Period 6 ("The Gilded Age"): 1865-1898
(The End of the Civil War to the start of the Spanish American War)

In a Nutshell (Big Picture)

The transformation of the United States from an agricultural to an increasingly industrialized and urbanized society brought about significant economic, political, diplomatic, social, environmental, and cultural changes.

Key Concepts (Broad Essential Information)

A. Technological advances, large-scale production methods, and the opening of new markets encouraged the rise of industrial capitalism in the United States.

B. Large-scale industrial production — accompanied by massive technological change, expanding international communication networks, and pro-growth government policies — generated rapid economic development and business consolidation.

C. A variety of perspectives on the economy and labor developed during a time of financial panics and downturns.

D. New systems of production and transportation enabled consolidation within agriculture, which, along with periods of instability, spurred a variety of responses from farmers.

E. The migrations that accompanied industrialization transformed both urban and rural areas of the United States and caused dramatic social and cultural change.

F. International and internal migration increased urban populations and fostered the growth of a new urban culture.

G. Larger numbers of migrants moved to the West in search of land and economic opportunity, frequently provoking competition and violent conflict.

H. The Gilded Age produced new cultural and intellectual movements, public reform efforts, and political debates over economic and social policies.

I. New cultural and intellectual movements both buttressed and challenged the social order of the Gilded Age.

J. Dramatic social changes in the period inspired political debates over citizenship, corruption, and the proper relationship between business and government.
Significant Topics (Must Know)

1. The Industrial Revolution
   Following the Civil War, government subsidies for transportation and communication systems helped open new markets in North America. Businesses made use of technological innovations, greater access to natural resources, redesigned financial and management structures, advances in marketing, and a growing labor force to dramatically increase the production of goods. As the price of many goods decreased, workers’ real wages increased, providing new access to a variety of goods and services; many Americans’ standards of living improved, while the gap between rich and poor grew. Businesses and foreign policymakers increasingly looked outside U.S. borders in an effort to gain greater influence and control over markets and natural resources in the Pacific Rim, Asia, and Latin America. Corporations’ need for managers and for male and female clerical workers as well as increased access to educational institutions, fostered the growth of a distinctive middle class. A growing amount of leisure time also helped expand consumer culture.

2. Formation of Trusts and Monopolies
   Many business leaders sought increased profits by consolidating corporations into large trusts and holding companies, which further concentrated wealth.

3. The American Labor Movement
   The industrial workforce expanded and became more diverse through internal and international migration; child labor also increased. Labor and management battled over wages and working conditions, with workers organizing local and national unions and/or directly confronting business leaders.

4. The Southern Economy
   Despite the industrialization of some segments of the Southern economy — a change promoted by Southern leaders who called for a “New South” — agriculture based on sharecropping and tenant farming continued to be the primary economic activity in the South.

5. American Social and Economic Theory
   Some argued that laissez-faire policies and competition promoted economic growth in the long run, and they opposed government intervention during economic downturns. Social commentators advocated theories later described as Social Darwinism to justify the success of those at the top of the socioeconomic structure as both appropriate and inevitable. Some business leaders argued that the wealthy had a moral obligation to help the less fortunate and improve society, as articulated in the idea known as the Gospel of Wealth, and they made philanthropic contributions that enhanced educational opportunities and urban environments. A number of artists and critics, including agrarians, utopians, socialists, and advocates of the Social Gospel, championed alternative visions for the economy and U.S. society.

6. Farmers’ Organizations
   Improvements in mechanization helped agricultural production increase substantially and contributed to declines in food prices. Many farmers responded to the increasing consolidation in agricultural markets and their dependence on the evolving railroad system by creating local and regional cooperative organizations.

7. The Populist Movement
   Economic instability inspired agrarian activists to create the People’s (Populist) Party, which called for a stronger governmental role in regulating the American economic system.

8. Immigration and Domestic Migration during the Late 1800s
   As cities became areas of economic growth featuring new factories and businesses, they attracted immigrants from Asia and from southern and eastern Europe, as well as African American migrants within and out of the South. Many migrants moved to escape poverty, religious persecution, and limited opportunities for social mobility in their home countries or regions. Increasing public debates over assimilation and Americanization accompanied the growth of international migration. Many immigrants negotiated compromises between the cultures they brought and the culture they found in the United States.
9. The Effect of Urbanization on Politics, Society, and Culture
   Urban neighborhoods based on particular ethnicities, races, and classes provided new cultural opportunities for city dwellers. In an urban atmosphere where the access to power was unequally distributed, political machines thrived, in part by providing immigrants and the poor with social services.

10. Migration to the American West
   The building of transcontinental railroads, the discovery of mineral resources, and government policies promoted economic growth and created new communities and centers of commercial activity. In hopes of achieving ideals of self-sufficiency and independence, migrants moved to both rural and boomtown areas of the West for opportunities, such as building the railroads, mining, farming, and ranching.

11. The Conquest of the West
   As migrant populations increased in number and the American bison population was decimated, competition for land and resources in the West among white settlers, American Indians, and Mexican Americans led to an increase in violent conflict. The U.S. government violated treaties with American Indians and responded to resistance with military force, eventually confining American Indians to reservations and denying tribal sovereignty. Many American Indians preserved their cultures and tribal identities despite government policies promoting assimilation, and they attempted to develop self-sustaining economic practices.

12. Government Corruption and Reform
   The major political parties appealed to lingering divisions from the Civil War and contended over tariffs and currency issues, even as reformers argued that economic greed and self-interest had corrupted all levels of government.

13. Discrimination and Segregation
   The Supreme Court decision in Plessy v. Ferguson that upheld racial segregation helped to mark the end of most of the political gains African Americans made during Reconstruction. Facing increased violence, discrimination, and scientific theories of race, African American reformers continued to fight for political and social equality.

14. Women’s Activism and the Struggle for Women’s Rights
   Many women sought greater equality with men, often joining voluntary organizations, going to college, promoting social and political reform, and, like Jane Addams, working in settlement houses to help immigrants adapt to U.S. language and customs.

Supporting Evidence for Significant Topics

The Gilded Age (Overview)

Gilded Age (What was it? Why the name?)

Mark Twain

Significant Political and Economic Issues of the Gilded Age (4 main issues)

Currency Issue and the Gold Standard

Tariff
Civil Service Reform

Laissez-faire vs. Socialism Debate

**Significant Social Issues of the Gilded Age**

Women

African Americans

Immigrants

**Regional Conditions during the Gilded Age**

The North

The South

The West

**Compartmentalizing the Gilded Age (7 broad categories)**

Industrialization

Urbanization

Rise of Big Business and Corporations
Organization of Workers and the Formation of Labor Unions

Westward Expansion: The Closing of the Frontier

Plight of Farmers

Corruption

**Political Corruption (National and Local Levels) and the fight for Reform**

**Patronage** ("Spoils System")
- the practice of granting government appointments to friends, political supporters, and party loyalists
- the practice many times results in inept and/or corrupt individuals serving in government positions

**Graft**
- practices, especially bribery, used to secure illicit gains in politics or business
- one of the most common forms of corruption during the Gilded Age

**Kickbacks**
- an amount of money that is given to someone in return for providing help in a secret and dishonest business deal
- one of the most common forms of corruption during the Gilded Age

**Crédit Mobilier Scandal**
- a company created to build the Union Pacific Railroad
- in 1872 it was discovered that Crédit Mobilier bribed congressmen to gain federal subsidies for the construction of the railroad
- strong evidence pointed to high ranking congressmen and possibly a connection to the Vice President’s office
- one of the many scandals that were characteristic of President Grant’s Administration (1869-77) which was arguably one of the most corrupt in U.S. history

**Whiskey Ring Scandal**
- distillers and revenue officials (excise tax collectors) in St. Louis defrauded the government of millions of dollars by cutting illegal deals on the collection of excise taxes
- one of the many scandals that were characteristic of President Grant’s Administration (1869-77) which was arguably one of the most corrupt in U.S. history

adapted from James L. Smith, Barron’s Test Prep, and the AP U.S. History Curriculum Framework
**Mugwumps**
- reformers (mostly Republicans) who wanted civil service reform and an end to political corruption

**Pendleton Act (1883)**
- law that created the Civil Service Commission and instituted the merit system for federal hiring and jobs
- passed as a result of a deranged federal office seeker who assassinated President Garfield

**Political Machines**
- the urban political machine dominated American cities in the late 1800s into the early 1900s
- in exchange for votes and support, the machine allied with both rich and poor in major urban areas providing, in many instances, social services

**Tammany Hall**
- corrupt political organization that controlled New York City politics during the late 1800s and early 1900s
- the most infamous of the urban political machines

**William Tweed**
- an American politician who controlled the “Tweed Ring” at Tammany Hall in New York City
- often referred to as “Boss Tweed”
- The “Tweed Ring” defrauded New York City of millions which made his name synonymous with municipal corruption and urban political machines

**Australian (secret) Ballot**
- Election ballot printed by the government rather than political parties that was marked privately by the voters
- Most states had moved to the secret ballot by the 1880s as a result of the political machines rigging elections in many major cities

**Expansion of Democracy** (to combat corruption in politics)

**Initiative**
- a means by which a petition signed by a certain minimum number of registered voters can bring about a public vote on a proposed law

**Referendum**
- the practice of submitting to popular vote a measure passed on or proposed by a legislative body or through an initiative

**Recall**
- a procedure that allows citizens to remove and replace a public official before the end of a term of office

**Thomas Nast**
- political cartoonist, known for attacking corruption in business and politics
- he helped make the public aware by exposing much of the Gilded Age corruption including the actions of “Boss Tweed”
Big Business Consolidation

Monopoly
- situation where one producer (or a group of producers acting together) controls supply of a good or service, and where the entry of new producers is prevented or highly restricted

Horizontal integration
- merging one or more companies of the same business activity
- Rockefeller’s Standard Oil used horizontal integration to limit competition and increase profits

Vertical integration
- a single company controls all of the steps in the process of creating a product, such as the acquisition of raw materials, the manufacturing of the product, and the marketing, selling, and distribution of the product
- Carnegie Steel used vertical integration to limit competition and increase profits

Robber Barons vs. Captains of Industry
- two contrasting views of big business/corporate leaders in the late 1800s
- Robber Baron is a derogatory term that refers to the industrialists and bankers of the late 1800s who placed profits over the public interest by monopolizing power
- Captains of Industry is a complimentary term that refers to the industrialists and bankers of the late 1800s as innovative, hardworking, and business savvy

Sherman Anti-Trust Act (1890)
- law that authorized the federal government to break up any business combination that was “in restraint of trade.” Intended to break up monopolies, the law was instead used primarily against labor unions

J.P. Morgan
- powerful financier and banker who controlled American finance
- his dedication to modernization transformed American business in the late 1800s

John D. Rockefeller
- industrialist who amassed a great fortune through the creation of the Standard Oil Trust

Andrew Carnegie
- Scottish-born industrialist who made a fortune in the steel business

Urbanization of America

Bessemer Process (Henry Bessemer)
- a method for making steel by blasting compressed air through molten iron to burn out excess carbon and impurities
- allowed for the inexpensive, mass production of steel which contributed to “vertical construction” in cities and safer railroad travel

Immigration and Migration
- the need for cheap labor to fuel American Industrial growth led to an unprecedented amount of immigrants coming to America and a large scale internal migration that dramatically increased the population of many cities

adapted from James L. Smith, Barron’s Test Prep, and the AP U.S. History Curriculum Framework
Problems associated with Urbanization in the Gilded Age
- overcrowding, filth, disease, crime, unsanitary conditions, etc.
- bottom line is that the infrastructure of cities and services offered could not keep pace with the rapid increase in population

Tenements
- run-down and overcrowded apartments in poor sections of cities, often occupied by immigrants

Labor Movement and Early Labor Unions

Knights of Labor (1869)
- nationwide labor union that was open to all workers (skilled and unskilled)
- reached its peak in 1886 before beginning a sharp decline in membership

Great Railroad Strike of 1877
- strike triggered by wage cuts for railroad workers that spread nationwide
- President Rutherford B. Hayes ordered U.S. troops to end the strike

Haymarket Square (1886)
- after police fired into a crowd of 100,000 protesting workers in Chicago, the workers met and rallied in Haymarket Square to protest police brutality. A bomb exploded, killing or injuring many of the police, which promoted anti-union and anti-immigrant feelings

Homestead Strike (1892)
- strike at Carnegie's steel plant in 1892
- company officials hired 300 armed Pinkerton detectives to stop strikers who were angry over pay cuts
- 10 people were killed and 60 wounded

Pullman Strike (1894)
- due to poor wages for Pullman workers and a shut down of western railroads, workers for the Pullman Palace Car Company in Chicago went on strike
- President Grover Cleveland ordered federal troops to crush the strike and dozens were killed in violent clashes

American Federation of Labor aka AFL (1886)
- nationwide labor union that by the 1890s was open only to skilled, white workers
- known as a “bread and butter” union because it sought only to achieve higher wages, minimize working hours, and improve working conditions rather than transform American society

Eugene Debs
- head of the American Railway Union and leader of the Pullman strike, which led to his imprisonment for ignoring a federal court injunction to stop striking
- became a prominent socialist leader and ran for president five times as the Socialist Party’s candidate for president.

Samuel Gompers
- Cigar maker who founded the American Federation of Labor and contributed to its success in the late 1800s

Mother Jones
- nickname for Mary Harris Jones, an Irish-American woman who became a prominent labor organizer. She led several significant strikes and cofounded the radical Industrial Workers of the World aka IWW in 1905.
Discrimination, Segregation, and the Fight for Equality (African Americans)

Jim Crow Laws
- state and local laws designed to enforce segregation of blacks from whites

Disenfranchisement of African Americans

Grandfather Clause
- method of denying African Americans the right to vote by not letting anyone vote whose grandfather had not voted prior

Poll Tax
- method of denying African Americans the right to vote by requiring the payment of a poll tax in order to cast a vote

Property Qualifications
- method of denying African Americans the right to vote by requiring the ownership of land in order to cast a vote

Literacy Test
- method of denying African Americans the right to vote by requiring that voters pass a literacy test in order to cast a vote

Crop-lien System (sharecropping, tenant farming)
- a system of credit, also known as the crop-lien system, used by cotton farmers in the South. Sharecroppers who did not own the land they worked obtained supplies and food on credit from local merchants. The land owners and merchants held a lien on the cotton crop and the merchants and landowners were the first ones paid from its sale. What was left over, which was very little, went to the farmer resulting in a perpetual cycle of debt.

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)
- Supreme Court decision that upheld a Louisiana law requiring the racial segregation of railroad facilities on the grounds that “separate but equal” facilities were constitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment.
- the decision essentially legalized segregation in America

W.E.B. DuBois
- African American historian and civil rights activist
- One of the cofounders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909

Booker T. Washington
- former slave who became an educator and founded the Tuskegee Institute to provide training in agriculture and crafts for African American students

Atlanta Compromise (1895)
- speech made by Booker T Washington in which he urged African Americans to accept disenfranchisement and segregation for the time being, working for economic advancement instead.
- Booker T. Washington was heavily criticized by DuBois and other civil rights leaders for being a sell out and accepting white supremacy

Ida B. Wells
- African American civil rights activist who fought relentlessly for anti-lynching legislation
Women's Activism during the Gilded Age

**National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), 1869**
- Organization led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony that fought for women's suffrage, equal rights for women, and the right for women to join labor unions. Accepted only women as members.

**American Women Suffrage Association (AWSA), 1869**
- Organization led by Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howard that fought only for women's suffrage. Accepted men as members as well.

**Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), 1874**
- Women's organization that opposed the consumption of alcohol and supported reforms such as women's suffrage.

**Jane Addams**
- Founded a settlement house (Hull House) in Chicago in 1889 that offered practical help and material aide to newly arrived immigrants
- Widely regarded as the greatest American woman of the early 1900s for her pioneering work in what would become known as Social Work
- She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931

**Lillian Wald**
- Founder of a settlement house in New York City in 1893 to improve medical care for all citizens
- Advocate for child labor legislation and woman's suffrage

Immigration during the Gilded Age

**Old Immigration**
- Immigrants from northern and western Europe made up most of the immigration to the United States before the 1890s.

**New Immigration**
- Immigrants came primarily from southern and eastern Europe and began to arrive in the United States during the 1890s. New Immigrants generally did not assimilate as well as Old Immigrants due primarily to cultural differences

**Ellis Island**
- Island in New York Harbor that served as the inspection and processing station for millions of immigrants coming to the United States from 1892 to 1954

**Angel Island**
- The equivalent of Ellis Island but located on the west coast in San Francisco

**Assimilation**
- Process by which immigrant and minority groups are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society

**Nativism**
- The policy of protecting the interests of native inhabitants against those of immigrants
Xenophobia
- intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries

Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
- law that prohibited Chinese laborers from entering the United States
- the only immigration law ever passed by the United States to target a specific ethnic group

American Protective Association (1887)
- organization created by American nativists that campaigned for laws to restrict immigration

Organization of Farmers and the Populist Movement

Grange aka the Patrons of Husbandry (1867)
- organization that brought farmers together to promote their economic and political interests

Granger Laws
- laws passed by midwestern states in the late 1860s and early 1870s to help farmers, primarily by regulating railroads

Farmers Alliance
- farmer’s organization in the 1870s and 1880s that supported government regulation of the railroad, establishment of an income tax, and cheap money (inflation) to help debtor farmers

Colored Farmers Alliance (1886)
- organization of African American farmers in Texas who had been barred from joining the Southern Farmers Alliance. Fought against rising farm costs and high interest rates.

Las Gorras Blancas aka the “White Caps” (1889)
- secret organization of Spanish-speaking New Mexicans that fought against Anglo-Americans who had taken land away from Hispanic families

People’s (Populist) Party (1891)
- political party created by farmers (primarily in the South and Midwest) who had been hurt by debt, low prices for their crops, and railroad monopolies
- nominated a 3rd party candidate in the election of 1892 (James B. Weaver) and the election of 1896 (William Jennings Bryan)

Omaha Platform (1892)
- the political platform of the Populist Party in the election of 1892
- called for the free coinage of silver, the abolition of national banks, a graduated income tax, direct election of Senators, civil service reform, a working day of eight hours and government control of all railroads, telegraphs, and telephones.

Gold Standard
- monetary system in which currency is based upon a fixed quantity of gold. Debtors are often hurt by the higher interest rates and the deflationary pressure associated with the gold standard.

Free Silver
- a central cause of the Populist movement. Populists favored the "free coinage of silver" to inflate the American economy and allow farmers to more easily pay back debts.
Cross of Gold Speech
- speech delivered by William Jennings Bryan at the 1896 Democratic National Convention in Chicago
- the speech railed against the Gold Standard and advocated the use of bimetallism (silver and gold) to back currency

William Jennings Bryan
- U.S. representative from Nebraska who became the nominee of both the Democratic and Populist Parties in 1896 after his famous “Cross of Gold” speech. Bryan campaigned against the gold standard, calling for the free coinage of silver.

Social and Economic Theory in the Gilded Age

Laissez-faire
- the principle that government should not interfere in the workings of a free market economy

Socialism
- a social system or theory in which the government controls the means of production and distribution of goods.

Social Darwinism
- philosophy that competition leads to the betterment of society through the survival of the fittest. Social Darwinists are opposed to regulating competition or assisting the poor.

Henry George
- economic reformer whose book, *Progress and Poverty* (1879), advocated solving problems of economic inequality by imposing a single tax on the value of unused land

Edward Bellamy
- author of *Looking Backward* (1888), a utopian novel that described the world of the future. According to Bellamy, the world in 2000 would be based on a new social order in which poverty and corrupt politics were unknown and cooperation had replaced competition.

Gospel of Wealth
- Andrew Carnegie’s idea that the people who possess great wealth had an obligation to use their wealth for the public good.
- helped to encourage the charitable and philanthropic efforts of the wealthy

Social Gospel
- religious doctrine preached by those who believed that Christian churches should directly address economic and social problems
- supporters believed that the church had a role in reforming society
- some refer to the Social Gospel Movement as a “3rd Great Awakening”

Closing of the Frontier, Early Conservation Efforts, and Renewed Conflict with Native Americans

Railroad Subsidies
- generous Government grants of land and/or money to railroad companies to build railroads in the West.

Morrill Land-Grant Acts (1862 and 1890)
- laws passed that granted federal land to states for the purpose of building colleges

U.S. Fish Commission (1871)
- government agency created to investigate the causes for the decrease of commercial fish and aquatic animals in U.S. coastal and inland waters.
Sierra Club (1892)
- grassroots environmental organization founded in San Francisco by the conservationist John Muir.

Department of the Interior
- executive department of the U.S. government that dealt with land and natural resource management, American Indian affairs, wildlife conservation, and territorial affairs

Great Sioux War (1876-1881)
- war between the U.S. army and the tribes (Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho) that took part in the Battle of the Little Big Horn. The war ended in 1881 with the surrender of Sitting Bull

Little Big Horn (1876)
- river in Montana where George Custer and the U.S. cavalry attacked an Indian encampment. Most of Custer’s force died in the battle.

Dawes Severalty Act (1887)
- law that intended to break up Indian reservations into individual farms and turn American Indians into homesteaders
- designed to end common ownership of the land
- surplus lands were sold to raise money for Indian education

Ghost Dance
- Indian belief that centered on a ritual dance that would bring about an Indian messiah who would banish the whites, bring back the buffalo, and restore land to the Indians
- many whites viewed this as the “Ghost Dance Cult” and feared its implication

Massacre at Wounded Knee (1890)
- last major encounter between Indians and the U.S. army. The Lakota Indians were overpowered by U.S. troops and roughly 300 Lakota died.

Crazy Horse
- Lakota leader who resisted white movement into the Black Hills and fought at the Battle of Little Big Horn. He was killed by U.S. soldiers in 1877

Sitting Bull
- Lakota holy man who led a resistance against U.S. government policies toward Indians. His visions led to the battle of Little Big Horn. He was killed in the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890.

Chief Joseph
- Nez Perce chief in the Northwest who led his tribe in an attempt to escape to Canada in 1877. U.S. troops forced him to surrender and he and his people were exiled to a reservation.

Helen Hunt Jackson
- author of *A Century of Dishonor* (1881), a book that chronicled the mistreatment of American Indians and advocated improved relations between the U.S. Government and remaining Native American tribes.

Frederick Jackson Turner
- historian who argued that cheap, abundant land and the settlement of the American West were the dominant factors in creating American democracy and shaping the national character.
Other Notable Items

**The New South**
- term that was used by southerners who wanted to promote economic changes in the South. The changes included industrialization, diversification of crops, and integration with the national economy.
- the vision for the “New South” never materialized as most of the south returned to its Antebellum agrarian ways

**Conspicuous Consumption**
- term coined by the economist Thorstein Veblen that refers to how people spend money in excess of what is necessary to fulfill their needs. People openly consume products they don’t need in order to gain a semblance of social status
- the beginning of materialism that continued to evolve and strengthen into the 20th century and today

**Panic of 1893**
- deep economic depression caused by high protective tariffs and a return to the gold standard

**Frederick Taylor**
- engineer who created the principles of scientific management to make factory production faster and more efficient