

## The Gilded Age Video



The age we refer to as the Gilded Age began in the early 1870s as the country was still recovering from the bloody horrors of the Civil War. It lasted until the end of the century when the reform movements we know as the Progressive Era took hold. The impact of the Gilded Age on American society, culture, and industry should not be underestimated. It was during the last three decades of the nineteenth century that modern America was born. The growth of American industry, the development of a national economy, the conquest of the last remaining Native-American territory, and the rise of large corporations all occurred during this time. By the end of the Gilded Age the United States

had become an industrial behemoth, though not everyone benefitted equally from these developments. To understand the twentieth century, we must begin by looking at the Gilded Age.

Before you watch the video consider the following questions and use them to guide you as you watch.

1. Why was the term “gilded” applied to the era?
2. Make note of the major changes that occurred during the era
3. What was the primary use of oil before the appearance of motor cars?
4. Why was steel such an important commodity?

### **The Railroad**

5. The most important industry was the railroad. Take note of how the railroads completely changed the country.
6. How did railroads impact the farming sector? Consider specialization and the high cost of shipping.

### **Urbanization**

7. How did factories during this age change how people worked and lived?
8. Who were the new unskilled laborers? How did the factories fill their need for such workers? Consider the role of immigration.

9. Note population changes in major cities – what was the trend?
10. What changes could be observed in the kinds of buildings being built in urban areas?
11. Why were immigrants courted by politicians?

### **African Americans in the Gilded Age**

12. What were the political fortunes of African Americans in the period?
13. How did white political leaders disenfranchise African Americans in the South?
14. What impact did Jim Crow laws have on African Americans?
15. Note the importance of the Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896.

### **The Conquest of the West**

16. What were the challenges faced by Native-Americans in the West?
17. What role did the slaughter of the Buffalo herds have on the Native-American population?
18. What was the result of Native-American armed insurrections? Why do you think these failed?
19. Make note of the events at Wounded Knee. What turning point did the massacre symbolize for the Native-American population?

### **The Victorians**

20. Make note of the cultural hallmarks of the “Victorian Age.”
21. What do these tell us about the culture and outlook of Americans of the time?
22. Note the rise of organized, professional sports, and other forms of entertainment. What aspects of the Gilded Age made this development possible? (Hint: consider urbanization)
23. Why do you think the “rags to riches” stories of Horatio Alger appealed to Americans of this age?

### **Seeking Reform**

24. What was the status of the women during this age?

25. What role did settlement houses play for immigrants?
26. What was the basis for the opposition many Americans had to immigration at this time?
27. What were some of the concerns of labor during this time? How did employers respond?
28. Note the impact of the Panic of 1893. What does this tell us about the economy of the Gilded Age?
29. How did the Homestead and the Pullman strikes (1892 and 1894) demonstrate the weaknesses of the labor movement in the Gilded Age?
30. How do you explain the typical government sympathy for management in labor disputes?
31. Why were business leaders viewed as Robber Barons?
32. What was the significance of the Interstate Commerce Act 1887 and the Sherman Anti-Trust Act 1890?

### **Gilded Politics**

33. What was the level of political interest in the Gilded Age?
34. Who were the typical supporters of the Republican Party?
35. Who were the typical supporters of the Democratic Party?
36. What policies did the Republican Party support?
37. What policies did the Democratic Party support?
38. What impact did political corruption have on the Gilded Age?

### **The Birth of the Populist Party**

39. What role did the Panic of 1873 have on the growing political unrest amongst farmers?
40. What were the policies supported by farm groups at this time?
41. What caused the dissolution of the Populist Party?

**The American Empire**

- 42. What factors led American leaders to support overseas expansion?
- 43. How did the Spanish-American War of 1898 alter the United States?

**Innovations of the Gilded Age**

- 44. Why do you think the Gilded Age heralded so many important innovations?
- 45. How did some of these innovations fundamentally alter the way Americans lived their lives?

**Legacies of the Gilded Age**

- 46. What does the film identify as some of the most important legacies of the Gilded Age?

Key Figures

**John D. Rockefeller**

**Ulysses S. Grant**

**Theodore Roosevelt**

**Andrew Carnegie**

**Rutherford B. Hayes**

**Thomas Edison**

**William “Boss” Tweed**

**William McKinley**

**Alexander Graham Bell**

**Hiram Revels**

**James Garfield**

**Jane Addams**

**William Jennings Bryan**