the two railroads came together on May 10, 1869, at Promontory Point, Utah, where a golden spike was ceremoniously driven into the ground to mark the linking of the Atlantic and the Pacific states.

Before 1900, four other transcontinental railroads were constructed across different sections of the West. Three of them were completed in the same year, 1883: the Southern Pacific, which tied New Orleans to Los Angeles; the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe, which carried passengers and freight between Kansas City and Los Angeles; and the Northern Pacific, which connected Duluth, Minnesota, with Seattle, Washington. A fourth transcontinental railroad also connecting St. Paul, Minnesota, and Seattle was completed in 1893. James Hill’s well-planned Great Northern was the only transcontinental railroad to be built without federal subsidies.
Competition and Consolidation

New technologies and industries tend to be overbuilt. Certainly this was the case with the railroads built in the 1870s and 1880s, many of which were unprofitable. In addition to overbuilding, the railroads frequently suffered from mismanagement and outright fraud. Speculators like Jay Gould went into the railroad business for quick profits and made their millions by selling off assets and watering stock (inflating the value of a corporation’s assets and profits before selling its stock to the public). In a ruthless scramble to survive, railroads competed by offering rebates (discounts) and kickbacks to favored shippers while charging exorbitant freight rates to smaller customers such as farmers. They also attempted to increase profits by forming pools, in which competing companies agreed secretly and informally to fix rates and share traffic.

A financial panic in 1893 forced a quarter of all railroads into bankruptcy. J. Pierpont Morgan and other bankers quickly moved in to take control of the
bankrupt railroads and consolidate them. With competition eliminated, they could stabilize rates and reduce debts. By 1900, seven giant systems controlled nearly two-thirds of the nation’s railroads. A positive result was a more efficient rail system. On the negative side, however, the system was controlled by a few powerful men like Morgan, who dominated the boards of competing railroad corporations through interlocking directorates (the same directors ran competing companies). In effect, they created regional railroad monopolies.

Railroads captured the imagination of late-19th century America, as the public, local communities, states, and the federal government invested in their development. At the same time, however, customers and small investors often felt that they were the victims of slick financial schemes and ruthless practices. Railroad moguls seemed to affirm this ruthlessness. William Vanderbilt, who had inherited his father Cornelius Vanderbilt’s transportation empire, reportedly responded to critics, “The public be damned.” Early attempts to regulate the railroads by law did little good. The Granger laws passed by midwestern states in the 1870s were overturned by the courts, and the federal Interstate Commerce Act of 1886 was at first ineffective (see Chapter 16). It was not until the Progressive era in the early 20th century that the Interstate Commerce Commission was given expanded powers to protect the public interest.

**Industrial Empires**

The late 19th century witnessed a major shift in the nature of industrial production. Early factories had concentrated on producing textiles, clothing, and leather products. After the Civil War, in what some scholars have termed a “second Industrial Revolution,” the growth was in heavy industry and the production of steel, petroleum, electric power, and the industrial machinery to produce other goods.

**The Steel Industry**

The technological breakthrough that launched the rise of heavy industry was the discovery of a new process for making large quantities of steel (a more durable metal than iron). In the 1850s, both Henry Bessemer in England and William Kelly in the United States discovered that blasting air through molten iron produced high-quality steel. The Great Lakes region, with its abundant coal reserves and access to the iron ore of Minnesota’s Mesabi Range, soon emerged as the leading steel producer.

**Andrew Carnegie.** Leadership of the fast-growing steel industry passed to a shrewd business genius, Andrew Carnegie, who in the 1850s had worked his way up from being a poor Scottish immigrant to becoming the superintendent of a Pennsylvania railroad. In the 1870s, he started manufacturing steel in Pittsburgh and soon outdistanced his competitors by a combination of salesmanship and the use of the latest technology. Carnegie employed a business strategy
known as vertical integration, by which a company would control every stage of the industrial process, from mining the raw materials to transporting the finished product. By 1900, Carnegie Steel had climbed to the top of the steel industry. It employed 20,000 workers and produced more steel than all the steel mills in Britain.

**U.S. Steel Corporation.** Deciding to retire from business to devote himself to philanthropy, Carnegie sold his company in 1900 for over $400 million to a new steel combination headed by J. P. Morgan. The new corporation, United States Steel, was the first billion-dollar company and also the largest enterprise in the world, employing 168,000 people and controlling over three-fifths of the nation’s steel business.

**The Oil Industry**

The first U.S. oil well was drilled by Edwin Drake in 1859 in Pennsylvania. Only four years later, in 1863, a youthful businessman, John D. Rockefeller, founded a company that would come to control most of the nation’s oil refineries by eliminating its competition.

**Rockefeller and the Standard Oil Trust.** Rockefeller took charge of the chaotic oil refinery business by applying the latest technologies and efficient practices. At the same time, as his company grew, he was able to extort rebates from railroad companies and temporarily cut prices for Standard Oil kerosene to force rival companies to sell out. By 1881 his company—now known as the Standard Oil Trust—controlled 90 percent of the oil refinery business. The trust that Rockefeller put together consisted of the various companies that he had acquired, all managed by a board of trustees that Rockefeller and Standard Oil controlled. Such a combination represented a horizontal integration of an industry, in which former competitors were brought under a single corporate umbrella. By controlling the supply and prices of oil products, Standard Oil’s profits soared and so did Rockefeller’s fortune, which at the time of his retirement amounted to $900 million. By eliminating waste in the production of kerosene, the Standard Oil monopoly was also able to keep prices low for consumers. Emulating Rockefeller’s success, dominant companies in other industries (sugar, tobacco, leather, meat) also organized trusts.

**Antitrust Movement**

The trusts came under widespread scrutiny and attack in the 1880s. Middle-class citizens feared the trusts’ unchecked power, and urban elites (old wealth) resented the increasing influence of the new rich. After failing to curb trusts on the state level, reformers finally moved Congress to pass the Sherman Antitrust Act in 1890, which prohibited any “contract, combination, in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy in restraint of trade or commerce.”
Although a federal law against monopolies was now on the books, it was too vaguely worded to stop the development of trusts in the 1890s. Furthermore, the Supreme Court in United States v. E. C. Knight Co. (1895) ruled that the Sherman Antitrust Act could be applied only to commerce, not to manufacturing. As a result, the U.S. Department of Justice secured few convictions until the law was strengthened during the Progressive era (see Chapter 21).

Laissez-Faire Capitalism

The idea of government regulation of business was alien to the prevailing economic, scientific, and religious beliefs of the late 19th century. The economic expression of these beliefs was summed up in the phrase “laissez-faire.”

Conservative Economic Theories

As early as 1776, the economist Adam Smith had argued in The Wealth of Nations that business should be regulated, not by government, but by the “invisible hand” (impersonal economic forces) of the law of supply and demand. This was the origin of the concept of laissez-faire. If government kept its hands off, so the theory went, businesses would be motivated by their own self-interest to offer improved goods and services at low prices. In the 19th century, American industrialists appealed to laissez-faire theory to justify their methods of doing business—even while they readily accepted the protection of high tariffs and federal subsidies. The rise of monopolistic trusts in the 1880s seemed to undercut the very competition needed for natural regulation. Even so, among conservatives and business leaders, laissez-faire theory was constantly invoked in legislative halls and lobbies to ward off any threat of government regulation.

Social Darwinism. Although it offended many, Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection in biology played a role in bolstering the views of economic conservatives. The English social philosopher Herbert Spencer was the most influential of the social Darwinists who thought that Darwin’s ideas of natural selection and survival of the fittest should be applied to the marketplace. Spencer concluded that the concentration of wealth in the hands of the “fit” was a benefit to the future of the human race. An American social Darwinist, Professor William Graham Sumner of Yale University, argued that help for the poor was misguided because it interfered with the laws of nature and would only weaken the evolution of the species by preserving the unfit.

Gospel of wealth. A number of Americans found religion more convincing than social Darwinism in justifying the wealth of successful industrialists and bankers. Because he diligently applied the Protestant work ethic (that hard work and material success are signs of God’s favor) to both his business and personal life, John D. Rockefeller concluded that “God gave me my riches.” In a popular lecture, “Acres of Diamonds,” the Reverend Russell Conwell
preached that everyone had a duty to become rich. Andrew Carnegie’s article “Wealth” argued that the wealthy had a God-given responsibility to carry out projects of civic philanthropy for the benefit of society. Practicing what he preached, Carnegie distributed over $350 million of his fortune to support the building of libraries, universities, and various public institutions.

Technology and Innovations

Vital to industrial progress were the inventions that led to greater productivity in the workplace and a larger variety of mass-produced goods in the home.

Inventions

The first radical change in the speed of communications was the invention of a workable telegraph by Samuel F. B. Morse, first successfully demonstrated in 1844. By the time of the Civil War, electronic communication by telegraph and rapid transportation by railroad were already becoming standard parts of modern living, especially in the northern states. After the war, Cyrus W. Field’s invention of an improved transatlantic cable in 1866 suddenly made it possible to send messages across the seas in an instant’s time. By 1900, cables linked all continents of the world in an electronic network of instantaneous, global communication. Another huge leap in communications technology was the invention of the telephone by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876.

Topping the list of hundreds of noteworthy inventions of the late 19th century were the typewriter (1867), the cash register (1879), the calculating machine (1887), and the adding machine (1888). Products for the consumer that were in widespread use by the end of the century were George Eastman’s Kodak camera (1888), Lewis E. Waterman’s fountain pen (1884), and King Gillette’s safety razor and blade (1895).

Edison and Westinghouse

Possibly the greatest inventor of the 19th century, Thomas Edison started out as young telegraph operator and patented his first invention (a machine for recording votes) in 1869. The success of his early inventions gave Edison the resources to establish in 1876 a laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey, for the purpose of inventing new technologies. This was the world’s first modern research laboratory. It may also have been Edison’s single most important contribution to science and industry, because it introduced the concept of mechanics and engineers working on a project as a team rather than as lone inventors. Out of Edison’s lab came more than a thousand patented inventions, including the phonograph, the incandescent lamp (the first practical electric lightbulb), the dynamo for generating electric power, the mimeograph machine, and the motion picture camera.
Another remarkable inventor, George Westinghouse, held more than 400 patents and was responsible for developing an air brake for railroads (1869) and a transformer for producing high-voltage alternating current (1885). The latter invention made possible the lighting of cities and the operation of electric streetcars, subways, and electrically powered machinery and appliances.

**Marketing Consumer Goods**

The increased output of U.S. factories as well as the invention of new consumer products created a need for businesses to find ways of selling their merchandise to a large public. R. H. Macy in New York and Marshall Field in Chicago made the large department store the place to shop in urban centers, while Frank Woolworth’s Five and Ten Cent Store brought nationwide chain stores to the towns and urban neighborhoods. Two large mail-order companies, Sears, Roebuck and Montgomery Ward, used the improved rail system to ship to rural customers everything from hats to houses ordered from their thick catalogs, which were known to millions of Americans as the “wish book.” Packaged foods under such brand names as Kellogg and Post became a common item in the kitchen pantries of American homes. Refrigerated railroad cars and canning enabled Gustavus Swift and other packers to change the eating habits of Americans with mass-produced meat and vegetable products. Advertising and new marketing techniques not only promoted a consumer economy but also created a consumer culture in which “going shopping” became a favorite pastime.

**Impact of Industrialization**

The growth of American industry raised the standard of living for most people, but it also created sharper economic and class divisions among the rich, the middle class, and the poor.

**The Concentration of Wealth**

By the 1890s, the richest 10 percent of the U.S. population controlled nine-tenths of the nation’s wealth. Industrialization created a new class of millionaires, most of whom flaunted their wealth by living in ostentatious mansions, sailing enormous yachts, and throwing lavish parties. The Vanderbilts graced the waterfront of Newport, Rhode Island, with summer homes that rivaled the villas of European royalty. Guests at one of their dinner parties were invited to hunt for their party favors by using small silver shovels to seek out the precious gems hidden in sand on long silver trays.

**Horatio Alger myth.** At first, Americans tended to ignore the widening gap between the rich and the poor by finding comfort in the highly publicized examples of “self-made men” in business (Andrew Carnegie, Thomas Edison, and others). They also thought there might be some truth in the popular novels
by Horatio Alger, Jr., which sold more than a million copies. Every Alger novel portrayed a young man of modest means who became rich and successful through honesty, hard work, and a little luck. In reality, opportunities for upward mobility (movement into a higher economic bracket) did exist, but the rags-to-riches career of an Andrew Carnegie was unusual. Statistical studies demonstrate that the typical wealthy businessperson of the day was a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant male who came from an upper- or middle-class background and whose father was in business or banking.

**The Expanding Middle Class**

The growth of large corporations introduced the need for thousands of white-collar workers (salaried workers whose jobs generally do not involve manual labor) to fill the highly organized administrative structures. Middle management was needed to coordinate the operations between the chief executives and the factories. In addition, industrialization helped expand the middle class by creating jobs for accountants, clerical workers, and salespersons. In turn, these middle-class employees increased the demand for services from other middle-class workers: professionals (doctors and lawyers), public employees, and storekeepers. The increase in the number of good-paying occupations after the Civil War significantly increased the income of the middle class.

**Wage Earners**

By 1900, two-thirds of all working Americans worked for wages, usually at jobs that required them to work ten hours a day, six days a week. Wages were determined by the laws of supply and demand, and because there was usually a large supply of immigrants competing for factory jobs, wages were barely above the level needed for bare subsistence. Low wages were justified by David Ricardo (1772–1823), whose famous “iron law of wages” argued that raising wages arbitrarily would only increase the working population, and the availability of more workers would in turn cause wages to fall, thus creating a cycle of misery and starvation. Real wages (income adjusted for inflation) rose steadily in the late 19th century, but even so most wage earners could not support a family decently on one income. Therefore, working-class families depended on the additional income of women and children. In 1890, 11 million of the 12.5 million families in the United States averaged less than $380 a year in income.

**Working Women**

One adult woman out of every five in 1900 was in the labor force working for wages. Most were young and single, since only 5 percent of all married women worked outside the home. In 1900, men and women alike believed that, if it was economically feasible, a woman’s proper role was in the home raising children. Factory work for women was often restricted to industries
that were perceived as an extension of the home: the textile, garment, and food-processing industries, for example. As the demand for clerical workers increased, women moved into formerly male occupations as secretaries, bookkeepers, typists, and telephone operators. Occupations or professions that became feminized (women becoming the majority) usually lost status and received lower wages and salaries.

**Labor Discontent**

Before the Industrial Revolution, workers had enjoyed a personal and relaxed workplace that valued an artisan’s skills. They often had a sense of accomplishment in creating a product from start to finish. Factory work was radically different, since it was highly structured and regulated to increase productivity. Industrial workers were assigned just one step in the manufacturing of a product, performing semiskilled tasks that were repetitive and monotonous. Both immigrants from abroad and migrants from rural America had to learn to work under the tyranny of the clock. In many industries, such as railroads and mining, working conditions were dangerous. Many workers were exposed to chemicals and pollutants that only later were discovered to cause chronic illness and early death.

The workplace was also unstable and highly mobile. Industrial workers changed jobs on the average of every three years. Absenteeism and quitting, not strikes and labor unions, were the most common forms of protest against intolerable working conditions. An estimated 20 percent of those who worked in factories for a period of time eventually dropped out of the industrial workplace rather than continuing. This was a far higher percentage than those who protested by joining labor unions.

**The Struggle of Organized Labor**

The late 19th century witnessed the most violent labor conflicts in the nation’s history. So common were the reports of striking workers battling police and state militia that many feared the country was heading toward open class warfare between capital and labor.

**Industrial Warfare**

With a surplus of cheap labor, management held most of the power in its struggles with organized labor. Strikers could easily be replaced by bringing in strikebreakers, or scabs—unemployed persons desperate for jobs. Employers also used all of the following tactics for defeating unions:

- **the lockout**: closing the factory to break a labor movement before it could get organized

- **blacklists**: names of pro-union workers circulated among employers
yellow-dog contracts: workers being told, as a condition for employment, that they must sign an agreement not to join a union
calling in private guards and state militia to put down strikes
obtaining court injunctions against strikes

Moreover, management fostered public fear of unions as anarchistic and un-American. Before 1900, it won most of its battles with organized labor because, if violence developed, employers could almost always count on the support of the federal and state governments.

Labor itself was often divided on the best methods for fighting management. Some union leaders advocated political action. Others favored direct confrontation: strikes, picketing, boycotts, and slowdowns to achieve union recognition and collective bargaining.

Great railroad strike of 1877. One of the worst outbreaks of labor violence in the century erupted in 1877, during an economic depression, when the railroad companies cut wages in order to reduce costs. A strike on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad quickly spread across 11 states and shut down two-thirds of the country’s rail trackage. Railroad workers were joined by an estimated 500,000 workers from other industries in an escalating strike that was quickly becoming national in scale. For the first time since the 1830s, a president (Rutherford B. Hayes) used federal troops to end labor violence. The strike and the violence finally ended, but not before more than a hundred people had been killed. After the strike, some employers addressed the workers’ grievances by improving wages and working conditions, while others took a hard line by busting workers’ organizations.

Attempts to Organize National Unions

Before the 1860s, unions had been organized as local associations of craft workers (a craft union of Philadelphia shoemakers, a craft union of New York printers, and so on).

National Labor Union. The first attempt to organize all workers in all states—both skilled and unskilled, both agricultural workers and industrial workers—was the National Labor Union. Founded in 1866, it had some 640,000 members by 1868. Besides championing the goals of higher wages and the eight-hour day, the first national union also had a broad social program: equal rights for women and blacks, monetary reform, and worker cooperatives. Its chief victory was winning the eight-hour day for workers employed by the federal government. It lost support, however, after a depression began in 1873 and after the unsuccessful strikes of 1877.

Knights of Labor. A second national labor union, the Knights of Labor, began in 1869 as a secret society in order to avoid detection by employers. Under the leadership of Terence V. Powderly, the union went public in 1881,
opening its membership to all workers, including African Americans and women. Powderly advocated a variety of reforms: (1) worker cooperatives “to make each man his own employer,” (2) abolition of child labor, and (3) abolition of trusts and monopolies. He favored settling labor disputes by means of arbitration rather than resorting to strikes. Because the Knights were loosely organized, however, he could not control local units that decided to strike.

The Knights of Labor grew rapidly in the early 1880s and attained a peak membership of 730,000 workers in 1886. It declined just as rapidly, however, after the violence of the Haymarket riot in Chicago in 1886 turned public opinion against the union.

**Haymarket bombing.** Chicago, with about 80,000 Knights in 1886, was the site of the first May Day labor movement. Also living in Chicago were about 200 anarchists who advocated the violent overthrow of all government. In response to the May Day movement calling for a general strike to achieve an eight-hour day, labor violence broke out at Chicago’s McCormick Harvester plant. On May 4, workers held a public meeting in Haymarket Square, and as police attempted to break up the meeting, someone threw a bomb, which killed seven police officers. The bomb thrower was never found. Even so, eight anarchist leaders were tried for the crime and seven were sentenced to death. Horrified by the bomb incident, many Americans concluded that the union movement was radical and violent. The Knights of Labor, as the most visible union at the time, lost popularity and membership.

**American Federation of Labor.** Unlike the idealistic, reform-minded Knights of Labor, the American Federation of Labor (AF of L) concentrated on attaining practical economic goals. Founded in 1886 as an association of 25 craft unions, the AF of L did not advocate a reform program to remake American society. Samuel Gompers, who led the union from 1886 to 1924, went after the basics of higher wages and improved working conditions. He directed his local unions of skilled workers to walk out until the employer agreed to negotiate a new contract through collective bargaining. By 1901, the AF of L was by far the nation’s largest union, with 1 million members. Even this union, however, would not achieve major successes until the early decades of the 20th century.

**Strikebreaking in the 1890s**

Two massive strikes in the last decade of the 19th century demonstrated both the growing discontent of labor and the continued power of management to prevail in industrial disputes.

**Homestead strike.** Henry Clay Frick, the manager of Andrew Carnegie’s Homestead Steel plant near Pittsburgh, precipitated a strike in 1892 by cutting wages by nearly 20 percent. Frick used the weapons of the lockout, private
guards, and strikebreakers to defeat the steelworkers’ walkout after five months. The failure of the Homestead strike set back the union movement in the steel industry until the New Deal in the 1930s.

**Pullman strike.** Even more alarming to conservatives was a strike of workers living in George Pullman’s model company town near Chicago. Pullman manufactured the famous railroad sleeping cars that bore his name (Pullman cars). In 1894, he announced a general cut in wages and fired the leaders of the workers’ delegation that came to bargain with him. The workers at Pullman laid down their tools and appealed for help from the American Railroad Union whose leader, Eugene V. Debs, directed railroad workers not to handle any trains with Pullman cars. The union’s boycott tied up rail transportation across the country.

Railroad owners supported Pullman by linking Pullman cars to mail trains. They then appealed to President Grover Cleveland, persuading him to use the army to keep the mail trains running. A federal court issued an injunction forbidding interference with the operation of the mails and ordering railroad workers to abandon the boycott and the strike. For failing to respond to this injunction, Debs and other union leaders were arrested and jailed. The jailing of Debs and others effectively ended the strike. In the case of *In re Debs* (1895), the Supreme Court approved the use of court injunctions against strikes, which gave employers a very powerful weapon to break unions. After serving a six-month jail sentence, Debs concluded that more radical solutions were needed to cure labor’s problems. He turned to socialism and the American Socialist party, which he helped to found in 1900.

By 1900, only 3 percent of American workers belonged to unions. Management held the upper hand in labor disputes, with government generally taking its side. However, some of the public were beginning to recognize the need for a better balance between the demands of employers and employees to avoid the numerous strikes and violence that characterized the late 19th century.

**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: INDUSTRIAL STATESMEN OR ROBBER BARONS?**

Middle-class Americans who enjoyed the benefits of increased industrial production, new consumer goods, and a higher standard of living generally admired the business leaders of the age, viewing them as great industrial statesmen. University professors gave intellectual respectability to this view by drawing upon social Darwinism to argue that business leaders’ success was due to their superior intelligence and fitness. Did they not, after all, make the United States the leading economic power in the world?

In the early 20th century, however, a growing number of citizens and historians questioned the methods used by business leaders to
build their industrial empires. Charles Beard and other Progressive historians called attention to the oppression of farmers and workers, the corruption of democratic institutions, and the plundering of the nation’s resources. Their critical view of 19th-century business leaders received support from historians of the 1930s (the Depression decade). Matthew Josephson, for example, popularized the view that John D. Rockefeller and others like him were robber barons, who took from American workers and small businesses to build personal fortunes. The robber barons were presented as ruthless exploiters who used unethical means to destroy competition, create monopolies, and corrupt the free enterprise system. Any positive contributions that might have been made were merely unplanned by-products of the industrialists’ ruthlessness and greed.

The prevailing wisdom of the 1930s shifted in the 1950s, as Allan Nevins urged other historians to right the injustice done to “our business history and our industrial leaders.” Nevins and other revisionists argued that the mass production that helped win two world wars and that made the United States an economic superpower far outweighed in significance any self-serving actions by business leaders.

Another approach to the era was taken by historians who analyzed statistical data in an effort to judge the contributions of industrialists and big business. They asked: Were big corporations essential for the economic development of the United States? Did monopolies such as the Standard Oil Trust advance or retard the growth of the U.S. economy? Robert Fogel, for example, used statistical data to prove his startling thesis that railroads were not indispensable to the economic growth of the era. Despite these studies, critics of big business and the robber barons maintain that, in the final analysis, the quantity of economic growth was less important than the quality of life for the average American.

### KEY NAMES, EVENTS, AND TERMS

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### MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. During the railroad expansion from 1860 to 1900, all of the following were true EXCEPT
   - (A) Numerous short lines were consolidated into trunk lines.
   - (B) Four transcontinental lines were built with government help.
   - (C) Technical innovations made railroads the most popular form of transportation.
   - (D) No laws were passed to regulate the railroads.
   - (E) The building of railroads was used by speculators for quick profit.

2. In the 19th century, railroads formed pools in order to
   - (A) share equipment and terminals for greater efficiency
   - (B) fix prices and divide business for greater profit
   - (C) inflate the value of assets and profits before selling the stock
   - (D) better serve farmers in remote rural areas
   - (E) increase competition by dividing up large companies into smaller ones

3. Which of the following was NOT considered a proper function of government in the late 19th century?
   - (A) protection of private property with state or federal troops
   - (B) distribution of public lands to private corporations
   - (C) protection of American industry against foreign competition
   - (D) use of court injunctions to stop workers’ strikes
   - (E) protection of workers from unfair labor practices

4. The U.S. economy in the late 19th century was characterized by all of the following EXCEPT
   - (A) consolidation of businesses into trusts
   - (B) technological innovations
   - (C) acceptance of unions and collective bargaining
(D) growing concentration of wealth
(E) control of industries by bankers

5. The decisions of the Supreme Court in the late 19th century most often
(A) favored corporations
(B) favored labor unions
(C) avoided cases involving labor disputes
(D) protected consumers
(E) supported government regulation of business

6. Social Darwinists would most likely support which of the following?
(A) enforcement of the Sherman Antitrust Act
(B) relief for the unemployed
(C) nonregulation of business
(D) guarantee of a living wage for workers
(E) subsidies for farmers

7. The concept of the gospel of wealth is reflected in all of the following statements EXCEPT
(A) Each man had a duty to become rich.
(B) Money should be distributed to the poor and the homeless.
(C) The wealthy had a responsibility to use their wealth for the good of society.
(D) Wealth was God’s reward for a life of virtue and hard work.
(E) Philanthropy should support educational, health, and religious institutions.

8. Which of the following accurately describes a trend in American society in the 1880s and 1890s?
(A) The middle class declined in numbers and influence.
(B) The percentage of women in the labor force decreased.
(C) Most married women worked to support their families.
(D) The workplace became more tightly organized and structured.
(E) The wealthy avoided signs of self-indulgence.

9. The most effective and enduring labor union in the post-Civil War era
(A) championed worker cooperatives
(B) supported a broad program of social reforms
(C) adopted socialist and anarchist ideas about government
(D) accepted both skilled and unskilled workers as members
(E) focused on such goals as higher wages and shorter hours for skilled workers

10. Which of the following was NOT true of the American labor movement in the late 19th century?
(A) Labor’s rights were protected by laws of Congress.
(B) A number of major strikes were defeated by business and government.
(C) Some unions tried to organize both skilled and unskilled workers.
(D) Middle-class Americans often concluded that unions were radical and violent.
(E) Immigrants were often used as strikebreakers.