Industrialization, immigration, & urban expansion were part of the dramatic growth that the U.S. experienced during the last quarter of the 19th century. Accompanying this growth were both old & new concerns and problems about the lives of many Americans. By the turn of the century, a reform movement had developed that included a wide range of groups and individuals with a common desire to improve life in the industrial age. Their ideas and work became known as progressivism, because they wanted to build on the existing society, making moderate political changes and social improvements through government action. Most Progressives were not revolutionaries but shared the goals of limiting the power of big business, improving democracy for the people, and strengthening social justice. During the next week, we will examine the origins, efforts, and accomplishments of the Progressive era. The Progressives did not cure all of America's problems, but they improved the quality of life, provided a larger role for the people in their democracy, and established a precedent for a more active role for the federal government.

ORIGINS OF PROGRESSIVISM
- Although the Progressive movement had its origins in the state reform of the early 1890s, it acquired national momentum only with the dawn of a new century & the unexpected swearing into office of a young president, Theodore Roosevelt, in 1901
- Middle-class Americans felt the need to adjust to changing times & their reformist impulse gave a name to an era: the Progressive era
- It lasted through the Republican presidencies of Teddy Roosevelt & William Taft & the first term of the Democrat, Woodrow Wilson
- U.S. entry into WWI in 1917 diverted public attention away from domestic issues & brought the era to an end, but not before major regulatory laws had been enacted by Congress and various state legislatures

ATTITUDES AND MOTIVES
- Entering a new century, most Americans were well aware of how their country was rapidly changing
- A once relatively rural society of independent farmers was becoming an industrialized nation of mixed ethnicity centered in growing cities
- For decades, middle-class Americans had been alarmed by the rising power of big business, the increasing gap between rich and poor, the violent conflict between labor and capital, and the dominance of corrupt political machines in the cities
- Most disturbing to minorities were the racist, Jim Crow laws in the South that made African Americans to the status of second-class citizens
- Crusaders for women's suffrage added their voices to the call for political reform and greater democracy
- Groups participating in the Progressive movement included Protestant church leaders who championed one set of reforms, African Americans proposing other reforms, union leaders seeking public support for their goals, & feminists lobbying their state legislatures for votes for women
- Progressives believed that changes in society were badly needed and that gov't was the proper agency for correcting social & economic ills

WHO WERE THE PROGRESSIVES?
- Unlike the Populists of the 1890s, whose strength came from rural America, the Progressives were mainly middle-class citizens of cities
- The urban middle class had steadily grown in the final decades of the 19th century...In addition to doctors, lawyers, ministers, & storekeepers, there were not thousands of white-collar office workers & middle managers employed in banks, manufacturing firms, & other businesses
- Members of this business and professional middle class took their civic responsibility seriously as they were disturbed about what might happen to American democracy from such conditions as unrest among the poor, excesses of the rich, gov't corruption, & a decline in morality
- A missionary spirit inspired certain aspects of middle-class progressivism as protestant churches taught social responsibility, which included caring for the poor & insisting on honesty in public life
- The Social Gospel popularized by Walter Rauschenbusch was an important element in Protestant Christians' response to urban poverty
- Without strong leadership, the diverse forces of reform could not have overcome conservatives' resistance to change
- Fortunately for the Progressives, many dedicated & able leaders entered politics at the turn of the century to challenge the status quo
- Theodore Roosevelt & Robert La Follette in the Republican Party & William Jennings Bryan & Woodrow Wilson in the Democratic Party demonstrated leadership that had been lacking from national politics during the Gilded Age

WHAT WAS THE PROGRESSIVES' PHILOSOPHY?
- Historians see progressivism as a phase in a reform tradition starting in the Jeffersonians (early 1800s), Jacksonians (1830s), & Populists 1890s
- The Progressives were committed to democratic values & believed that honest gov't & just laws could improve the human condition
- A revolution in thinking occurred at the same time as the Industrial Revolution

Charles Darwin, in his Origin of Species, presented the concept of evolution, which had an impact beyond justifying accumulation of wealth. The way people thought and reasoned was challenged, & the philosophy of transcendentalism gave way to a balanced pragmatism. In the early 20th century, William James and John Dewey were two leading American advocates of this new philosophy. They defined “truth” in a way that many Progressives found appealing. James & Dewey argued that the “good” & the “true” could not be known in the abstract as fixed and changeless ideals. Rather, they said, people should take a pragmatic, or practical, approach to morals, ideals, and knowledge. They should experiment with ideas and laws and test them in action until they found something that seemed to work well for the better ordering of society. Progressive thinkers adopted the new philosophy of pragmatism because it enabled them to challenge fixed notions that stood in the way of reform. For example, they rejected laissez-faire theory as impractical. The old standard of rugged individualism no longer seemed viable in a modern society dominated by impersonal corporations.

SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT
- Another idea that gained acceptance among Progressive came from the practical studies of Frederick Taylor...By using a stopwatch to time the output of factory workers, Taylor discovered ways of organizing people in the most efficient manner-the scientific management system
- Many Progressive believed that gov't too could be made more efficient if placed in the hands of experts & scientific managers
- Progressives objected to the corruption of political bosses because it was anti-democratic & because it was an inefficient way to run things
THE MUCKRAKERS

- Before the public could be roused to action, it first had to be well informed about the dirty realities of party politics & the scandalous condition in factories and slums
- Newspaper & magazine publishers found that their middle-class readers loved to read about underhanded schemes in politics
- Therefore, in-depth, investigative stories came to characterize much of the journalistic reporting of the era
- Writers specializing in such stories were referred to as muckrakers by President Theodore Roosevelt

ORIGINS

- One of the earliest muckrakers was Chicago reporter Henry Lloyd, who in 1881 wrote articles for the Atlantic Monthly attacking the practices of the Standard Oil Company and the railroads
- Published in book form in 1894, Lloyd's Wealth Against Commonwealth fully exposed the corruption and greed of the oil monopoly but failed to suggest how to control it

MAGAZINES

- Combined careful research with sensationalism, these articles set a standard for the deluge of muckraking that followed
- Popular 10-and 15-cent magazines such as McClure's, Collier's, and Cosmopolitan competed fiercely to outdo their rivals with shocking exposes of political and economic corruption

BOOKS

- The most popular series of muckraking articles were usually collected and publishes best-selling books
- Articles no tenement life by Jacob Riis, one of the first photojournalist, were published as "How the Other Half Lives" (1890)
- Lincoln Steffens’ "The Shame of the Cities" (1904) also caused a sensation by describing in detail the corrupt deals that characterized big-city politics from Philadelphia to Minneapolis
- Many of the muckraking books were novels
- Two of Theodore Dreiser's novels, The Financier and The Titan, were portrayed the ruthlessness of an industrialist
- Fictional accounts such as Frank Norris' "The Octopus" (on the tyrannical power of railroad companies) were more effective than many journalistic accounts in stirring up public demands for gov't regulation

DECLINE OF MUCKRAKING

- The popularity of muckraking books and magazine articles began to decline after 1910 for several reasons
  1. Writers found it more difficult to top the sensationalism of the last story
  2. Publishers were expanding & faced economic pressures from banks & advertisers to tone down their treatment of business
  3. By 1910, corporations were becoming more aware of their public image & developing the field of public relations
- Nevertheless, muckraking had a lasting effect on the Progressive era as it exposed inequities, educated the public about corruption in high places, and prepared the way for corrective action