America in the Progressive Era
Progressivism was a broad program of reforms that involved almost every facet of American life and touched most classes of people.

Early attempts at reform were made by journalists (muckrakers), politicians, and individual citizens to reform American society.

Muckrakers were journalists who hoped that if they revealed the problems of society through exposé articles, then American voters would use the ballot box to change society for the better after corruption had been exposed.
The first to strike was Lincoln Steffens. In 1902, he published an article in McClure's magazine called "Tweed Days in St. Louis." Steffens exposed how city officials worked in league with big business to maintain power while corrupting the public treasury.

More and more articles followed, and soon Steffens published the collection as a book entitled The Shame of the Cities. Soon public outcry demanded reform of city government and gave strength to the progressive ideas of a city commission or city manager system.
Ida Tarbell struck next. One month after Lincoln Steffens launched his assault on urban politics, Tarbell began her McClure's series entitled "History of the Standard Oil Company." She outlined and documented the cutthroat business practices behind John Rockefeller's meteoric rise. Tarbell's motives may also have been personal: her own father had been driven out of business by Rockefeller.
Once other publications saw how profitable these exposés had been, they courted muckrakers of their own. In 1905, **Thomas Lawson** brought the inner workings of the stock market to light in *Frenzied Finance*. **John Spargo** unearthed the horrors of child labor in *The Bitter Cry of the Children* in 1906. That same year, **David Phillips** linked 75 senators to big business interests in *The Treason of the Senate*. In 1907, **William Hard** went public with industrial accidents in the steel industry in the blistering *Making Steel and Killing Men*. **Ray Stannard Baker** revealed the oppression of Southern blacks in *Following the Color Line* in 1908.
Perhaps no muckraker caused as great a stir as Upton Sinclair. An avowed Socialist, Sinclair hoped to illustrate the horrible effects of capitalism on workers in the Chicago meatpacking industry. His bone-chilling account, The Jungle, detailed workers sacrificing their fingers and nails by working with acid, losing limbs, catching diseases, and toiling long hours in cold, cramped conditions. He hoped the public outcry would be so fierce that reforms would soon follow.

The clamor that rang throughout America was not, however, a response to the workers' plight. Sinclair also uncovered the contents of the products being sold to the general public. Spoiled meat was covered with chemicals to hide the smell. Skin, hair, stomach, ears, and nose were ground up and packaged as head cheese. Rats climbed over warehouse meat, leaving piles of excrement behind.

Sinclair said that he aimed for America's heart and instead hit its stomach. Even President Roosevelt, who coined the derisive term "muckraker," was propelled to act. Within months, Congress passed the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act to curb these sickening abuses.
Rampant political corruption and political machines limited Americans’ ability to have a voice in the American democracy. Progressivists sought to take control of political process away from bosses, and return it to the people.

Reforms:

- **Direct Primary** - Voters narrow the candidacy for president
- **Initiative Referendum** - Voters can propose new legislation with enough support
- **Recall** - Elected officials can be recalled by voters with enough support
- **17th Amendment** - Direct election of Senators by state voters
In order to promote greater competition in the marketplace and remove the threat of trusts (monopolies), Congress passed the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890, which prohibits certain business activities that the federal government deems to be anti-competitive (seeking only to monopolize the marketplace by driving all competition out of business). It has also been a “competition law” since it promotes greater business development and competition. The Act led to the creation of the Federal Trade Commission to investigate and limit monopolies and protect American consumers.
Progressive reforms to Industry also came through federal regulation of workers’ hours and limited child labor. The eight-hour work day allowed workers greater quality of life, and the end to child labor in industries led to the rise of mass participation in a free, public schooling system in the United States.

In order to help industries maintain production levels amidst these changes, Progressives in industry promoted a “Gospel of Efficiency” for their laborers, and began using an idea created by Frederick Taylor called “Taylorism,” which used assembly line production in factories, making working conditions both safer and more productive.
In the 1820s and ’30s, a wave of religious revivalism swept the United States, leading to increased calls for **temperance**, as well as other “perfectionist” movements such as the abolition of slavery. In 1838, the state of Massachusetts passed a temperance law banning the sale of spirits in less than 15-gallon quantities; though the law was repealed two years later, it set a precedent for such legislation. Maine passed the first state prohibition law in 1846, and a number of other states had followed suit by the time the Civil War began in 1861.

By the turn of the century, **temperance societies** were a common fixture in communities across the United States. Women played a strong role in the temperance movement, as alcohol was seen as a destructive force in families and marriages. **Carrie Nation** would enter saloons armed with a Bible and a hatchet and smash liquor bottles, while **Frances Willard** entered saloons and made men get on their knees and pray for God’s mercy, and she went on a national campaign to outlaw alcohol when she established the **Women’s Christian Temperance Union**. In 1906, a new wave of attacks began on the sale of liquor, led by the **Anti-Saloon League** (established in 1893) and driven by a reaction to urban growth, as well as the rise of evangelical Protestantism and its view of saloon culture as corrupt and ungodly. In addition, many factory owners supported prohibition in their desire to prevent accidents and increase the efficiency of their workers in an era of increased industrial production and extended working hours.

By 1919, the Prohibition movement would reach their goal of creating a national prohibition of the sale, manufacture, and distribution of alcohol in the **Volstead Act**, which was ratified as the **18th Amendment**.
Following the American Civil War, suffragettes (or women who sought the right to vote) campaigned to guarantee freed slave men AND women the right to vote under the 15th Amendment. Women such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton worked to convince men that women were created equal, and deserved equal rights, and to convince women that voting would not make them a “mannish” anomaly in American society.

By the early 20th century, the National American Woman Suffrage Association began to create a national campaign for the vote (Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the organization’s first president.) By then, the suffragists’ approach had changed. Instead of arguing that women deserved the same rights and responsibilities as men because women and men were “created equal,” the new generation of activists argued that women deserved the vote because they were different from men. They could make their domesticity into a political virtue, using the franchise to create a purer, more moral “maternal commonwealth.”

This argument served many political agendas: Temperance advocates, for instance, wanted women to have the vote because they thought it would mobilize an enormous voting bloc on behalf of their cause, and many middle-class white people were swayed once again by the argument that the enfranchisement of white women would “ensure immediate and durable white supremacy, honestly attained.”
Winning the Vote at Last:

Starting in 1910, some states in the West began to extend the vote to women for the first time in almost 20 years. (Idaho and Utah had given women the right to vote at the end of the 19th century.) Still, the more established Southern and Eastern states resisted. In 1916, NAWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt unveiled what she called a “Winning Plan” to get the vote at last: a blitz campaign that mobilized state and local suffrage organizations all over the country, with special focus on those recalcitrant regions. (Meanwhile, a splinter group called the National Women’s Party focused on more radical, militant tactics—hunger strikes and White House pickets, for instance—aimed at winning dramatic publicity for their cause.)

World War I slowed the suffragists’ campaign but helped them advance their argument nonetheless: Women’s work on behalf of the war effort, activists pointed out, proved that they were just as patriotic and deserving of citizenship as men, and on August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was finally ratified.
The Fight for Equality

With the ruling in **Plessy v. Ferguson**, the United States (especially in the South) allowed the legal separation of blacks and whites as long as they were "separate but equal." These **Jim Crow Laws** made it impossible for African-Americans to achieve full social, legal, or political equality in America.

**Booker T. Washington**, a former slave, believed that African-Americans should seek a **Philosophy of Accommodation**, meaning that blacks would learn trade skills and temporarily accept their racial status in American society.

He said, "In all things that are purely social, we can be separate as the fingers." He also believed, "No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem."

He founded the **Tuskegee Institute** in order to help educate blacks in trade skills.
W.E.B. DuBois felt very differently from Booker T. Washington. As a northern-born black man, he became the first African-American to earn his PhD from Harvard. In response to Washington’s Philosophy of Accommodation, he said, “Mr. Washington’s program practically accepts a policy of inferiority.”

DuBois believed that African-Americans would never get political rights and social equality if all they did is ask the white man for them. Instead he believed in providing young African-American leaders with the skills they would need to build stronger communities and run for political office. He, therefore, founded the Niagara Movement and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to help accomplish these goals.