

1 Roosevelt and Progressivism

MAIN IDEA

Reformers tried to solve the problems of the cities. They gained a champion in Theodore Roosevelt.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Many of the reforms of the Progressive Era have had an effect on life in America today.

TERMS & NAMES

progressivism
muckrakers
direct primary
initiative
referendum
recall
Sherman Antitrust Act
Theodore Roosevelt

ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

Newspaper journalist Nellie Bly worked for *The New York World*. In 1887, Bly wanted to investigate the Women's Lunatic Asylum in New York City. An asylum is a place where people with mental illness can get help. She faked mental illness and fooled doctors so that she could become a patient there. After spending ten days in the asylum, Bly wrote a newspaper article about what she had witnessed. She described being forced to take ice cold baths.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

My teeth chattered and my limbs were goose-fleshed and blue with cold. Suddenly I got, one after the other, three buckets of water over my head—ice-cold water, too—into my eyes, my ears, my nose and my mouth.

Nellie Bly, quoted in *Nellie Bly: Daredevil, Reporter, Feminist*

She reported that nurses choked and beat patients. Shortly after Bly's stories appeared, conditions at the asylum improved.

Bly also wrote about poor conditions in slums, factories, prisons, and nursing homes. Like other reformers, she wanted to correct the wrongs in American society. All of these reformers made up the Progressive movement around the turn of the century.



Nellie Bly

The Rise of Progressivism

As you saw in Chapter 7, the rapid growth of cities and industries in the United States at the turn of the century brought many problems. Among them were poverty, the spread of slums, and poor conditions in factories. A depression in the 1890s made problems worse. In addition, corrupt political machines had won control of many city and state governments. Big corporations had gained power over the economy and government.

To attack these problems, individuals organized a number of reform movements. These reformers believed in the basic goodness of people. They also believed in democracy. The reformers were mostly native born and middle-class. They could be found in either political party. Their reform movements came to be grouped under the label **progressivism**.

Now and then

BIG BUSINESS AND COMPETITION

In the late 1800s, John D. Rockefeller made a fortune as he gained control of most of the nation's oil refineries, oil fields, and pipelines. In 1906, the government filed an anti-trust suit against Rockefeller's Standard Oil. This resulted in its breakup in 1911. The cartoon below shows Standard Oil as an octopus.

In the 1990s, Bill Gates became the richest man in the world as he built Seattle-based Microsoft into a computer software giant. In 1998, the government filed an antitrust suit against Microsoft. It charged the company with using illegal tactics to gain a monopoly with its computer operating system and Web browser.



About 1900, a new group of writers began to expose corruption in American society. They were called **muckrakers**. The muckrakers created a public demand for reform. Muckraker Ida Tarbell, for example, accused Standard Oil of using unfair tactics to force small companies out of business.

The progressive reformers shared at least one of three basic goals: first, to reform government and expand democracy; second, to promote social welfare; third, to create economic reform.

Reforming Government and Expanding Democracy

In the 1870s and 1880s, elected officials often handed out government jobs and contracts. In return, they won political support. This practice was called patronage. It became a hot political issue during the presidencies of Rutherford B. Hayes, James Garfield, and Chester Arthur. Finally, Congress passed the Pendleton Civil Service Act in 1883. This law required people to take civil service exams for certain government jobs. It also prevented elected officials from firing civil service workers for political reasons.

In the 1890s and early 1900s, progressive leaders in a number of states sought to expand democracy. They wanted to give voters more control over their government. In 1903, under progressive governor Robert M. La Follette, Wisconsin became the first state to establish a direct primary. In a **direct primary**, voters, rather than party conventions, choose candidates to run for public office.

In Oregon, newspaper editor William S. U'Ren promoted three reforms besides the direct primary.

1. **Initiative**—This reform allowed voters to propose a law directly.
2. **Referendum**—In this reform, a proposed law was submitted to the vote of the people.
3. **Recall**—This reform allowed people to vote an official out of office.

In the years that followed, many other states adopted one or more of these progressive reforms.

Promoting Social Welfare

This goal addressed such problems as poverty, unemployment, and poor working conditions. You read about the social gospel and settlement house movements in Chapter 7. Leaders in these movements promoted many social-welfare reforms. For example, Jane Addams provided social services

ReadingHistory

A. Finding Main Ideas What was the main goal behind the progressive reforms of government?

to the poor at Hull House. She also worked to help the unemployed. Florence Kelley, also from Hull House, pushed for minimum wage laws and limits on women's working hours.

Another group of reformers who wanted to improve social welfare were the prohibitionists. They worked to prevent alcohol from ruining people's lives. The prohibitionists built on the temperance movement of the 1800s.



This photograph shows an immigrant family in a crowded tenement at the turn of the century.

Creating Economic Reform

The third progressive goal was to create economic reform. This meant limiting the power of big business and regulating its activities. By the late 1800s, business leaders in some major industries had formed trusts. These were combinations of businesses. The business firms in a trust worked together to cut prices and squeeze out competitors. Then the trust would raise prices and make larger profits.

The **Sherman Antitrust Act** of 1890 made it illegal for corporations to gain control of industries by forming trusts. However, the government did not enforce the law at first. Enforcement required a strong president.

Roosevelt and the Square Deal

Theodore Roosevelt—the first progressive president—provided this strength and leadership. He came to the presidency by accident, however. In 1898, Roosevelt won fame fighting in the Spanish-American War in Cuba. He returned from Cuba a war hero and was elected governor of New York. In 1900, Roosevelt ran on the Republican ticket as President McKinley's vice president.

Then an assassin shot McKinley, just six months after his inauguration. Roosevelt became president when McKinley died on September 14, 1901. At age 42, Roosevelt was the youngest person ever to become president. He brought his boundless energy to the office. The president often joined his six children in playing in the White House. Americans admired Roosevelt's zest for living. He gained the public's support for reform.

Roosevelt began his reforms with an effort to break up the corporate trusts. He thought industries should be regulated for the public interest.

"I believe in a square deal."

Theodore Roosevelt

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

When I say I believe in a square deal I do not mean, and nobody who speaks the truth can mean, that he believes it possible to give every man the best hand. If the cards do not come to any man, or if they do come, and he has not got the power to play them, that is his affair. All I mean is that there shall not be any crookedness in the dealing.

Theodore Roosevelt, speech on April 5, 1905

Roosevelt saw government as an umpire. Its purpose was to ensure fairness, or a "square deal," for workers, consumers, and big business.

ReadingHistory

B. Summarizing

How did progressives pursue their three basic goals?

To root out “crookedness,” Roosevelt used the Sherman Antitrust Act. Since its passage in 1890, many corporations had ignored the law, which was intended to regulate the trusts. No one had enforced it—no one, that is, until Roosevelt became president in 1901.

At the end of 1901, the nation’s railroads were run by a handful of companies. The power of railroads continued to grow. It was not surprising, therefore, that one of Roosevelt’s first targets was the railroads. He used the Sherman Antitrust Act to bust up a railroad trust.

Roosevelt was not against big business as such. However, he opposed any trust he thought worked against the national interest. In addition to the railroad trust, Roosevelt broke up the Standard Oil Company and a tobacco trust. In all, the government filed suit against 44 corporations during Roosevelt’s presidency.

ReadingHistory

C. Making

Inferences How do you think big business leaders regarded President Roosevelt? Why?

Roosevelt Leads Progressive Reforms

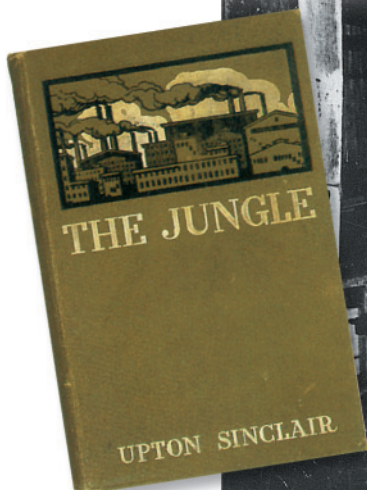
As president, Roosevelt had a great deal of power to push progressive ideas. To make such ideas into law, however, he needed help. Roosevelt got it as voters began pressuring their senators and representatives. As a result, Congress passed laws that helped change American society.

Roosevelt acted to regulate the meat-packing industry after reading Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*. The novel describes a packing plant in which dead rats end up in the sausage. Sinclair focused attention on the poor sanitary conditions under which the meat-packers worked. “I aimed at the public’s heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach,” he noted.

Roosevelt launched an investigation of the meat-packing industry. In 1906, he signed the Meat Inspection Act. This act created a government meat inspection program. Roosevelt also signed the Pure Food and Drug Act. This law banned the sale of impure foods and medicines.

While Roosevelt tried to win a square deal for most Americans, he did not push for civil rights for African Americans. He believed that discrimination was morally wrong. However, he did not take the political risk of leading a fight for civil rights.

Shown at the left is the cover of Upton Sinclair’s novel, *The Jungle*. The photograph shows immigrant workers stuffing sausages in a Chicago meat-packing house.



Conservation

Roosevelt was a strong crusader for conservation—controlling how America’s natural resources were used. As an outdoorsman and hunter, he had observed the gradual loss of natural resources. He camped with naturalist John Muir for four days in Yosemite, California. Because he loved the Yosemite Valley so much, he set out to preserve Yosemite and other areas for people’s “children and their children’s children.”

Roosevelt preserved more than 200 million acres of public lands. He established the nation’s first wildlife refuge at Pelican Island, Florida. He doubled the number of national parks in the United States. At one point, Congress refused to establish any more national parks. Roosevelt used the Antiquities Act to create national monuments instead. In this way, he preserved the Grand Canyon and the Petrified Forest in Arizona. Roosevelt spoke of the glories of the Grand Canyon while visiting the site in 1903.

ReadingHistory

D. Finding Main Ideas Why did President Roosevelt bypass Congress?

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Leave it as it is. You cannot improve on it. The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it.

Theodore Roosevelt, quoted in *Yellowstone*

Both the Grand Canyon and the Petrified Forest have since become national parks. America’s next president, William Howard Taft, was not as interested in conservation. However, he did continue Roosevelt’s progressive reforms, as you will read in the next section.

AMERICA’S HISTORY MAKERS



THEODORE ROOSEVELT
1858–1919

From his youth on, Theodore Roosevelt lived what he called the “strenuous life.” He rode horses, hiked, boxed, wrestled, and played tennis. In winter, he swam in the icy Potomac River. He hunted rhinoceros in Africa, harpooned devilfish in Florida, and boated down the Amazon.

Americans loved reading of his exploits and affectionately referred to him as “Teddy” or “T.R.” Once, on a hunting trip, he refused to shoot a bear cub. News of the event resulted in a new toy—the teddy bear.

How did Roosevelt’s active style of living carry over into his presidency?

Section 1 Assessment

1. Terms & Names

Explain the significance of:

- progressivism
- muckrakers
- direct primary
- initiative
- referendum
- recall
- Sherman Antitrust Act
- Theodore Roosevelt

2. Taking Notes

Use a chart to list examples of progressive reforms.

Goals	Reforms
To expand democracy	
To protect social welfare	
To create economic reform	

Which reform was most important? Explain.

3. Main Ideas

- What kinds of problems did progressives attempt to solve?
- What did President Roosevelt mean by a “square deal,” and how did he try to achieve it?
- What were Roosevelt’s achievements in the field of conservation?

4. Critical Thinking

Recognizing Effects In what ways do the reforms that President Roosevelt promoted affect your life today?

THINK ABOUT

- the quality of the food you eat
- natural resources that have been preserved

ACTIVITY OPTIONS

ART GEOGRAPHY

Do research on one of the natural areas that President Roosevelt preserved. Create a **travel brochure** or an illustrated **map** of the area.