

Making America Modern: **Industrialism and the Gilded Age** *1865–1910*

Year 2
History Unit 4
Sourcebook

Lesson 1: American Industrialism

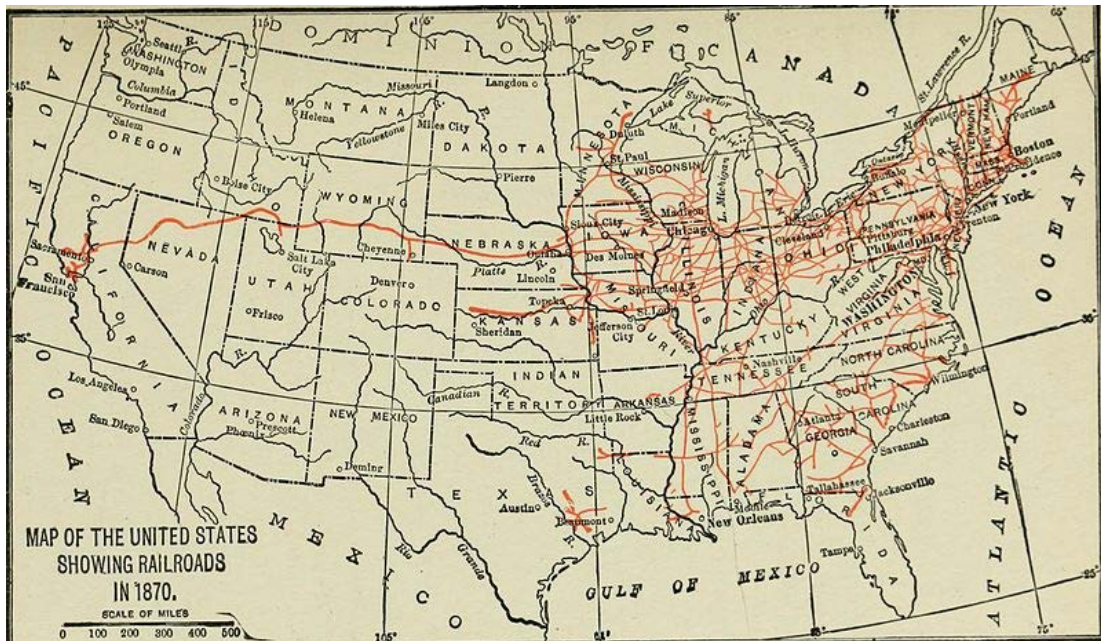


Standard Oil refinery in Cleveland, Ohio, 1889 (Wikimedia)

How did industrialism transform the American economy following the Civil War?

Station 1: The Railroad National Railroads, 1870

After the Pacific Railway Act was passed in 1862, American railroads grew rapidly. The expansion of the railroad and the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad did not just fuel westward expansion. Thanks to the interconnected series of rail lines, raw materials could travel to industrial centers around the country faster, fueling the growth of American industries.

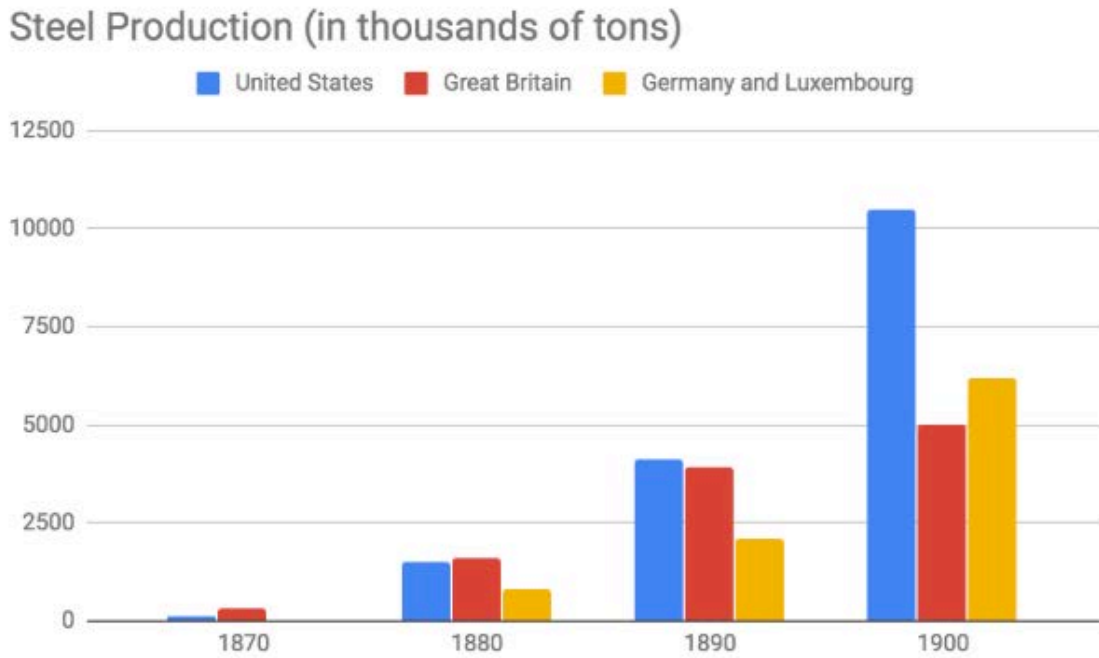


The map shows the railroads of the United States in 1870. The first cross-continental railroad had been completed the year before. In the next 20 years, more than 90,000 miles of railroad would be built. (Wikimedia)

Steel

In the mid-19th century, a new production method made steel cheaper to produce than other metals. Steel is incredibly strong, which made it very useful for constructing buildings, machines, and other innovations, like the railroad.

The graph below shows the amount of steel produced in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and Luxembourg between 1870 and 1900.



(Data retrieved from DBQ Project: DBQs in American History)

Station 2: The Evolution of Industries American Factories — Before and After the Civil War

The two factories below—the first from the 1830s, the second from the 1880s—demonstrate the rapid growth of industry following the Civil War. The second image shows a steel factory. American steel production grew from 380,000 tons per year in 1875 to 60 million tons per year by 1920. The steel industry established the United States as a world leader in industrial production.



“American Industries in the 1830s,” by John Penniman, 1841–1844 (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

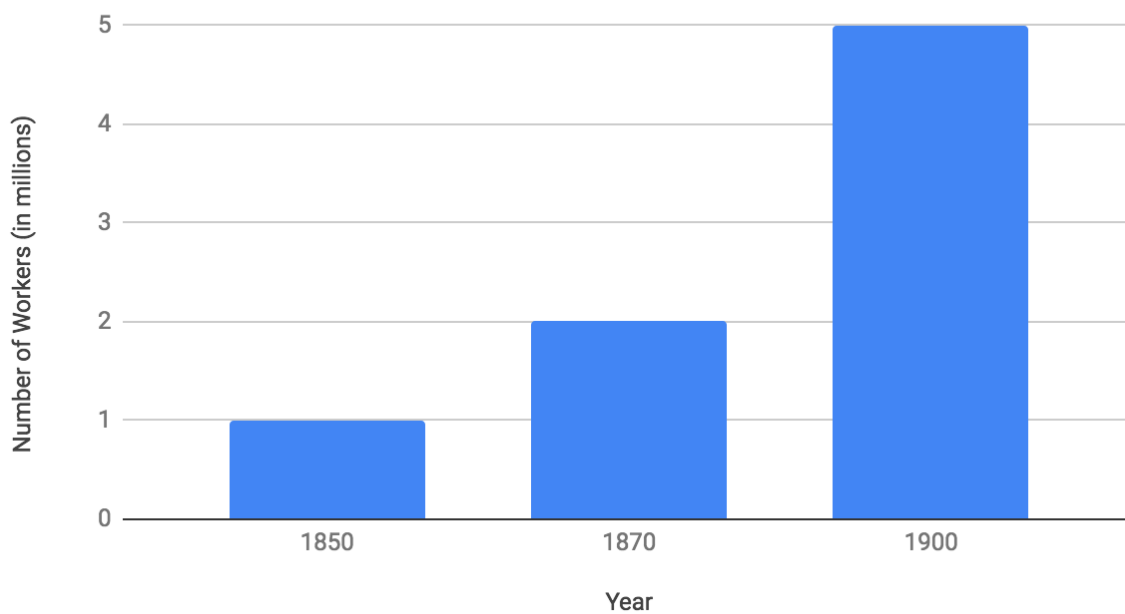


An American steel plant in 1915 (Wikimedia)

Industrial Employment

As American industries grew, so did the number of workers employed in them. By 1900, nearly five million Americans worked in factories.

Factory Workers in the United States, 1850-1900



(Data retrieved from Wikipedia)

Station 3: The Rise of Big Business Achievements of the Industrialists

The so-called “captains of industry” became household names: John D. Rockefeller of Standard Oil, Andrew Carnegie of Carnegie Steel, and J. Pierpont Morgan, the powerful banker who controlled many industries. Their tactics were not always fair, but there were few laws regulating business conduct at that time. The industrialists gained control of the American economy, ushering in a new age where big businesses dominated American industry.

The chart below illustrates the major industrialists and their contributions to the rise of big business in the Gilded Age.

Industrialist	Achievements
Cornelius Vanderbilt	Shipping and railroad tycoon worth more than \$100 million
Andrew Carnegie	Owner of an American steel industry that became the premier steel company in the world, becoming the richest man in the world
John Pierpont (J.P.) Morgan	Banker who financed railroads and helped organize major corporations; controlled one sixth of railroad stock [<i>units of ownership in a company</i>] in the United States
John D. Rockefeller	Founder of the Standard Oil Company, which controlled about 90 percent of U.S. refineries [<i>where oil is produced and purified</i>] and pipelines
Leland Stanford	Investor in the plan to build a transcontinental railroad; became president of the Central Pacific Railroad and then of the Southern Pacific Railroad as well

(Data retrieved from PBS.org and History.com/topics/Cornelius-vanderbilt)

Lessons 2–4: The Robber Barons



This cartoon of Andrew Carnegie, "The Double Role," appeared in the Saturday Globe in Utica, New York, on July 9, 1892. (Washington State University)

To what extent were the industrialists of the 19th century "robber barons"?

Homework

The Evolution of Corporate Empires

Read the article “Entrepreneurs and Bankers: The Evolution of Corporate Empires” by historian Robert Cherny on the Newsela website.

Document A

Andrew Carnegie’s “Wealth”

The following excerpt is from Andrew Carnegie’s article “Wealth,” published in the North American Review in June 1889.

The contrast between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the laborer with us today measures the change that has come with civilization. This change, however, is not to be **deplored** [*disapproved of*], but welcomed as highly beneficial. It is essential for the progress of [humans] that the houses of some should be homes for all that is highest and best in literature and the arts rather than that none should be so. Much better this great irregularity than universal **squalor** [*poverty*]. . . .

The “good old times” were not good old times. Neither master nor servant was as well off then as today. Formerly, articles were manufactured at the **domestic hearth** [*home*], or in small shops which formed part of the household The inevitable result of such a mode of manufacture was **crude** [*simple, unrefined*] articles at high prices. Today, the world obtains **commodities** [*goods*] of excellent quality at prices which even the previous generation would have deemed incredible

It is to this law [of competition] that we owe our wonderful material development . . . , while the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for humanity, because it insures the survival of the fittest. We accept and welcome, therefore . . . , the concentration of business in the hands of the few

Not evil, but good, has come to the race from the accumulation of wealth by those who have the ability and energy to produce it.

Courtesy of Swarthmore College, Swarthmore.edu.

Document B
William Jewett Tucker's "The Gospel of Wealth"

The following text was adapted from William Jewett Tucker's article "The Gospel of Wealth," published in the Andover Review in June 1891.

Why should there be this vast amount of wealth in the hands of the few? The question is not, How shall private wealth be returned to the public? But, Why should it exist in such ridiculous amounts ... in the hands of the few?

... It is estimated that two thirds of the property of the United States is in the hands of one seventieth of the population. It also seems safe to assume that more than one half of the wealth of the country is in the possession of less than fifty thousand families.

... The ethical question of today centers, I am sure, in the distribution rather than in the redistribution of wealth.

Courtesy of HathiTrust Digital Library, [Babel.HathiTrust.org](http://babel.hathitrust.org).

Document C
The Industrialists: Philanthropic and Cultural Impact

Industrialists	Philanthropy
Cornelius Vanderbilt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donated \$1 million to establish Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN • Donated to many churches around New York
Andrew Carnegie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donated money to establish Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA • Established Carnegie Hall for the arts in New York City • Founded the Carnegie Institution to fund scientific research • Built more than 2,000 libraries across the United States • Established \$10 million pension fund for teachers • Gave \$125 million to found the Carnegie Corporation for education
John Pierpont Morgan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donated significantly to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Museum of Natural History • Donated to the Episcopal Church and helped construct Saint John the Divine in New York City
John D. Rockefeller	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helped establish the University of Chicago (giving \$35 million over the course of his life) • Funded the Rockefeller Medical Institute in New York City (now Rockefeller University) • Created the General Education Board to support education in the American South • Established schools of public health at Johns Hopkins University and Harvard University • Contributed \$185 million to the Rockefeller Foundation to promote “the well-being of mankind throughout the world.”
Leland Stanford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA, in honor of his deceased son and funded free education for its students for many years.

(Data retrieved from Wikipedia)

Document D

Henry Demarest Lloyd: “The Story of a Great Monopoly”

In March 1881, Henry Demarest Lloyd wrote “The Story of a Great Monopoly” for The Atlantic. His article, excerpted below, tells the story of how John D. Rockefeller expanded his Standard Oil Company.

Rockefeller found a way of **refining** [*purifying*] by which more kerosene could be got out of a barrel of petroleum than by any other method This grew into the Standard Oil Company The Standard produces only one fiftieth or sixtieth of our petroleum, but dictates the price of all, and refines nine tenths This corporation has driven into bankruptcy, or out of business, or into union with itself, all the petroleum refineries of the country except five in New York, and a few in Western Pennsylvania

The Standard achieved monopoly by conspiracy with the railroads The Standard killed its rivals, in brief, by getting the great [railroads] to refuse to give them transportation

The time has come to face the fact that the forces of capital and industry have outgrown the forces of our government

Courtesy of The Atlantic, TheAtlantic.com.

Lesson 5: Urbanization

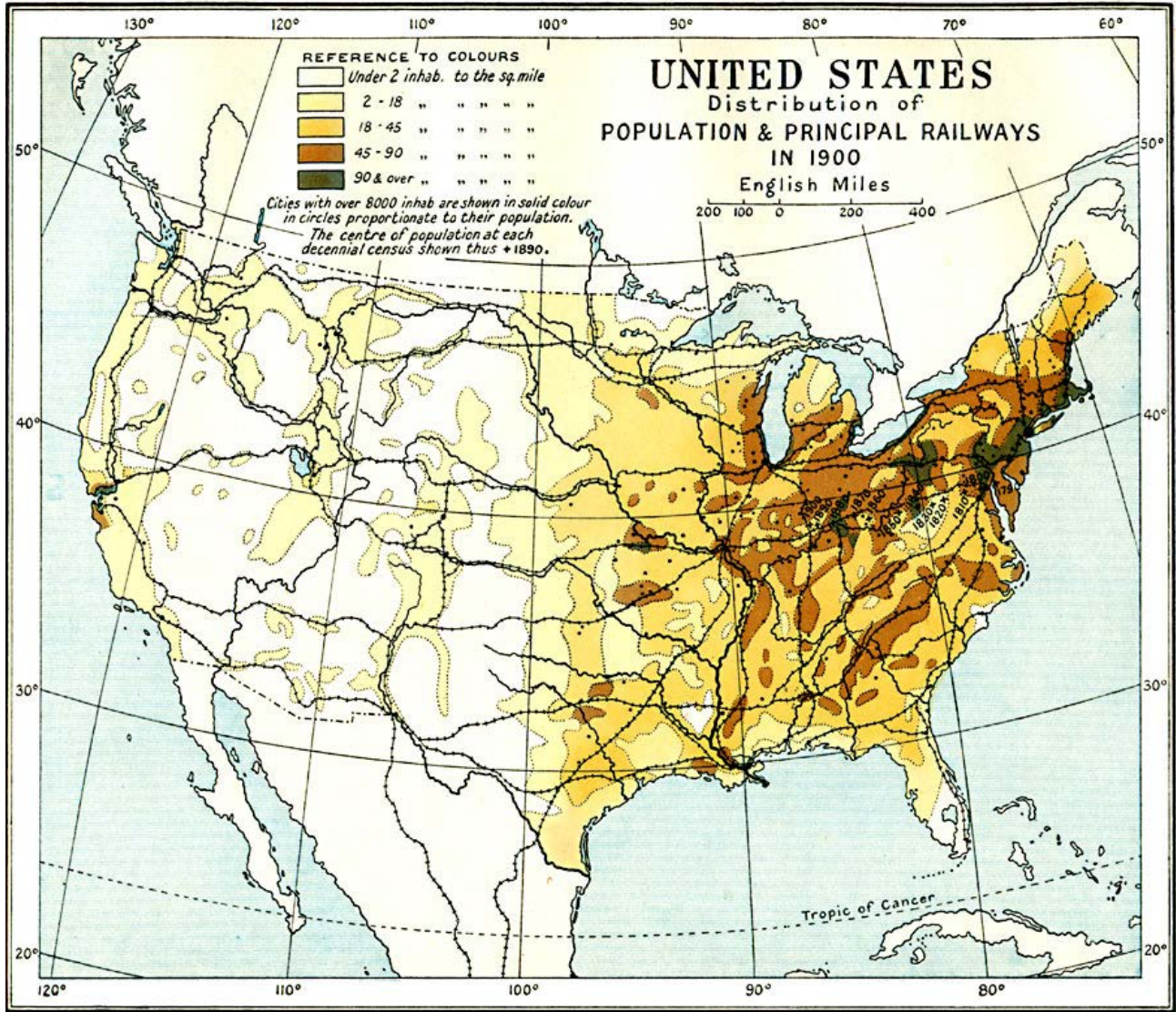


Construction of the Flatiron Building, New York City, ca. 1905 (Wikimedia)

Why did American cities grow so rapidly in the late 19th century?

Homework
From the Countryside to the City

Read the article "From the Countryside to the City" on Independence Hall's USHistory.org website.



The map above shows the population density of the United States in 1900.

Courtesy of Educational Technology Clearinghouse, Florida Center for Instructional Technology, College of Education, University of South Florida, ETC.USF.edu.

Document A

The End of the Frontier

In 1890, the frontier was “closed.” According to the Census Bureau, there was no longer any boundary uncrossed on the continental United States. For much of the mid- to late 19th century, Americans had been leaving cities to explore the frontier; by the end of the century, however, the reverse was occurring, as frontier opportunities decreased and urban opportunities increased. Historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented his “Frontier Thesis,” The Significance of the Frontier in American History, in an address in Chicago in 1893. Below is an excerpt from his thesis.

Up to our own day, American history has been [mostly] the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land ... and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development

Since the days when the fleet of Columbus sailed into the waters of the New World, America has been another name for opportunity, and the people of the United States have taken their tone from the **incessant** [*nonstop*] expansion He would be a [fool] who should claim that the expansive character of American life has now entirely ceased [with the end of the frontier]. Movement has been its dominant fact, and ... the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its [development].

Courtesy of National Humanities Center, NationalHumanitiesCenter.org.

Document B

Annual Earnings: Urban Laborers vs. Farm Laborers

The table below highlights the annual income and hourly wages of Americans in various industries. Jobs in clerical and industrial work generally were located in cities, teaching jobs were both urban and rural, and farm labor was in rural areas.

	1880	1890
Income and earnings		
Annual income:		
clerical worker		\$848
public school teacher		\$256
industrial worker		\$486
farm laborer		\$233
Hourly wage:		
soft-coal miner		\$0.18 ^a
iron worker		\$0.17 ^a
shoe worker		\$0.14 ^a
paper worker		\$0.12 ^a
Labor statistics		
Number of people in labor force	17.4 million	28.5 million
Average workweek, manufacturing		60 hours

Courtesy of University of Missouri Libraries, LibraryGuides.Missouri.edu.

Document C
Harry Reece: Visit to Chicago

*Harry Reece grew up on a farm in Illinois during the late 1800s. In the following, he recalls a trip to the city of Chicago — “Big Town” — and his first experience with the **electric trolley** [an electric bus that runs on power from overhead wires]. Reece — and many other Americans like him — were drawn to the appeal of the “big city” and the new opportunities and excitement it seemed to promise.*

I was born in the middle west. Out in the state of Illinois

We lived on a farm, and even telephones were curiosities to myself and the country boys of my age. Electric lights were something to marvel at ... and trolley cars, well they too were past understanding!

Speaking of trolley cars reminds me of a trip to the “city” once when I was about a dozen years old. My father and a neighbor, Old Uncle Bill Brandon, had to go up to the Big Town, which was Chicago, on some sort of business ... and Father rewarded me by taking me along

You can imagine what a time I had seeing things I'd never seen before, in fact had only dreamed about or heard about. Curiosity wasn't the name for it. Speechless **incredulity** [*inability to believe something*] came nearer describing my emotions

But when I saw my first trolley car slipping along Cottage Grove Avenue in Chicago ... slipping along without horses or engine or apparent motive power ... well it was just too darned much for me. I didn't know what to think.

Courtesy of Library of Congress.

Document D
Immigration

Between 1840 and 1920, the percentage of foreign-born (immigrant) and foreign-parentage (children of immigrants) Americans increased along with the increase in urban populations.

Table 13.1 U.S. Population Composition and Growth, 1840–1920 (in percentages)

	Population (in millions)	Urban	Black	Foreign parentage	Foreign born
1840	17.1	10.8	16.8	n.d.	n.d.
1850	23.2	15.3	15.7	n.d.	12.9
1860	31.4	19.8	14.1	n.d.	17.9
1870	39.8	25.7	13.5	19.0	19.6
1880	50.2	28.2	13.1	22.5	17.8
1890	62.9	35.1	11.9	25.0	19.9
1900	76.0	39.7	11.6	27.6	18.1
1910	92.0	45.7	10.7	27.8	18.0
1920	105.7	51.2	9.9	28.0	16.9

n.d. = no data.

*Courtesy of (Ed.) McIlwraith, Thomas and Muller, Edward, North America:
The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent, pg. 285.*

Lessons 6–7: Hardships and New Opportunities



Sweatshop in a Ludlow Street tenement, New York, 1889 (Wikimedia)

Did the opportunities for Americans in Gilded Age cities outweigh the hardships?

Homework
Life in American Cities

Read the articles “The Glamour of American Cities,” “The Underside of Urban Life,” and “Corruption Runs Wild” on Independence Hall’s USHistory.org website.

Group 1: Hardships
Document A
Factory Life

During the Gilded Age, many women worked in factories. Some women laborers were from the country, drawn to the city by its new opportunities but finding themselves stuck in factories. Other women were from immigrant families, helping to keep their families afloat. And some women worked alongside their husbands and even their children in order to feed and house their families. Both men and women worked for tiny salaries for long hours. Below is an account from a female laborer in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City.

First let me tell you something about the way we work and what we are paid. The regular work pays about \$6 a week, and the girls have to be at their machines at seven o'clock in the morning and they stay at them until eight o'clock at night, with just one-half hour for lunch in that time

The shops are unsanitary — that's the word that is generally used, but there ought to be a worse one used. Whenever we tear or damage any of the goods we sew on, or whenever it is found damaged after we are through with it, whether we have done it or not, we are charged for the piece and sometimes for a whole yard of the material. At the beginning of every slow season, \$2 is deducted from our wages.



*Women working in a Chicago factory, 1903
(Chicago Historical Society)*

*Courtesy of The 1911 Remembering Triangle Factory Fires, Cornell University,
TriangleFire.ILR.Cornell.edu.*

Document B

Average Daily Hours and Wages in U.S. Manufacturing

The table below details the daily hours and average daily wages of American workers in New York City in 1889.

Industry	Average Daily Hours	Average Daily Wages
Clothing manufacturers	12	\$1.63
Printing	12	\$2.00
Textiles	12	\$.67
Iron- and steelworkers	12	\$1.81
Unspecified laborers	12.2	\$1.36

In 1900, Andrew Carnegie made \$23 million. Assuming that Carnegie worked a ten-hour day and a 50-week year, his daily “wage” was about \$92,000.

(Data retrieved from University of Missouri Libraries, LibraryGuides.Missouri.edu.)

Document C

Jane Addams: Political Machines

In the excerpt below, urban activist Jane Addams describes the role of political machines in American cities in the late 19th century.

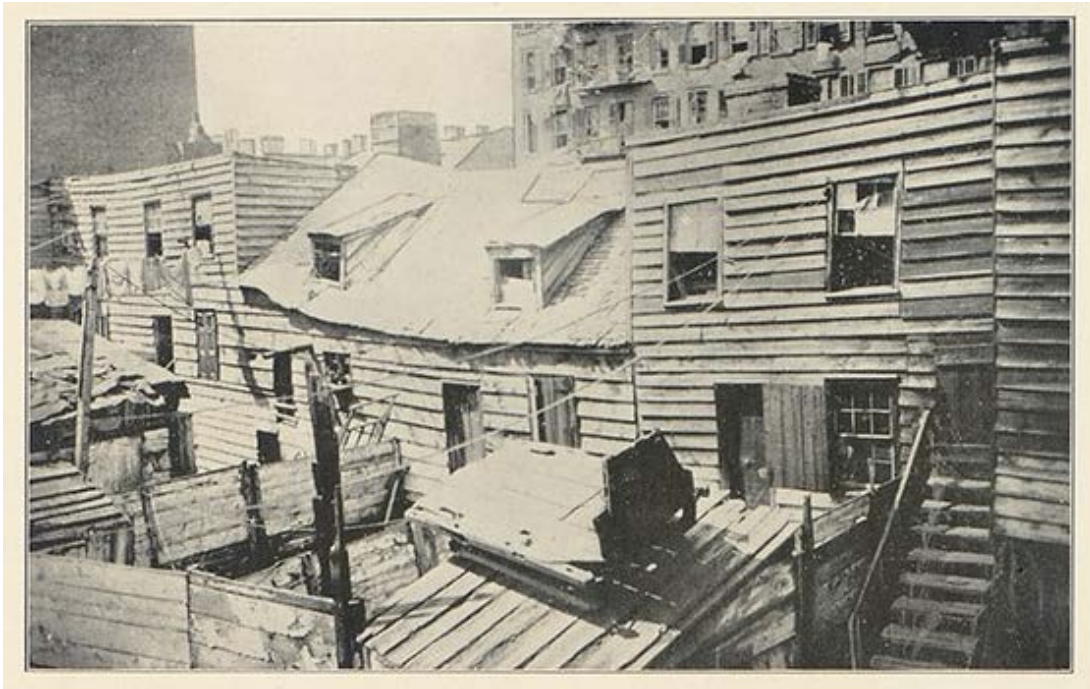
The **Alderman** [*member of city council*] ... bails out his **constituents** [*voters*] when they are arrested, or says a good word to the police justice when they appear before him for trial; uses his “pull” with the **magistrate** [*judge*] when they are likely to be fined for a civil misdemeanor, or sees what he can do to “fix up matters” with the State’s attorney when the charge is really a serious one.

Because of simple friendliness, the Alderman is expected to pay rent for the hard-pressed tenant when no rent is forthcoming, to find jobs when work is hard to get. ... The question does, of course, occur to many minds, Where does the money come from? ... He sells out the city **franchises** [*votes*], ... he makes a deal with the franchise-seeking companies ... he guarantees to steer **dubious** [*suspicious*] measures through the [City] Council, for which he demands **liberal** [*generous*] pay.

Courtesy of Digital History, University of Houston, DigitalHistory.UH.edu.

Document D
Tenements vs. Industrialist Mansions

The following images from Jacob Riis's How the Other Half Lives (published in 1890) depict the living conditions of many poor Americans in New York City in the late 19th century.



The exteriors of tenement buildings in downtown New York City (Riis, Jacob A. The Peril and Preservation of Home. George W. Jacobs & Co., 1903. Courtesy of Harvard Library)



(Flickr)

The following images depict the homes of the wealthy industrialists of the Gilded Age in New York City.



Cornelius Vanderbilt's mansion on 57th Street and 5th Avenue in New York City — it's now the home of the Bergdorf Goodman luxury department store. (Library of Congress)



Henry Frick's New York City mansion on the Upper East Side is now home to the Frick Collection, an art museum that houses Frick's enormous art collection. (Library of Congress)

Group 2: New Opportunities
Document A
Entertainment

The nation's first amusement parks developed during the Gilded Age. Coney Island in New York City was one of the most famous. In Coney Island, rich and poor gathered together to enjoy carnival attractions that had never been seen before. Freak shows featuring bizarre or unusual people, rides, games, and other forms of entertainment filled the park. Luna Park was one of Coney Island's most famous amusement parks: It opened in 1904, with 250,000 lights bringing the park to life. Americans had never seen electricity used to such a degree before.



Luna Park, with all its lights and color, was an exciting new place of entertainment for working-class Americans. Photograph by Samuel Gottscho, 1906 (Wikimedia)

Document B
Urban Innovations

Steel transformed the infrastructure of American cities. Because the material was lightweight but strong, engineers could make bridges bigger and buildings — called skyscrapers — taller than ever before.



Chicago's Home Insurance Building was the world's first "skyscraper," at ten stories high. It was built in 1885. (Wikimedia)



The Brooklyn Bridge was completed in 1883. It connected Brooklyn and Manhattan for the first time and played a major role in the growth of New York City. (Published by Suiseiseki @ Wikimedia under the CC BY-SA 3.0 license)

Document C
The Subway

In October 1904, New York's first subway opened to the public with a ceremony at City Hall. The New York subway was the second subway to open in America, following Boston's in 1897. The New York subway was bigger and better than Boston's, and it changed the nature of intercity transportation. Below is an excerpt of Mayor McClellan's speech at the opening ceremony.



(Library of Congress)

When the Brooklyn Bridge was opened, Greater New York was born Every step in the direction of interborough communication has tended to improve conditions not only in the borough immediately affected, but benefits the city as a whole

We have met here today for the purpose of turning over a page in the history of our city; for the purpose of marking the advent of a new era in her development. If this new underground railroad which we are about to open proves as popular and as successful as I confidently expect it to be, it will be only the first of many more which must ultimately result in giving us an almost perfect system of interborough communication.

Mayor Declares Subway Open Ovations for Parsons and McDonald. The New York Times October 28, 1904. Courtesy of NYCSubway.org)

Document D
Jobs

Cities provided new job opportunities for poor Americans. Americans rushed to move to cities during the Gilded Age because there were no jobs anywhere else. many of these jobs were open to women, giving women increased opportunities for work and independence. The flyer below calls for women to work in cotton mills in Lowell and Chicopee, Massachusetts, towns just outside Boston.

75 Young Women
From 15 to 35 Years of Age,
WANTED TO WORK IN THE
COTTON MILLS!
IN LOWELL AND CHICOPEE, MASS.

I am authorized by the Agents of said Mills to make the following proposition to persons suitable for their work, viz:—They will be paid \$1.00 per week, and board, for the first month. It is presumed they will then be able to go to work at job prices. They will be considered as engaged for one year, cases of sickness excepted. I will pay the expenses of those who have not the means to pay for themselves, and the girls will pay it to the Company by their first labor. All that remain in the employ of the Company eighteen months will have the amount of their expenses to the Mills refunded to them. They will be properly cared for in sickness. It is hoped that none will go except those whose circumstances will admit of their staying at least one year. None but active and healthy girls will be engaged for this work, as it would not be advisable for either the girls or the Company.

I shall be at the Howard Hotel, Burlington, on Monday, July 25th; at Farnham's, St. Albans, Tuesday forenoon, 26th, at Keyse's, Swanton, in the afternoon; at the Massachusetts' House, Rouses Point, on Wednesday, the 27th, to engage girls,—such as would like a place in the Mills would do well to improve the present opportunity, as new hands will not be wanted late in the season. I shall start with my Company, for the Mills, on Friday morning, the 29th inst., from Rouses Point, at 6 o'clock. Such as do not have an opportunity to see me at the above places, can take the cars and go with me the same as though I had engaged them.

I will be responsible for the safety of all baggage that is marked in care of I. M. BOYNTON, and delivered to my charge.

I. M. BOYNTON,
Agent for Procuring Help for the Mills.

(Courtesy of the Baker Old Class Collection, Baker Library, Harvard Business School.)

Lesson 8: Immigration



Ellis Island, 1902 (Wikimedia)

**To what extent was the United States
a land of opportunity for immigrants?**

Homework Immigration

The following text was adapted from historian Hasnia Diner's essay "Immigration and Migration," historian Thomas Kessner's essay "Why Immigration Matters," and the Gilder Lehrman Institute's article "A Nation of Immigrants," all published by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

Throughout American history, millions of people around the world have left their homelands for a chance to start a new life in this country — and they continue to come here to this day. People who come to live in a new country are called immigrants.

Over the past 400 years, immigrants have had different reasons to come to America. Some came to escape war, others for the freedom to practice the religion of their choice. Still others came for the opportunity to own land or simply for a chance to work and escape poverty.

For example, the threat of starvation brought a large portion of Ireland's population to the United States in the 1840s and 1850s. Potatoes, Ireland's main source of food at the time, stopped growing because of a fungus in the soil. The Irish Potato Famine led nearly 20 percent of Ireland's population to immigrate to the United States.

Immigrants also came from China when parts of the country were experiencing severe drought and starvation. Many of the Chinese immigrants built the railroads running across the sprawling American continent.

Jewish immigrants came to the United States fleeing Eastern European persecution. Anti-Jewish laws in Russia, as well as violent **pogroms** [*anti-Jewish riots*] that attacked Jewish villages and killed many Jewish people, made life very difficult for Russian Jews. As a result, over two million Jews fled to America in search of new freedoms.

The Industrial Revolution of the late 1800s attracted more immigrants as businesses in the United States grew quickly. New technology and new ideas helped develop large factories where many new products were made. These businesses needed more workers to keep growing. Immigrants and migrants filled the labor demands of the new industrial order, transforming the nation.

Between 1882 and 1914, approximately 20 million immigrants came to the United States. Mass immigration from eastern and southern Europe dramatically altered the population's ethnic and religious composition. Unlike earlier immigrants, who had come primarily from northern Europe — Britain, Germany, Ireland, and Scandinavia — many of the "new immigrants" arrived from Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Russia. The newcomers were often Catholic or Jewish, and two-thirds of them settled in cities.

Immigration to the East

The two largest groups of the new immigrants in this period were the Jews of eastern Europe and the Italians. Not only were they different from other Americans in many ways, they also settled in the most congested districts of America's industrial cities, and they seemed so helpless and ill-fitting. Both groups were described as illiterate, unwashed, undisciplined, and undesirable. Immigrants from Italy came with little urban experience, and most did not even intend to settle here, only to make some money and go back home. Indeed, the arrival of these groups touched off a process of immigration restriction that ultimately closed the **vaunted** [*praised*] "golden door".

In their large numbers, these immigrants brought to their new land much valuable experience and many important gifts. For better and worse, they helped expose a young nation to ancient ethical and moral systems, new political and philosophical traditions, and rich cultural and economic experiences. Their diversity contributed to the evolution of American liberty. And like other immigrants before them, they peopled the land, pushed back its frontiers, built its cities, laid its tracks, worked its factories, enriched its cultures, and fashioned a remarkable technology. Of course they reaped many benefits, too: the opportunity for liberty and a better life — and for even a poor child, the opportunity to dream big dreams.

But with time and success, many Americans who had once been immigrants themselves had since forgotten the difficulties associated with the process. And now they feared it. So during the 1920s, America slammed the doors on this part of the country's unique past by passing a landmark law, known as the Emergency Quota Act, that put an end to open immigration. By declaring that immigration could not exceed 3 percent of the number of a nation's people already in the United States in 1910, this act severely restricted the flow of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.

Immigration to the West

Europeans were not the only ones who made their way to the United States in these decades. Many immigrants came through the West. Some, like immigrants from Mexico, and even from its more remote regions, began to arrive in the late 19th century, primarily to work on the railroads. They created small **enclaves** [*regions where people of one ethnic group live*] as far north as Chicago before the beginning of the 20th century. Pushed by the Mexican Revolution, these immigrants sought new labor opportunities in the United States.

On the West Coast, Chinese people immigrated in large numbers through Angel Island in San Francisco. The Chinese were the only immigrants ever to be excluded specifically by nationality.

The history of Chinese immigration stands in a class of its own. Between the end of the Civil War and 1882, about 300,000 Chinese immigrants had entered the United States. Anti-Chinese sentiment had been running high in California since the 1850s, and in 1882, the United States Congress passed the first restriction on immigration. The Chinese Exclusion Act barred Chinese immigrants from coming to the United States.

The 1890s saw not only government regulation but also the emergence of organized citizen action against immigration. In 1895, a group of elite women and men in Boston founded the Immigration Restriction League with the goal of preserving the historic ethnic makeup of America — as defined by this group. They pushed for a literacy test, which passed in Congress in 1896, although President Grover Cleveland vetoed the measure. In the early 20th century, during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, a few more categories of potential immigrants were added to the list of undesirables, including the “**feeble-minded** [*stupid*],” “**imbeciles** [*idiots*],” carriers of various diseases, and **anarchists** [*anti-government activists*].

*Diner, Hasnia, Immigration and Migration, (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History)
“Immigration”: History Now 3 (Spring 2005)*

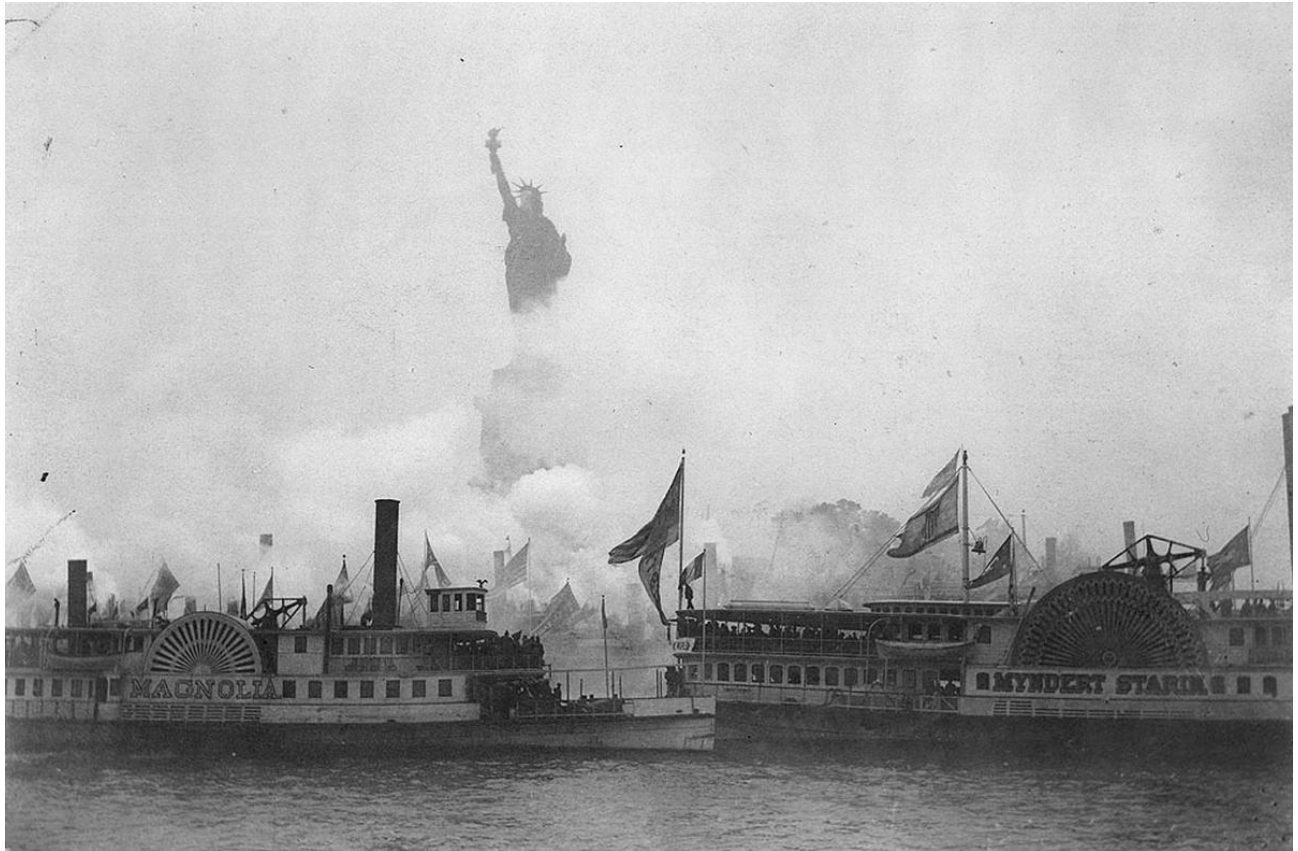
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, History Times: A Nation of Immigrants (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History)

Timeline of U.S. Immigration Policy

Review the “Timeline of U.S. Immigration Policy” on the PBS website, focusing on the laws passed between 1790 and 1921.

Group 1: Immigration to the East
Document A
The Statue of Liberty

The Statue of Liberty, officially called Liberty Enlightening the World, was a joint effort between France and the United States intended to commemorate the lasting friendship between the peoples of the two nations. The Statue of Liberty was then given to the United States and placed atop an American-designed pedestal on a small island in Upper New York Bay, now known as Liberty Island, and dedicated by President Grover Cleveland in 1886.



Looming above New York Harbor nearby, the Statue of Liberty provided a majestic welcome to those passing through Ellis Island. (The Atlantic, TheAtlantic.com)

Document B
Emma Lazarus's "The New Colossus"

Emma Lazarus, a Jewish American poet, wrote "The Great Colossus" in 1883 as a donation to the auction of artistic and literary works to raise money for the construction of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. In 1903, the poem was engraved on a plaque and attached to the statue's pedestal.

Not like the **brazen** [*bold*] **giant of Greek fame** [*an ancient Greek statue*],
With conquering limbs **astride** [*extending*] from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her **beacon-hand** [*torch-carrying hand*]
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied **pomp** [*ceremony*]" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses **yearning** [*eager*] to breathe free,
The wretched **refuse** [*trash*] of your **teeming** [*swarming*] shore.
Send these, the homeless, **tempest-tost** [*thrown by a storm*] to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Lazarus, Emma. The New Colossus. 1903. Courtesy of PoetryFoundation.org

Document C

The Saranoff Family Embraces America

Hilda Polacheck conducted the following interview with the Saranoffs, a Russian Jewish immigrant family, about their early experiences in Chicago in the 1930s.

Jacob Saranoff worked in a rag-shop near **Hull House** [*a community “settlement” house in Chicago, which provided resources to immigrants*]. He had come to Chicago from Russia in 1902, bringing his wife and two children with him

The next morning the children were enrolled in the public school. The first great ambition of Jacob and Sarah Saranoff had been realized. Their children were in school.

After paying a month’s rent and the price of the furniture and household utensils, Jacob had two dollars left. It was necessary for Jacob to take the first job that he could find. The job was sorting rags. His wages were eight dollars a week. The rent was six dollars a month. Jacob and Sarah decided that they could get along

The floor of the rag-shop was never swept . . . but Jacob paid no attention to the dust. His children were in school. They could not have gone to school in Russia. There were no schools for Jewish children in the village where he had lived. So why pay attention to dust?

Solomon, or Solly, as he was called, the older of the two children, wanted to learn to play the piano. But how does one get piano lessons and buy a piano on which to practice on eight dollars a week? “Someday I will learn to play,” Solly said. “All sorts of miracles happen in America. Maybe something will happen so that I can learn”

The dream of buying a piano now became an obsession with Jacob The idea came to Jacob that he could rent one of the bedrooms to **boarders** [*people who rent and live in a part of someone else’s home*] The boarders moved into one of the two bedrooms. A shiny new piano was moved into the bare parlor. A relative gave the family a discarded cot which was put into the parlor. On this Solly slept. Rosie was moved into the bedroom where her parents slept. Her bed was made up of the four chairs

Solly was ready to graduate from high school. He was to play one of his own compositions at the graduation exercises Jacob was proud of his son, who was loudly applauded by the audience Jacob would have liked to stay in bed the morning after the graduation. But a man had been fired the week before for staying home one day. So he dragged himself out of the bed and went to the rag-shop. Several hours later he was brought home by two men. They said that Jacob had started to cough and had spit large chunks of blood Sarah was panic stricken. The neighbors called a doctor from the health department. A week later, Jacob was dead.

Courtesy of Library of Congress.

Document D
“Where the Blame Lies” (Political Cartoon)

“Where the Blame Lies” shows a man holding a top hat and gesturing toward a group of immigrants labeled “German socialist,” “Russian anarchist,” “Polish **vagabond** [homeless person],” “Italian **brigand** [robber, usually in a rural setting],” “English convict,” “Irish pauper,” etc., in New York City. A frowning Uncle Sam leans against a building. At his feet is a sheet of paper on which is written: “**Mafia** [Italian organized-crime group] in New Orleans, Anarchists in Chicago, Socialists in New York.” The man says to Uncle Sam, “If Immigration was properly Restricted, you would no longer be troubled with Anarchy, Socialism, the Mafia, and such kindred evils!”



(Library of Congress)

Group 2: Immigration to the West

Document A

“A Memorial from Representative Chinamen in America”

Below, several Chinese men write to then-president Ulysses S. Grant about the experiences of Chinese immigrants in the United States in 1876.

First — We understand that it has always been the settled policy of your honorable government to welcome immigration to your shores, from all countries, without **hindrance** [*barrier*]. The Chinese are not the only people who have crossed the ocean to seek a residence in this land.

Second — The treaty of **amity** [*friendship*] and peace between the United States and China makes special mention of the rights and privileges of Americans in China, and also of the rights and privileges of Chinese in America.

Third — American steamers, subsidized by your honorable government, have visited the ports of China and invited our people to come to this country to find employment and improve their condition.

Fourth — Our people in this country, for the most part, have been peaceable, law-abiding, and **industrious** [*hardworking*]. They performed the largest part of the unskilled labor in the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad and other railroads on this coast. They have found useful employment in all the manufacturing establishments of this coast, in agricultural pursuits, and in family service. While benefiting themselves with the honest reward of their daily toil, they have given satisfaction to their employers and have left all the results of their industry to enrich the State. They have not displaced white laborers from these positions, but have simply multiplied industries

Seventh — At the present time an intense excitement and bitter hostility against the Chinese in this land, and against further Chinese immigration, has been created in the minds of the people, led on by his Honor the Mayor of San Francisco and his associates in office

Courtesy of Library of Congress.

Document B
Lee Chew's "The Biography of a Chinaman"

This excerpt is from Lee Chew's "The Biography of a Chinaman," written for the Independent in 1903.

The treatment of the Chinese in this country is all wrong and mean

There is no reason for the prejudice against the Chinese But the trouble is that the Chinese are such excellent and faithful workers that bosses will have no others when they can get them

It was the jealousy of laboring men of other nationalities — especially the Irish — that raised the outcry against the Chinese. No one would hire an Irishman, German, Englishman, or Italian when he could get a Chinese, because our countrymen are so much more honest Chinese were persecuted, not for their **vices** [*sins*], but for their **virtues** [*good qualities*].

There are few Chinamen in jails and none in the poorhouses. There are no Chinese tramps or drunkards. Many Chinese here have become sincere Christians, in spite of the persecution which they have to endure from their heathen countrymen. More than half the Chinese in this country would become citizens if allowed to do so, and would be patriotic Americans. But how can they make this country their home as matters now are! They are not allowed to bring wives here from China, and if they marry American women there is a great outcry. Under the circumstances, how can I call this my home, and how can anyone blame me if I take my money and go back to my village in China?

Chew, Lee. The Biography of a Chinaman. 1903. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.

Document C
The Workingmen of San Francisco

This excerpt is from a speech to the workingmen of San Francisco on August 16, 1888.

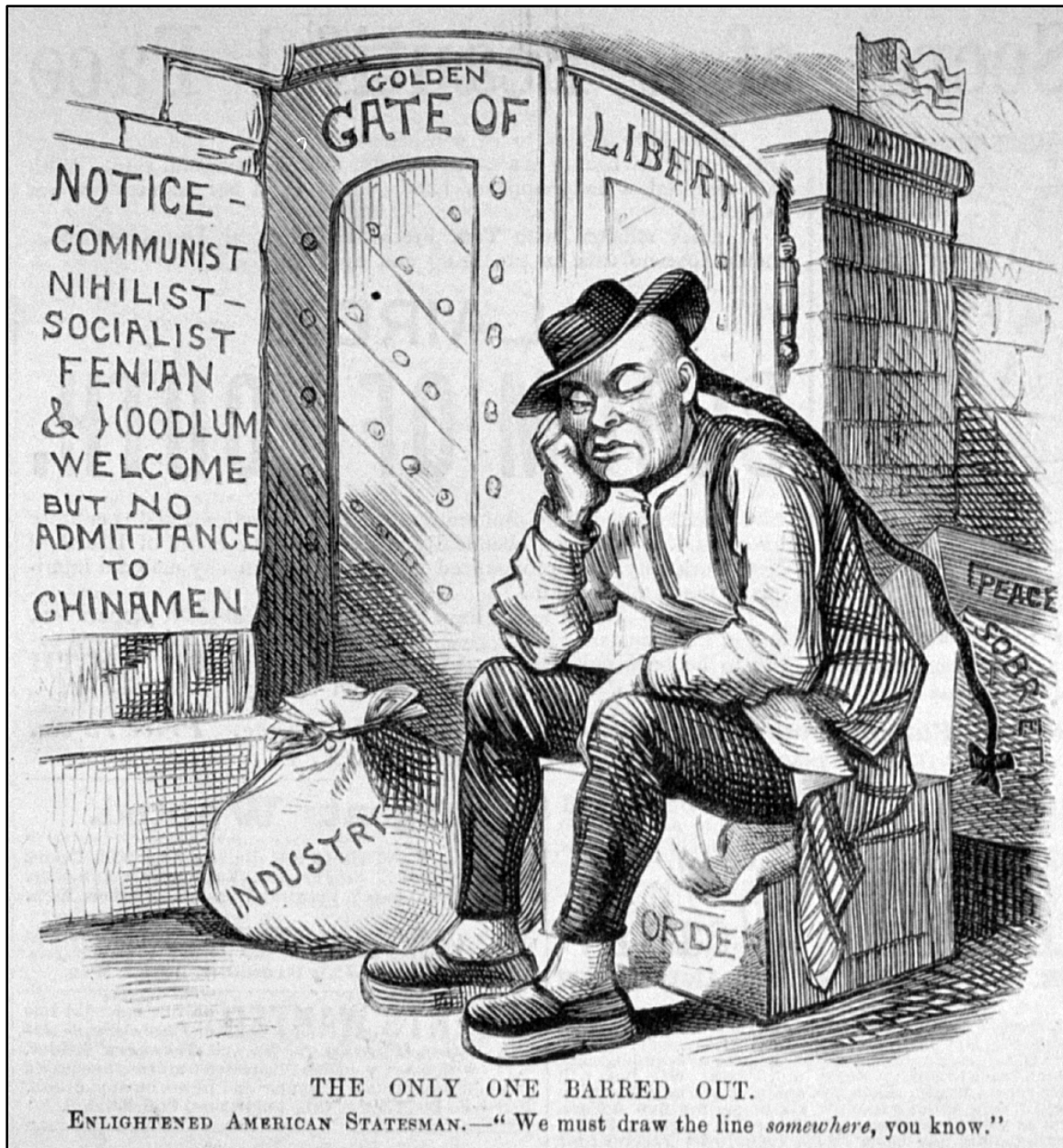
We have met here in San Francisco tonight to raise our voice to you in warning of a great danger that seems to us **imminent** [*about to happen*], and threatens our almost utter destruction as a prosperous community

Now, hundreds and thousands of Chinese are every week flocking into our State. Today, every avenue to labor, of every sort, is crowded with Chinese slave labor worse than it was eight years ago This state of things brings about a terrible competition between our own people, who must live as civilized Americans, and the Chinese, who live like degraded slaves. We should all understand that this state of things cannot be much longer endured.

August 16, 1888. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.

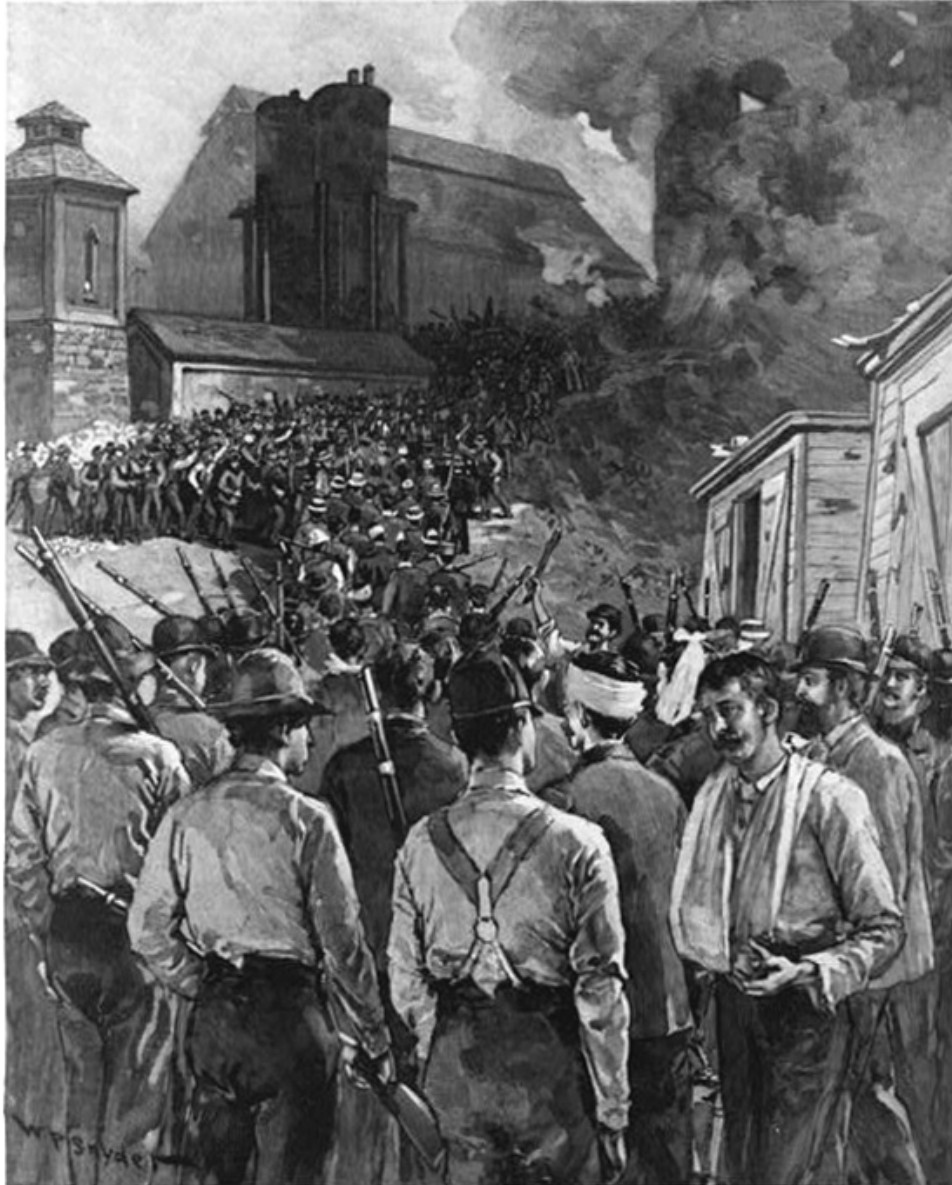
Document D
The Only One Barred Out

In 1882, the U.S. government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. While other immigrant groups were subject to government immigration quotas, the Chinese were fully banned from immigrating to the United States. In one year, Chinese immigration dropped from 40,000 to 23. The cartoon below, "The Only One Barred Out," appeared in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper on April 1, 1882.



A political cartoon from 1882 showing a Chinese man being barred entry to the "Golden Gate of Liberty." The caption reads "We must draw the line somewhere, you know." (Library of Congress)

Lesson 9: Labor Unions

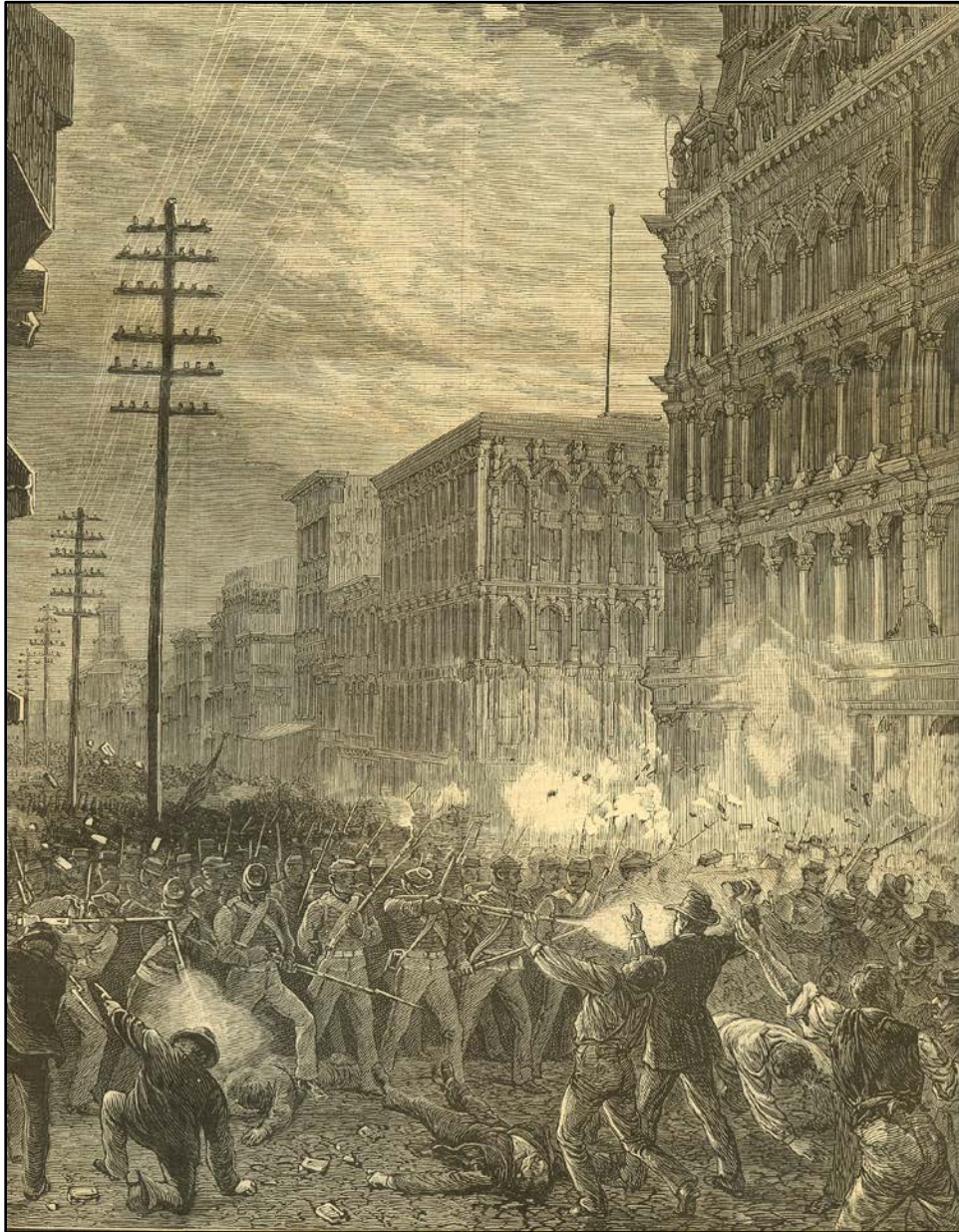


"The Homestead Riot," by W.P. Snyder, on the cover of Harper's Weekly magazine, 1892 (Wikimedia)

How effective were labor unions?

Homework Labor Unions

Read the article *“The Rise of Organized Labor,”* by the Independence Hall Association and published on the Newsela website.



An engraving titled *“Sixth Regiment Fighting Its Way Through Baltimore”* illustrates the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. (Wikimedia)

General Information for Union and Management

Read “General Information for Union and Management” on the B&O Railroad Museum website.

CONFIDENTIAL: Management Information

Read “Management: Confidential Information” on the B&O Railroad Museum website.

DO NOT SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH THE UNION

CONFIDENTIAL: Union Information

Read “Union: Confidential Information” on the B&O Railroad Museum website.

DO NOT SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH MANAGEMENT

Mediator Instructions

As the mediator, your role is to act as a neutral participant in the negotiation. You must hold participants to time limits and try to keep them from straying off the topic and not answering the questions raised in the negotiation. You may ask questions intended to allow the participants to fully develop their argument in order to ensure the conversation is productive. Because you have no allegiance to either group, ask questions that encourage a compromise, such as: *What compensation might you be willing to sacrifice in order to achieve your primary goals? Or, What might you be willing to give to laborers in exchange for your nonnegotiable positions?*

Lesson 10: Labor Unions



Labor Day parade, 1908 (Wikimedia)

How successfully did labor unions fight for worker rights?

**Homework
Strikes**

Read the articles “Homestead Strike” and “Haymarket Riot” on the History Channel website and “Pullman Strike” on Encyclopedia Britannica.

Group 1: The Homestead Strike
Document A
Homestead Strike: Union Perspective

Emma Goldman was a political activist and radical who fiercely supported workers' rights. The excerpt below comes from her 1931 autobiography, in which she remembers her reaction to the Homestead Strike in Pennsylvania that had happened 39 years earlier.

Trouble had broken out between the Carnegie Steel Company and its workers, organized in the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers. Amalgamated Association was one of the biggest and most efficient unions in the country, consisting mostly of strong Americans, men of decision and grit, who stood up for their rights.

The Carnegie Company, on the other hand, was a powerful corporation. Andrew Carnegie, its president, had turned over management to Henry Clay Frick, a man known for his hatred of unions and workers The company would make no more agreements with the Amalgamated Association. In fact, he would not recognize the union at all. Then he closed the mills. It was an open declaration of war.

The steelworkers declared that they were ready to take up the challenge of Frick: They would insist on their right to organize and to deal collectively with their employers. Their tone was manly, ringing with the spirit of their rebellious **forebears** [*ancestors*] of the Revolutionary War. Then the news flashed across the country of the slaughter of steelworkers by **Pinkertons** [*armed guards and spies for corporations*]. In the dead of night, Frick sent a boat packed with strike-breakers and heavily armed Pinkerton thugs to the mill. The workers stationed themselves along the shore, determined to drive back Frick's hires.

When the boat got within range, the Pinkertons had opened fire, without warning, killing a number of Homestead men on the shore, among them a little boy, and wounding many others.

Goldman, Emma. Living My Life. 1931. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.

Document B
Homestead Strike: Carnegie Steel Perspective

In this newspaper interview in the Pittsburgh Post on July 8, 1892, Henry Frick, chairman of Carnegie Steel, explains his opposition to the union's demands.

I can say as clearly as possible that under no circumstances will we have any further dealings with the Amalgamated Association as an organization. This is final.

The workmen in the Amalgamated Association work under what is known as a sliding scale. As the price of steel rises, the earnings of the men also rise; as the prices fall, their wages also fall. The wages are not allowed to fall below a certain amount, which is called the minimum. Until now, the minimum has been \$25 per ton of steel produced. We have recently changed the minimum to \$23 instead of \$25

The Amalgamated Association was unwilling to consider a minimum below \$24, even though the improved machinery would enable workers to earn more. We found it impossible to arrive at any agreement with the Amalgamated Association, so we decided to close our works at Homestead.

Frick, Henry. July 1892. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.

Document C
Homestead Strike: Public Opinion

Although the public had initially been sympathetic to the laborers, the violence of the strikes quickly turned public opinion against the union. The excerpt below is from an investigation by a House committee investigating the strike in 1892.

If the washerwoman of [labor leader John McLuckie] refuses to wash for what he is willing to pay, that is her right, but she has no right to stand in front of his door and fling stones at another woman who comes to take her place and do the work under the new scale of wages which he is willing to pay.

1892. Courtesy of PBS.org.

Document D
Homestead Strike: Outcome

In mid-November, the union conceded. Authorities charged the strike leaders with murder and 160 other strikers with lesser crimes. The workers' entire strike committee also was arrested for treason. However, sympathetic juries would convict none of the men. All the strike leaders and many more were blacklisted, and the Carnegie Company successfully swept unions out of Homestead. With the union crushed, Carnegie slashed wages, imposed 12-hour workdays, and eliminated 500 jobs. Below is Frick's telegram to Carnegie on November 21, 1892, just after the union conceded.

Strike officially declared off yesterday. Our victory is now complete and most gratifying. Do not think we will ever have any serious labor trouble again Let the Amalgamated [Union] still exist and hold full sway at other people's mills. That is no concern of ours.

Frick, Henry. November 21, 1892. Courtesy of PBS.org.

Group 2: The Pullman Strike

Document A

The Pullman Strike: Eugene Debs's Appeal to Railway Employees

Eugene Debs was the leader of the American Railway Union. In the excerpt below, Debs issued an appeal to the railway employees of the United States on June 29, 1894.

To the Railway Employees of America: The struggle with the Pullman company has developed into a contest between the producing classes and the money power of the country We stand upon the ground that the workingmen are entitled to a just proportion of the proceeds of their labor. This the Pullman company denied them. Reductions had been made from time to time until the employees earned barely sufficient wages to live, not enough to prevent them from sinking deeper and deeper into Pullman's debt, thereby mortgaging their bodies and souls, as well as their children's, to that heartless corporation.

Up to this point, the fight was between the American Railway Union and the Pullman Company. The American Railway Union **resolved** [*decided*] that it would refuse to handle Pullman cars and equipment The American Railway Union accepted the **gage** [*promise*] of war, and thus the contest is now on Every railroad employee of the country take a stand against the corporations in this fight, for if it should be lost, corporations will have **despotic** [*tyrannical*] sway and all employees will be reduced to a condition scarcely removed above chattel slavery; but the fight will not be lost.

June 29, 1894. Courtesy of Illinois Labor History Society, IllinoisLaborHistory.org.

Document B
Two Perspectives on the Strikers

The following article was written after federal troops had been in Chicago for three days on July 7, 1894, and it was published by the Chicago Times.

MEN NOT AWED BY SOLDIERS, MOST OF THE ROADS AT A STANDSTILL
Railway Union Is Confident of Winning Against Armed Capital

Despite the presence of United States troops and the mobilization of five regiments of state militia, despite threats of **martial law** [*military law*] and total extermination of the strikers by bullet, the great strike begun by the American Railway Union holds three-fourths of the roads running out of Chicago. If the soldiers are sent to the southwest section of the city, bloodshed and perhaps death will follow today, for this is the most lawless part in the city. But the **perpetrators** [*persons committing an act, often a crime*] are not American Railway Union men. The people engaged in this outrageous work of destruction are not strikers. The persons who set the fires yesterday are young **hoodlums** [*criminals*].

The following article was published on the same day, July 7, 1894, by the Chicago Tribune.

Hundreds of Freight Cars, Loaded and Empty, Burn, Rioters Prevent Firemen
from Saving the Property

The yards from Brighton Park to 61st Street were lit on fire last night by the rioters. Between 600 and 700 freight cars have been destroyed, many of them loaded. Miles and miles of costly track are in a snarled tangle of heat-twisted rails. Not less than \$750,00 — possibly \$1,000,000 — of property has been sacrificed to the mob of drunken Anarchists and rebels. That is the record of the night's work by the Debs strikers.

July 7, 1894. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.

Document C

The Pullman Investigation

The following excerpt is from a transcript of the investigation of the Pullman Strike by the federal government. The transcript was published by W. F. Burns in his book The Pullman Boycott in 1894. Lovejoy, interviewed below, was a Pullman employee.

Commissioner Kernan: Is it not one of the greatest troubles the railroad men have to contend with that they cannot get a hearing of their grievances?

Mr. Lovejoy: Yes, sir. It is. And if the men could always be sure of getting a fair and impartial hearing, I do not believe there would be any strikes. As a rule the men are opposed to strikes and resort to them only when every means of settling grievances has failed.

Commissioner Kernan: Is it not true that strikes usually end disastrously to the men?

Mr. Lovejoy: Strikes often fail to accomplish the particular end in view, but I believe on the whole their tendency is toward a betterment of the conditions of the men. The strike we have just passed through has demonstrated to the working people of this country that they must get together as one solid body before they can win. They have found out that when they undertake to assert their rights they have no friends but themselves. The press, the **judiciary** [courts], the ministers and office holders are all against them.

Burns, W .F. The Pullman Boycott. 1894. Courtesy of Gutenberg.org

Document D

Outcome of the Strike

On July 18, Pullman shops began to open their doors, and the militia slowly withdrew until August 7. Some strikers went back to work, but they were required to give up their union cards and sign a pledge not to join any union while employed for Pullman. Those workers not rehired were blacklisted by Pullman and found it almost impossible to find work elsewhere. Workers' wages and families were most hurt by the strike. The Pullman corporation also lost more by fighting the strike than if it had just met the workers' demands. The quote below is from Theodore Rhodie, a former employee.

I do not like to walk up there and hand up my membership in the American Railway Union because when a man asks me to give up my principles, my rights as an American citizen, he might just as well ask for my life.

Rhodie, Theodore. 2894. Courtesy of American Studies at the University of Virginia, xroads.Virginia.edu.

Group 3: The Haymarket Riot
Document A
Chicago Herald: The Haymarket Riot

The following text was adapted from an article published on May 4, 1886, in the Chicago Herald.

Three thousand men and boys stood around three barrels and boxes built as a platform on the square at 8 o'clock last evening. August Spies, the editor of the Anarchist newspaper in this city, stood upon one of the barrels. He made a brief speech to the crowd, and then introduced Albert Parsons, one of the prominent leaders of the Socialists of Chicago. The latter told his hearers that instead of getting ten hours' pay for eight hours' work, statistics proved that workingmen today were only getting two hours' pay for ten hours' work, and if they worked eight hours at the same wages, they would only be getting three hours' pay for eight hours' work

Just as the [police] officers reached the barrels . . . there was an explosion that rattled the windows in a thousand buildings, a burst of flame lit up the street, and then a scene of frightful and indescribable **consternation** [*distress*] followed.

May 4, 1886. Courtesy of The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

Document B
The New York Times: The Trial of Albert Parsons

Albert Parsons was one of the leaders of the Haymarket Riot and one of the seven men sentenced to death following the riot. The men argued that they were not guilty and had nothing to do with the bomb. The following article, "The Anarchists' Trial," was published in The New York Times on July 28, 1886.

At the Anarchist trial this morning, a newspaper reporter testified that he was at the Haymarket meeting. Parsons in his speech said: "What good are those strikes going to do? What do you think you are going to gain by them? Do you think you are going to gain your point? No, you will have to go back to work for less wages than you formerly received."

When he mentioned the name of **Jay Gould** [*an American capitalist widely criticized for corruption and strikebreaking*] someone cried, "Hang him; throw him in the lake." Parsons said: "No, no; that won't do. If Jay Gould was put out of the way today, another Jay Gould or 100 Jay Goulds would rise up. It is not the man, but the system, that ought to be destroyed"

Detective Cosgrove also testified about Parsons's speech. He estimated the crowd at 2,000 and said it was very unruly and excited. Parsons near the close of his speech frequently cried, "To arms," which served to greatly increase the excitement.

July 28, 1886. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.

Document C

Albert Parsons: Letter from Jail

While in jail, Parsons wrote the letter below to his wife, Lucy Parsons, who was also a radical labor activist and anarchist. He was awaiting sentencing after being found guilty of conspiracy. Ultimately, Parsons and three others were hanged for their alleged crimes.

My Darling Wife:

Our verdict this morning cheers the hearts of tyrants throughout the world.

There was no evidence that any one of the eight doomed men knew of, or advised, or **abetted** [*encouraged or supported*] the Haymarket tragedy. But what does that matter? The privileged class demands a victim, and we are offered a sacrifice to **appease** [*calm or satisfy*] the hungry yells of an infuriated mob of millionaires who will be contented with nothing less than our lives. Monopoly triumphs!

Well, my poor, dear wife, I, personally, feel sorry for you and the helpless little babes.

My children — well, their father had better die in the effort to secure their liberty and happiness than live contented in a society which condemns nine-tenths of its children to a life of wage-slavery and poverty. Bless them; I love them unspeakably, my poor helpless little ones.

Ah, wife, living or dead, we are as one. For you my affection is everlasting. For the people, humanity. I cry out again and again in the doomed victim's cell: Liberty! Justice! Equality!

Parsons, Lucy. 1886. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.

Document D

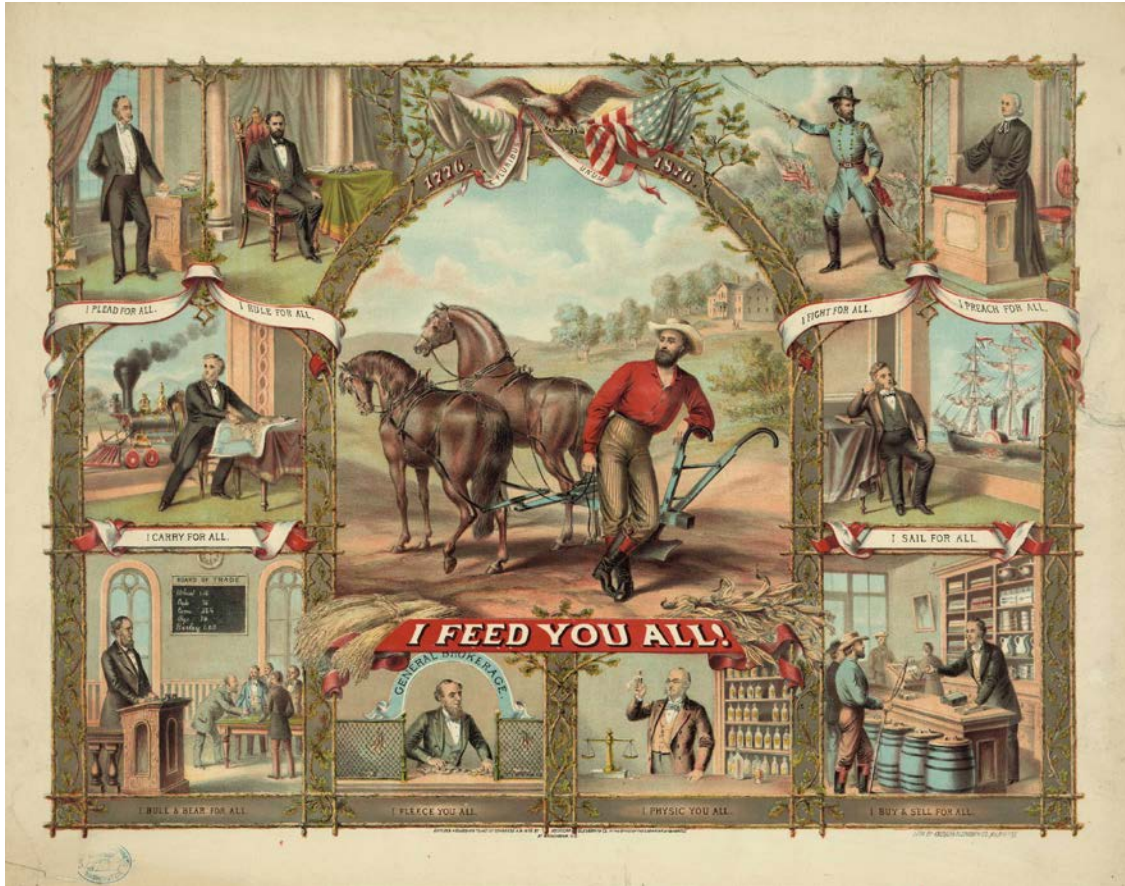
Historian Nathan Fine: Outcome of the Haymarket Riot

Following the riot, public fear of anarchists and their association with labor unions increased. However, many laborers were angry following the injustices of the trial of the labor leader. The excerpt below is from historian Nathan Fine's book Labor and Farmer Parties in the United States, 1828–1928, published in 1928.

The fact is that despite police repression [of the true guilt of the accused], newspaper incitement to **hysteria** [*extreme, often irrational fear*] [of anarchists], and organization of the **possessing classes** [*management*], which followed the throwing of the bomb on May 4, the Chicago wage earners only united their forces and stiffened their resistance. The conservative and radical central bodies, the socialists and the anarchists, the single taxers and the reformers, the native born . . . and the foreign born Germans, Bohemians, and Scandinavians, all got together for the first time on the political field in the summer following the Haymarket affair The Knights of Labor doubled its membership, reaching 40,000 in the fall of 1886. On Labor Day, the number of Chicago workers in parade led the country.

Fine, Nathan. Labor and Farmer Parties in the United States, 1828–1928. New York: Rand School of Social Science, 1928; pg. 5.3

Lesson 11: Agrarian Discontent



"I feed you all!" lithograph by American Oleograph Co., Milwaukee, ca. 1875 (Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History)

How did industrialism affect the lives of rural Americans?

Homework

Agrarian Discontent

The following text was adapted from historian Michael Kazin's essay "Populism and Agrarian Discontent," published by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. Additionally, read the section "Agrarian Activism in the United States" in the article "The Populists" on the Khan Academy website.

Today, the Gilded Age evokes thoughts of "robber baron" industrialists, immigrants working long hours in factories for little pay, massive, violent strikes, and political corruption. But there were also serious problems in rural America, where most of the population lived. And many small farmers turned to social movements and politics to fix those problems.

For example, during the 1880s, the population of Nebraska doubled to one million, a faster rate of growth than that of any other state in the Union. Taking advantage of cheap land offered by the railroads, Civil War veterans and European immigrants rushed in to start farms or launch small businesses.

Then, near the end of the decade, a nasty mix of crises put an end to the boom. A massive blizzard in 1888 killed animals across the northern plains, ruining Nebraskans who had invested their life's savings in pigs and cattle. Then in 1889, an enormous harvest of corn — Nebraska's largest crop — resulted in the lowest prices in memory. Some farmers resorted to burning their corn for fuel instead of selling it to buy coal. City newspapers blamed the crisis on too much corn for too few buyers; they predicted the market would readjust itself in time. A year later, the worst drought since the Civil War destroyed millions of acres of corn, wheat, and oats. The health of Nebraska's urban economy depended upon the harvest of its farms. Bankrupt businesses and unfinished buildings scarred the streets of Lincoln and Omaha.

A growing number of Nebraskans had already begun to fight against the industrial powers of the era. They believed that a powerful conspiracy was robbing small farmers of the fruits of their labors. They accused the railroads of imposing sharp and unfair price increases in rates, bankers of committing harmful lending practices, and the political establishment of serving the rich and the cities at the expense of productive families in the countryside. Men and women who had traveled West following the Homestead Act of 1862 had hoped to live an independent life. Instead, they were forced to **mortgage** [*give as a loan*] their farms and sometimes even their plows and animals to stay in business.

Since 1880, the Farmers Alliance had been attempting to mobilize these frustrated farmers. For most of the decade, good crop prices and the rush of optimistic newcomers kept its membership in the low thousands, but by 1890, the Farmers Alliance boasted over two million members nationwide.

Similar events and a similar kind of outrage were present in farming states all across the South and Great Plains. The prices of cotton, wheat, and corn were decreasing. Neither major party was willing to do anything much about it. And many wage earners had their own reasons to protest: Railroad companies, mine operators, and big manufacturers fired men for trying to organize unions, making it difficult to win either job security or a living wage.

Kazin, Michael, Populism and Agrarian Discontent. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History)

Document A
Luna Kellie: A Prairie Populist

Luna Kellie moved to the frontier with her family when she was 18 years old. Years later, in 1925, she recorded the hardships and struggles of her experiences in her memoirs, A Prairie Populist. The excerpt below describes Luna’s life with her husband, J.T., during the 1880s.

We never got enough money when we sold the crops to pay for their production. We had fallen so behind that we had to **mortgage** [take out a loan on a home] the farm at a high **interest** [additional money that must be paid when repaying a loan]

As my husband often said, “We have raised enough grain this year to feed us and all our descendants for a hundred years yet have to sell every bushel of it to pay expenses. Our expenses did not include a salary for ourselves or anything not absolutely necessary to produce the crop.” These things made us feel bitter and though we were bound to make a good home for the children we felt the lack of youth and hope.

Kellie, Luna. A Prairie Populist. 1925. Courtesy of Iowa Research Online, University of Iowa, IR,Ulowa.edu.

Document B
Farm Production and Prices

American farmers invested in technology, particularly improved plows, reapers, and threshers. With westward expansion onto the prairies, a single family with a reaper could increase acreage and thus production without needing large amounts of hired labor. The table below illustrates the impact of new farm technology on American farm production and prices.

Year	Number of Farms*	Bales of Cotton*	Bushels of Corn*	Bushels of Wheat*	Price Index (1860 = 100) **
1860	2	3.8	839	173	100
1870	2.7	4.4	760	254	140
1880	4	6.6	1,706	502	100
1890	4.6	8.7	2,125	449	90
1900	5.7	10.1	2,662	599	90

*in millions

**Price index is the average price of goods compared over time. If the price index of goods is 100 in 1860, the price index in following years is the average as compared to 100. (Data retrieved from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History)

Document C
Declaration of Purposes of the Patrons of Husbandry

Below is the Declaration of Purposes of the Patrons of Husbandry in 1874 of the Grange, a collective of farmers who advocated for their fair crop prices.

For our business interests, we desire to bring producers and consumers, farmers and manufacturers into the most direct and friendly relations possible. Hence we must dispense with a surplus of middlemen, not that we are unfriendly to them, but we do not need them. Their surplus and their exactions decrease our profits

We are opposed to excessive salaries [of management], high rates of interest, and exorbitant per cent profits in trade. They greatly increase our burdens, and do not bear a proper proportion to the profits of producers.

1874. Courtesy of The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

Lesson 12: Populism



The People's Party Convention at Columbus, Nebraska, 1890 (Wikimedia)

Why did the Populist Party appeal to millions of Americans during the Gilded Age?

Homework

Populism

The following text was adapted from historian Michael Kazin's essay "Populism and Agrarian Discontent," published by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

In 1892, farmers and labor unions came together in Omaha to organize a new People's Party, also known as the Populists. "We believe," proclaimed Ignatius Donnelly, a 61-year-old former congressman from Minnesota, "that the powers of government — in other words, of the people — should be expanded ... as rapidly and as far as the good sense of an intelligent people and the teachings of experience shall justify, to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land." Most of the party's leadership belonged to the Farmers Alliance.

But the Populists also knew they would never transform the nation focusing on agrarian issues only. Their Omaha Platform proposed a number of ways to restrain and regulate corporate America so that "the plain people" would once again feel the government was standing up for their interests: a **graduated** [*increased rate with increased income*] income tax, a "flexible" currency based on silver as well as gold (this would help people who owed money more easily pay back their debts), and the government control and ownership of the railroads and the telegraph. The Omaha Platform also preached that "the interests of rural and civil labor are the same; their enemies are identical" and backed it up with demands for an eight-hour day for public workers.

With such proposals, Populists won the votes of large numbers of miners in the Rocky Mountains and urban craftsmen in the cities of the Mississippi Valley and the Far West — as well as from small farmers in the South and West. From 1892 to 1896, an economic depression hurt the nation. As a result, the new party elected 45 congressmen and six senators, as well as governors and a majority of state legislators in Colorado and Kansas, and a mayor of San Francisco. Populist candidates were competitive nearly everywhere outside the industrial Northeast.

The involvement of women in the movement put the older parties to shame. Female Populists organized meetings on the prairies and the fields, spoke widely at rallies, and wrote for the movement press. The reformer Mary Elizabeth Lease became famous for allegedly telling Kansans in 1890 to "raise less corn and more hell." When Populists took charge of Colorado's government in 1892, one of their first acts was to place a vote on woman suffrage before the voters. It passed easily.

The Populists also included black farm laborers. They first welcomed the formation of a separate Colored Farmers Alliance — only to turn their backs on it in 1891 when thousands of black cotton-pickers staged a strike against employers who included members of the white Alliance. Still, African Americans joined the People's Party in states from North Carolina to Kansas. The party's ability to persuade black men to switch from the Republican Party was crucial to electing many third-party white candidates in the former Confederacy.

But the success of the People's Party was brief. Its first presidential campaign in 1892 was its last serious race. In 1896, the People's Party split apart over the question of whether to endorse William Jennings Bryan for president. The young, charismatic Bryan was already the Democratic nominee for president, and he was sympathetic to many of their ideas. In the end, a majority of delegates to the Populist convention supported Bryan, hoping that his election would be the first step toward liberating the nation from the rule of big business. Bryan's loss to Republican nominee William McKinley doomed the third party to a slow but certain death.

Kazin, Michael, Populism and Agrarian Discontent. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History)

Document A Populist Party Platform

In 1892, leaders of the Farmers' Alliances founded a new organization called the Populist Party. Below is the new party's platform.

We meet in the midst of a nation brought to the edge of moral and political ruin The fruits of the **toil** [*work*] of millions are badly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, ridiculous in the history of mankind From these governmental injustices we breed the two great classes—tramps and millionaires Our country finds itself confronted by . . . falling prices, the formation of conspiracies, the poverty of the producing class. . . . We believe that the power of government — in other words, of the people — should be expanded . . . to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land. . . .

We demand,

First. — That the union of the labor forces of the United States shall be permanent and **perpetual** [*lasting*]

Second. — Wealth belongs to him who creates it, and every dollar taken from industry without an equivalent is robbery

Third. — We believe that the time has come when the railroad corporations will either own the people or the people must own the railroads

FINANCE. — We demand a national currency, safe, sound, and flexible issued by the general government only

1. We demand free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold.
2. We demand a **graduated income tax** [*an income tax where the tax percentage increases as income increases*].
3. We believe that the money of the country should be kept as much as possible in the hands of the people. We demand that all State and national revenues shall be limited to the necessary expenses of the government

TRANSPORTATION. — Transportation being a means of exchange and a public necessity, the government should own and operate the railroads.

LAND. — The land is the heritage of the people, and should not be monopolized All land now held by corporations in excess of their actual needs . . . should be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers only.

July 5, 1892. Courtesy of W.W. Norton and Company, WWNorton.com.

Document B
William Jennings Bryan: Cross of Gold

James Weaver ran for president as a Populist Party candidate in 1892 but lost. Following his loss, the party began to lose steam. In 1896, the Democratic Party fused with the Populists. The Democrats agreed to adopt Populist Party interests, and the Populists agreed to support William Jennings Bryan as their candidate. The following speech was delivered by Bryan at the Democratic National Convention in July 1896. Although he lost the race, his speech is considered one of the most famous speeches in American history.

The merchant at the corner store is as much a businessman as the merchant of New York. The farmer who goes forth in the morning and toils all day ... is as much a businessman as the man who [works on Wall Street]. We come to speak for this broader class of businessmen It is for these that we speak.

We are fighting in the defense of our homes and our families. We have petitioned, and our petitions have been **scorned** [*mocked*]. We have **entreated** [*begged*], and our entreaties have been disregarded. We have begged, and they have mocked us. We beg no longer; we entreat no more; we petition no more. We defy them!

You come to us and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the **gold standard** [*the value of paper money based on the value of gold, which causes deflation. Farmers did not like this because it made it harder to pay off debts*]. I tell you that the great cities rest upon these broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic. But destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in this country.

Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them: You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.

Bryan, William Jennings. 1896. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.

Document C

Mary Elizabeth Lease: Speech to the Women's Christian Temperance Movement

Mary Elizabeth Lease became politically involved as a speaker for the rights of workers and farmers. She had a powerful voice and charismatic speaking style. In this speech, Lease spoke to the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1890, a women's movement against alcohol.

The mightiest movement the world has known in two thousand years ... is sending out the happiest message to oppressed humanity that the world has heard since [Christianity].

To this remote region, infested by savage beasts and still more savage men, the women of the New England States, the women of the cultured East, came with husbands, sons and brothers to help them build up a home [in the West] We endured hardships, and dangers; hours of loneliness, fear and sorrow We toiled in the cabin and in the field; we helped our loved ones to make the prairie blossom

Yet, after all our years of toil and deprivation, dangers and hardships, our homes are being taken from us by an **infamous** [*wicked*] system of **mortgage foreclosure** [*when people cannot pay back a mortgage loan, the bank can take the house*]. It takes from us at the rate of five hundred a month the homes that represent the best years of our life, our toil, our hopes, our happiness. How did it happen? The government, siding with Wall Street, broke its contracts with the people As Senator Plumb [of Kansas] tells us, "Our debts were increased, while the means to pay them [cash] was decreased."

No more millionaires, and no more **paupers** [*poor people*]; no more gold kings, silver kings and oil kings, and no more little **waifs** [*poor, homeless people*] of humanity starving for a crust of bread. We shall have the golden age ... when the farmers shall be prosperous and happy ... when the laborer shall have that for which he toils When we shall have not a government of the people by capitalists, but a government of the people, by the people.

Lease, Mary Elizabeth. 1890. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.