HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

From 1890 to 1920, the United States experienced a variety of changes as the country transitioned into the twentieth century. The rise of corporations, the increased urban population, and advances in technology changed how people worked. More men, women, and children found themselves working on production lines in factories for long hours. Many parents depended on the wages that their children could earn to support the basic needs of the family. More women stepped outside of the home to become wage-earners especially after the beginning of World War I. Some male workers resented the influx of lower-wage workers such as women and newly arrived immigrants in the labor-force and saw them as a threat to their economic security.

Recognizing the problems created by the changing times, Progressives sought to tackle corruption in business and politics as well as address numerous societal ills such as the consumption of alcohol. Clubs and organizations such as the NAACP and YWCA worked to tackle issues such as lynching and women’s treatment in the workplace. Progressives achieved several major reforms during this period including women’s suffrage and child labor laws.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:
- Progressive Era Links Guide
- TPS-MTSU Newsletter: Progressive Era
- Between a Rock and A Hard Place: A History of American Sweatshops, 1820-Present
- Make the Dirt Fly (on the Panama Canal)! A Smithsonian Institution Libraries Exhibition
- “Reforming Their World: Women in the Progressive Era”—National Women’s History Museum

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS:

The Library of Congress Web site provides many different types of primary sources related to the Progressive Era, from newspapers to video clips to photographs, and so much more! This primary source set focuses on several aspects of this time period, such as the women’s suffrage movement, child labor, and anti-lynching efforts.

While looking through these images, have students consider the following questions: How has society changed from the Progressive Era to the current day? What do Progressive Era sources show us about the need for reform? How did Progressives work to reform society? What reforms today are similar to the Progressive Era?

Have students explore one reform effort from the Progressive Era more in-depth. Why was this issue important to Progressives? What impact did the issue have on society and individuals? Who was most concerned about this issue? What reforms did they work to implement to address their issue? Did the reforms work?
Silent protest parade in New York [City] against the East St. Louis riots, 1917

[Woman standing over two children painting in an art class at Hull House], [ca. 1924 Feb.]

Jane Addams [c1912 Oct. 30]

[History class, Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama] [1902]

JOIN!
HELP YOUR RACE IN GENERAL AND YOURSELF IN PARTICULAR BY JOINING THE
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
MEMBERSHIP $1.00 A YEAR.

NAACP [advertisement] [from newspaper] [04/24/1920]

Women Opposed to Votes Are Angry with Mr. Taft [04/13/1910]

Careers for women compiled and edited by Catherine Filene [Prospectus] Boston [1920]

Col. Roosevelt on his tour thru New Jersey before the convention [c. 1912: September 3]

Panama Canal--scenes of the finished Canal / [production company unknown]. [1919?]

Biographical sketches of presidential candidates of the Democratic party at the presidential primary election to be held throughout the state of California on Tuesday, May 14, 1912. Woodrow Wilson. Champ Clark.

YORK, ALVIN. SGT., U.S.A.; REP. HULL OF TN; SGT. YORK; SEN. MCKELLAR; SEN. CHAMBERLAIN [1919]
Mobilizing woman-power, by Harriot Stanton Blatch; with a foreword by Theodore Roosevelt ... [1918]

Over there, 1917

Sound Recording: *Over There*, Enrico Caruso recording [1918-07-11]

Knitters in London [i.e., Loudon?] (Tennessee) Hosiery Mills. (See photos and report.) Location: Loudon, Tennessee. [1910 December]
CITATIONS: Progressive Era

Teachers: Providing these primary source replicas without source clues may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations is supplied for reference purposes to you and your students. We have followed the Chicago Manual of Style format, one of the formats recommended by the Library of Congress, for each entry below, minus the access date. The access date for each of these entries is September 1, 2011.


Chicago Daily News, Inc., photographer. “[Woman standing over two children painting in an art class at Hull House].” Photograph. ca. February 1924. From the Library of Congress, Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/cdn:@field(NUMBER+@band(ichicdn+n076596)).


“Women Opposed to Votes Are Angry with Mr. Taft.” Clipping. April 13, 1910. From the Library of Congress, Miller NAWSA Suffrage Scrapbooks, 1897-1911. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbcmillerbib:@field(DOCID+@lit(rbcmiller003739)).


“Panama Canal--scenes of the finished Canal / [production company unknown].” s.n., 1919?. From the Library of Congress, Early Motion Pictures, 1897-1920. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/papr:@field(NUMBER+@band(trmp+4129s5)).
California Dept. of State. “Biographical sketches of presidential candidates of the Democratic party at the presidential primary election to be held throughout the state of California on Tuesday, May 14, 1912. Woodrow Wilson, Champ Clark.” 1912. From the Library of Congress, An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+00202800)).


American Mutoscope and Biograph Company. “Girls winding armatures / American Mutoscope and Biograph Company.” 1904. From the Library of Congress, America at Work, America at Leisure: Motion Pictures from 1894-1915. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/papr:@field(NUMBER+@band(westhpp+2034)+@field(COLLID+workleis)).


