

The Gilded Age in America

- The Gilded Age is defined as the time between the Civil War and World War I
- the U.S. population and economy grew quickly due to an industrial explosion
- there was a lot of political corruption
- a labor pool swells by immigration from Europe and Asia
- minimal governmental regulation allowed the upper classes to accumulate great wealth and enjoy opulent lifestyles
- “Gilded” means covered thinly with gold leaf or gold paint – like a door knob!
- Mark Twain called this time period the "Gilded Age." By this he meant that the period was glittering on the surface but corrupt underneath if you scratched below the surface.

Made up of 4 Mini Units:

1. Industrial Revolution
 - a. There are technically two “rounds” of this. The First Industrial Revolution starts before the Civil War – this is where we get the steam engine train/railroads, Morse code for communication, the invention of standardized parts and the first water powered factories.
 - b. Then the Second Industrial Revolution in America happens after the Civil War. This is where we get cars, telephones, air planes, gas powered machines etc.
 - c. Conditions for workers in the factories and how they are treated become horrible. Causes fights between employers and workers. Rise of labor unions occur. Skilled workers vs. unskilled workers. Political and economic corruption of the time period from all the wealthy people taking advantage of the poorer society.
2. Immigration and Urbanization
 - a. Again, there are two “waves” that occur of immigrants from Europe. The first wave occurs before the Civil War – these are called “Old Immigrants”
 - b. The second wave of Immigrants are called “New Immigrants” and they came from a different area of Europe than their older counterparts.
 - c. Ellis Island and Angel Island. Their lives once they got here and how they were treated terribly. City life and urbanization. Reasons for coming to America or reasons for leaving their home land. Effect on America and how we needed them to help fuel industrialization.
3. Progressivism
 - a. This is how America was going to “progress” or improve itself from the filth, corruption, monopolies, greed, and horrible working conditions of the time.
 - b. Important laws were passed that protected American workers. Cleaned up America’s cities, helped fix America’s political system and voting rights.
 - c. This was all about change for the better!
4. Imperialism
 - a. America starts to flex its “world dominance muscles” and starts to become imperialists like the rest of the other world powers.
 - b. Imperialism is where you conquer or acquire land/colonies for resources or power
 - c. Alaska, Hawaii, Cuba, Philippines, Spanish-American War, Boxer Rebellion, etc, these are just some of the events