Lesson 1
The Roots of Progressivism

ESSENTIAL QUESTION • Can politics fix social problems?

It Matters Because
The Progressive Era was a time when many Americans tried to improve their society. They tried to make government honest, efficient, and more democratic. The movement for woman suffrage gained more support, as did efforts to limit child labor and reduce alcohol abuse.

The Rise of Progressivism

GUIDING QUESTION Who were progressives, and what did they believe caused social problems?

Progressivism was a collection of different ideas and activities, not a tightly organized political movement with a specific set of goals. Rather, it was a series of responses to problems in American society that had emerged from the growth of industry. Progressives had many different ideas about how to fix the problems they saw in American society.

Who Were the Progressives?
Progressivism was partly a reaction against laissez-faire economics and its emphasis on an unregulated market. Progressives generally believed that industrialization and urbanization had created many social problems. After seeing the poverty of the working class and the filth and crime of urban society, reformers began doubting the free market's ability to address those problems.

Progressives belonged to both major political parties. Most were urban, educated, middle-class Americans. Among their leaders were journalists, social workers, educators, politicians, and members of the clergy. Most agreed that government should take a more active role in solving society's problems. At the same time, they doubted that the government in its present form could fix those problems. They concluded that government had to be fixed before it could be used to fix other problems.

One reason progressives thought they could improve society was their strong faith in science and technology. The application of scientific knowledge had produced the lightbulb, the telephone,
and the automobile. It had built skyscrapers and railroads. Science and technology had benefited people; thus, progressives believed using scientific principles could also produce solutions for society.

**The Muckrakers**
Among the first people to articulate progressive ideas was a group of crusading journalists who investigated social conditions and political corruption. President Theodore Roosevelt nicknamed these writers "muckrakers" because of what he perceived as their obsession with scandal and corruption. Widely circulated, cheap newspapers and magazines helped spread the muckrakers' ideas.

Muckrakers uncovered corruption in many areas. Some, such as Ida Tarbell and Charles Edward Russell, concentrated on exposing the unfair practices of large corporations. Other muckrakers targeted government and social problems. Lincoln Steffens reported on vote stealing and other corrupt political practices of political machines.

Still other muckrakers concentrated on social problems. In his influential book *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), Jacob Riis published photographs and descriptions of the poverty, disease, and crime that afflicted many immigrant neighborhoods in New York City. By raising awareness of these problems, the muckrakers stimulated calls for reform.

**READING PROGRESS CHECK**

**Stating** What groups of people made up the Progressive movement?

**Reforming Government**

**GUIDING QUESTION** How did progressives hope to make government more efficient and responsive to citizens?

Progressivism included a wide range of reform activities. Different issues led to different approaches, and some progressives even took opposing positions on how to address some problems. They condemned government corruption but did not always agree on the best way to fix the problem.

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**muckraker** a journalist who uncovers abuses and corruption in a society

(continued from p. 202)

**TEKS** Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

5A evaluate the impact of Progressive Era reforms, including initiative, referendum, recall, and the passage of the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th amendments

5B evaluate the impact of muckrakers and reform leaders such as Upton Sinclair, Susan B. Anthony, Ida B. Wells, and W. E. B. DuBois on American society

9A trace the historical development of the civil rights movement in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, including the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 19th amendments

Progressive photographer Jacob Riis captured the poverty, disease, and crime common in many of New York City's immigrant neighborhoods.

**CRITICAL THINKING**

**Determining Cause and Effect** What did progressives believe caused the social problems that Riis photographed?
direct primary a vote held by all members of a political party to decide their candidate for public office

initiative the right of citizens to place a measure or issue before the voters or the legislature for approval

legislation a proposed law to be voted on by a governing body

referendum the practice of letting voters accept or reject measures proposed by the legislature

recall the right that enables voters to remove unsatisfactory elected officials from office

Making Government Efficient

One group of progressives drew its ideas for increasing government efficiency from business. Theories of business efficiency first became popular in the 1890s. Books such as Frederick W. Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911) described how a company could increase efficiency by managing time, breaking tasks down into small parts, and using standardized tools—a scientific approach to business that some progressives wanted to extend to government.

Progressives saw corruption and inefficiency in city government. Many municipal leaders traditionally chose political supporters and friends to run city departments, even though these people often knew little about managing city services.

Progressives supported proposals to reform city government. One, a commission plan, divided city government into several departments, with each one under an expert commissioner's control. A second, a council-manager system, employed a city manager who was hired by the city council. In both systems, experts played a major role in managing the city. Galveston, Texas, adopted the commission system in 1901. In other cities, political machines were weakened by having officials elected city-wide instead of by neighborhoods.

Democratic Reforms

Another group of progressives focused on making government more democratic and more responsive to citizens. Many believed that the key to improving government was to make elected officials more responsive and accountable to voters.

Wisconsin became a "laboratory of democracy" under the leadership of its governor, Robert M. La Follette, who attacked the way political parties ran their conventions. Party bosses controlled the selection of convention delegates and the nomination of candidates. La Follette pressured the state legislature to pass a law requiring parties to hold a direct primary, in which all party members could vote for a candidate to run in the general election.

The direct primary soon spread to other states. Other progressives also pushed for additional reforms: the initiative, the referendum, and the recall. The initiative permits citizens to introduce legislation and requires the legislature to vote on it. Typically, citizens have to gather a certain number of signatures on a petition to make the initiative legally binding. In an indirect initiative, the proposed law goes to the legislature first. If the legislature refuses to act on it, it goes on the ballot for the public to vote on it. A direct initiative goes directly to the public for a vote.

A referendum allows citizens to vote on proposed laws directly. In some states, if the legislature passes certain laws, such as a change to taxes, the new law has to be approved by the public in a referendum. Referendums are also used to repeal existing laws. Both the referendum and the initiative gave reformers the power to bypass or overrule the legislature if it refused to support something the people wanted. The idea of the initiative and the referendum was more popular in the West and Midwest. Today, 26 states allow some form of initiative and/or referendum. Since 1904, more than 2000 statewide referendums have been initiated by citizens.

The recall provided voters an option to demand a special election to remove an elected official from office before his or her term had expired. Today, nineteen states allow citizens to recall state officials, and at least 29 states allow recalls of local officials. Recalls are frequent for local officials.
Hundreds of city council members, school board members, and mayors have been recalled over the over the years but, as of 2013, only 20 state legislators have been recalled and only two governors.

Progressives also targeted the U.S. Senate. The U.S. Constitution originally directed each state legislature to elect two senators. Political machines and business interests often influenced these elections. Some senators, once elected, repaid their supporters with federal contracts and jobs. To counter corruption in the Senate, reformers called for the direct election of senators by voters. In 1912 Congress passed a direct-election amendment. In 1913 the amendment was ratified and became the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution. Although direct election was meant to end corruption, it also removed one of the state legislatures' checks on federal power.

**READING PROGRESS CHECK**

**Summarizing** How did progressives hope to solve problems through political reform?

**Woman Suffrage**

**GUIDING QUESTION** Why did progressives support the woman suffrage movement?

At the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton convinced the delegates that winning suffrage—the right to vote—should be a priority. Decades later, this right still had not been gained. It became a major goal for female progressives.

**Early Challenges**

The woman suffrage movement started slowly. Suffragists were threatened and called unfeminine and immoral. Many of the movement's supporters were abolitionists as well, and in the years before the Civil War, ending slavery took priority over women's voting rights.

After the Civil War, Congress introduced the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to grant citizenship to African Americans and voting rights to African American men. Leaders of the woman suffrage movement wanted...
these amendments to give women the right to vote as well. They were disappointed when established politicians refused.

The debate over these two amendments split the movement into two groups: the New York City–based National Woman Suffrage Association, founded by Stanton and Susan B. Anthony in 1869, and the Boston-based American Woman Suffrage Association, led by Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe. The first group wanted to focus on passing a constitutional amendment. The second believed that the best strategy was convincing state governments to grant women the right to vote first. This split weakened the suffrage movement. By 1900, only Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, and Colorado had granted women full voting rights.

**Building Support**

In 1890 the two groups united to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). The movement still faced the challenge of convincing women to become politically active. As the Progressive movement gained momentum, however, many women realized that they needed the vote to promote reforms and pass labor laws. Women began organizing events, handing out pamphlets, and delivering speeches. Many leaders of the suffrage movement were also able to lobby state and federal legislators directly. **Lobbying** is when you contact a political leader personally, explain your concern, and try to convince them to vote for a legislation that supports your causes. Often lobbyists promise to support the legislator financially when they run for reelection in return for their support. To gain influence with legislators and make their lobbying more effective, suffrage leaders raised funds for legislators who supported suffrage and campaigned for their election even though they could not actually vote for them. They also worked to defeat legislators who opposed woman suffrage.

Quaker social worker and former NAWSA member Alice Paul founded the National Woman’s Party (NWP). The NWP emphasized non-violent protest to promote women’s rights to participate in the democratic process. Its members picketed, blocked sidewalks, chained themselves to lamp posts, and went on hunger strikes if arrested. Suffragist Rose Winslow and several other women, including Alice Paul, were arrested for picketing the White House. After being sentenced to seven months in jail, Winslow and other women prisoners went on a hunger strike.
"We have been in solitary for five weeks... I have felt quite feeble the last few days—faint, so that I could hardly get my hair brushed, my arms ached so. But today I am well again. ... [Alice Paul] dreaded forcible feeding frightfully, and I hate to think how she must be feeling... I am really all right. If this continues very long perhaps I won't be. All the officers here know we are making this hunger strike [so] that women fighting for liberty may be considered political prisoners... [W]e don't want women ever to have to do this over again."

—Rose Winslow, quoted in Jailed for Freedom, 1920

The hunger strikers were force fed in prison, and the story gathered a lot of attention in the press, creating a national scandal. Equally disturbing was a police attack on a group of woman protestors that left several women with concussions and broken ribs.

The United States had entered World War I a few months before, and President Wilson was trying to portray the United States as fighting for freedom and democracy. As a result the NWP's protests may have helped convince Wilson to publicly ask Congress to pass an amendment giving women the right to vote. Wilson may also have been influenced by the public support that NAWSA had given him.

While the NWP had focused on non-violent protest, the leader of NAWSA, Carrie Chapman Catt, had organized the suffrage movement for one final nationwide push for suffrage. She used the organization’s funds to support politicians who backed suffrage. She convinced the organization to support President Wilson's re-election in 1916 and then supported the president when he took the country into war in 1917. As more states granted women the right to vote, Congress began to favor a constitutional amendment. In 1918 the House of Representatives passed a woman suffrage amendment. In the Senate, however, the amendment failed by two votes.

During the midterm elections of 1918, Catt used NAWSA's resources to defeat two antisuffrage senators. In 1919 the Senate passed the amendment by slightly more than the two-thirds vote needed. On August 26, 1920, after three-fourths of the states had ratified it, the Nineteenth Amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote went into effect.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Determining Cause and Effect What progressive goals did suffragists believe they could achieve if women had the right to vote?

Reforming Society

GUIDING QUESTION What problems did social-welfare progressives attempt to reform?

While many progressives focused on reforming the political system, others focused on social problems, such as crime, illiteracy, alcohol abuse, child labor, and the health and safety of Americans. These social-welfare progressives created charities to help the poor and disadvantaged. They also pushed for new laws they hoped would fix social problems.

Women were prominent leaders of the social-welfare progressives. Most women in the Progressive movement came from the middle or upper class, and felt a responsibility toward working class women. The main issues that working class women faced were poverty, safety, and abuse. Because the culture of the time generally expected fathers and husbands to work and provide for their families, women and children who lost their husbands and fathers were seen as exceptionally vulnerable and likely to be forced into...
poverty. Society also believed that women were more physically vulnerable than men, and for progressives the idea that poor women and their children might be forced into difficult and dangerous working conditions was an important women's issue.

Child Labor

 Probably the most emotional progressive issue was the campaign against child labor. Children had always worked on family farms, but mines and factories presented more dangerous and unhealthy working conditions. Muckraker John Spargo's 1906 book, *The Bitter Cry of the Children*, presented detailed evidence of child labor conditions. It told of coal mines that hired thousands of 9- or 10-year-old "breaker boys" to pick slag out of coal, paying them 60 cents for a 10-hour day. It described how the work bent their backs permanently and often crippled their hands. Reports like these convinced states to pass laws that set a minimum age for employment and established other limits on child labor, such as maximum hours children could work. At the same time, many states began passing compulsory education laws, requiring young children to be in school instead of at work.

Health and Safety Codes

Many adult workers also labored in difficult conditions. Factories, coal mines, and railroads were particularly dangerous. When workers were injured or killed on the job, they and their families received little or no compensation. Progressives joined union leaders to pressure states for workers' compensation laws. These laws established insurance funds that employers financed. Workers injured in accidents received payments from the funds.

In two cases, *Lochner v. New York* (1905) and *Muller v. Oregon* (1908), the U.S. Supreme Court addressed government's authority to regulate business to protect workers. In the *Lochner* case, the Court ruled that a New York law forbidding bakers to work more than 10 hours a day was unconstitutional, saying the state did not have the right to interfere with the liberty of employers and employees. In the *Muller* case, which involved women working in laundries in Oregon, however, the Court upheld the state's right to limit hours.

The different judgments were based on gender differences. The Court stated that healthy mothers were the state's concern and, therefore, the limits on women's working hours did not violate their Fourteenth Amendment rights. In the *Lochner* case, the Court had adhered to a strict construction of the Constitution and decided that government did not have the power to interfere in the right of an employer and employee to make a contract. In the *Miller* case, the Court had been more activist. It interpreted the Constitution so as to give government the power to regulate the workplace because of perceived public need to keep women safe by treating them differently from men.

On March 25, 1911, a tragedy occurred in New York City that led to new reforms. A fire on the top floors of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company caused nearly 150 of the factory's 500 workers to lose their lives. The disaster illustrated that fire precautions and inspections were inadequate. In response, New York created a Factory Investigating Commission and soon passed new laws that reformed the labor code.

Some progressives also favored zoning laws as a method of protecting the public. These laws divided a town or city into zones for commercial, residential, or other development, thereby regulating how land and buildings could be used. Building codes set minimum standards for light,
air, room size, and sanitation and required buildings to have fire escapes. Health codes required restaurants and other facilities to maintain clean environments for their patrons.

Zoning laws created a constitutional question. The Fifth Amendment of the Constitution says that no one shall be “deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.” If the government takes something of value from someone, it is supposed to pay for it. As governments began to impose zoning laws on communities to improve sanitation, safety, and the quality of life, individuals and businesses began to complain that they were losing the use of their property. They argued that the government should compensate them for the loss.

In Hadacheck v. Sebastian (1915), a brick-maker argued that he needed clay on his land to make bricks and that zoning laws forcing him to move his kiln deprived him of his Fifth Amendment rights. The Court disagreed finding that the zoning laws were a constitutional use of a government's police power to protect public health. In 1922, in Pennsylvania Coal v. Mahon, however, the court narrowed its interpretation. A coal company owned the rights to mine under a piece of land but a law prohibited mining below land that supported buildings on the surface. The Court agreed that the law had gone too far. Under its Fifth Amendment rights, the coal company had been deprived of its property and was owed compensation. The case established that the government does not have an unlimited right to regulate property use. At some point government regulation of property, even when done in the public interest, does require compensation.

The Prohibition Movement

Many progressives blamed alcohol for many of society's problems. Society at the time tended to view drinking alcohol as acceptable for men, not women, and men consumed the vast majority of all the alcohol produced. As a result social-welfare progressives focused on the problems that alcohol abuse created for women. Settlement-house workers knew that wages were often spent on alcohol instead of the family, and that drunkenness often led to physical abuse, illness, poverty, and abandonment. From these concerns emerged one of the major women's issues of the era, the temperance movement, which advocated that people stop, or at least moderate, their alcohol consumption.

Women were important leaders of the temperance movement. In 1874 a group of women formed the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). In 1879, Frances Willard became president of the WCTU and held the post for nearly 20 years. Under her leadership, the temperance movement grew to a national movement with significant political influence. In addition to temperance, Willard convinced the WCTU to support woman suffrage and champion many social welfare causes, including prison reform, equal pay for women, protections for children, and the eight hour day. By 1911, the WCTU

advocate to propose a certain position or viewpoint

The temperance movement gained a key victory in 1917 when Congress passed the Eighteenth Amendment. Prohibition went into effect in 1920, after the amendment was ratified.

CRITICAL THINKING

Summarizing Why did the temperance movement push for the prohibition of alcoholic beverages?
prohibition laws banning the manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages

SKILLS PRACTICE
There are many new words in this lesson, including initiative, referendum, primary, suffrage, prohibition, lobbying and others. Discuss the new words with a partner. If a word reminds you of any past experience, tell your partner about the experience.

Progressives Versus Big Business
Many progressives agreed that big business needed regulation. Some believed the government should break up big companies to restore competition. This led to the passage of the Sherman Antitrust Act in 1890. Others argued that big business was the most efficient way to organize the economy. They pushed for government to regulate big companies and prevent them from abusing their power. The Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), created in 1887 to regulate the railroads, was an early example of this kind of thinking.

Some activists even went so far as to advocate socialism—the idea that the government should own and operate industry for the community. They wanted the government to buy up large companies, especially industries that affected everyone, such as railroads and utilities. At its peak, socialism had some national support. Eugene V. Debs, the former leader of the American Railway Union, won nearly a million votes as the American Socialist Party candidate for president in 1912. Most progressives and most Americans, however, believed in the superiority of the American system of free enterprise.

READING PROGRESS CHECK
Explaining How did progressives seek to improve working conditions?

LESSON 1 REVIEW

Reviewing Vocabulary
1. Drawing Conclusions What was the primary goal of Progressive Era muckrakers? 5B, 25A
2. Determining Cause and Effect Why did women's organizations work for the passage of prohibition? 3C, 26D

Using Your Notes
3. Organizing Use your notes to write a statement summarizing progressive beliefs.

Answering the Guiding Questions
4. Identifying Central Ideas Who were progressives, and what did they believe caused social problems? 5B

5. Summarizing How did progressives hope to make government more efficient and responsive to citizens? 5A
6. Monitoring Why did the progressives support the woman suffrage movement? 5A, 9A, 9B, 23B, 26D
7. Identifying What problems did social-welfare progressives attempt to reform? 3C

Writing Activity
8. ARGUMENT Suppose that you are one of the progressives who wanted to bring about change to municipal government. Prepare a persuasive speech that you could deliver to convince people to support your call for reform. 3C