

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. What was the primary use of oil before the appearance of motor cars?
3. Why was steel such an important commodity?

The Railroad

4. Why was the most important industry the railroad?

Urbanization

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

African Americans in the Gilded Age

7. What were the political fortunes of African Americans in the period?

8. What impact did Jim Crow laws have on African Americans?
9. Note the importance of the Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896.

The Conquest of the West

10. What were the challenges faced by Native-Americans in the West?

The Victorians

11. Make note of the cultural hallmarks of the “Victorian Age.” What do these tell us about the culture and outlook of Americans of the time?
12. Why do you think the “rags to riches” stories of Horatio Alger appealed to Americans of this age?

Seeking Reform

13. What was the status of women during this age?
14. What was the basis for the opposition many Americans had to immigration at this time?
15. What were some of the concerns of labor during this time? How did employers respond?
16. Note the impact of the Panic of 1893. What does this tell us about the economy of the Gilded Age?
17. Why were business leaders viewed as Robber Barons?

Gilded Age Politics

18. Who were the typical supporters of the Republican Party?
19. Who were the typical supporters of the Democratic Party?
20. What impact did political corruption have on the Gilded Age?

The Birth of the Populist Party

- 21. What were the policies supported by farm groups at this time?
- 22. What caused the dissolution of the Populist Party?

The American Empire

- 23. What factors led American leaders to support overseas expansion?

Innovations of the Gilded Age

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

Legacies of the Gilded Age

- 26. 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