The “Gilded Age” of America: Built on the Backs of the Poor

Industry and Labor
- Consequences of the Industrial Revolution on Labor and Working Conditions:
  - Alienation
  - People = Cogs of the Machines
  - Job Insecurity
  - Children’s Labor =
    - Physical Danger and Health Defects
    - Wages —
    - Hours —
  - Solution?

Rising Power of Corporate America
- Huge Industrial Growth, 1870-1900
- “The Man who dies rich, dies disgraced.”
Rising Power of Corporate America

- "Robber Barons" (Cont’d)

- dominate market
- multiple markets dominated by single company (keeps it legal)

- Govt./Supreme Court
- Govt. corruption ($) 
- corporations have inalienable rights too

- Free-market capitalism, no gov't. involvement

- Results? — workers suffer
- "Let us remember that there is not a single person poor in the U.S. who is not poor by his own shortcomings." (Russell Conwell)

- Based on
  - Survival of the fittest in society
  - Justifies monopolies & Laissez-faire
The Workers' Response

- History = (poor always lose)
  - Owners of the means of production (wealthy)
  - Working class
  - World-wide working class revolution will bring Communism
- Labor & the state run the means of production; benefits the whole
  - "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." (Marx)

American Workers' Response:
- Industrial Workers of the World ("Wobblies")
- State/govt. = unnecessary, harmful, undesirable
- Why would workers in the 19th C favor these kinds of ideas?
- Reasons against American Socialism:

Lives of the Laboring Classes

- Tenement Housing
  - Disease, stench, no sanitation
  - "Perfume, anyone?"
  - Pollution — Hull House Movement

The Gilded Age on Trial

The Defendants

Andrew Carnegie
J. P. Morgan
William "Boss" Tweed
John D. Rockefeller
The Gilded Age on Trial

The Charges

1. Unethical business/political practices
2. Infringing upon the rights of others in order to selfishly build personal wealth and/or political power
3. Showing disregard for the rights of the working class
4. Establishing monopolies that eliminate competition in the marketplace
5. Using graft and corrupt practices to build personal wealth and power

The Gilded Age on Trial

Defense Character Witnesses

Herbert Spencer
Henry Clay Frick (Carnegie)

The Gilded Age on Trial

Accusing Witnesses (Prosecution)

Eugene V. Debs — Carnegie
Homestead Striker and Union Leader — Carnegie
Arsene Pujo — Morgan
Ida Tarbell — Rockefeller
Lincoln Steffens — Tweed