

The Gilded Age

*The Development of the Industrial
United States (1870–1900)*



Immigration and urbanization

Social change

The Western frontier

Politics

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

Icons: For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will learn about the immigration and urbanization that took place during the Gilded Age and be able to answer these key questions:

- Why did urbanization happen?
- What problems did cities face?
- Why did so many immigrants enter the U.S.?
- What challenges did immigrants face?



Looking back timeline



In order to contextualize the Gilded Age, use this timeline to recap previous key historical events.

Either press on a date or drag the pointer along the timeline to find out information about what happened in each year.

Press **start** to begin.

start





What was the Gilded Age?



The **Gilded Age** is the name given to the period of American history between about 1870 and 1900.

The Gilded Age was a period of rapid economic growth, population growth and social change, mostly as a result of **industrialization**. The name refers to the process of gilding an object with a thin outer coat of gold to hide what is beneath.



Why do you think the name the Gilded Age was applied to this period?



One result of industrialization was **urbanization** as the population shifted from rural to urban areas. At the same time that factories and corporations provided jobs in the cities, the **mechanization** of agriculture reduced the number of laborers needed on farms.

Rapid urbanization led to various social conditions and problems, including:

- housing issues
- crime and fire
- pollution and sanitation
- urban planning
- city management.





Science and technology began to radically change people's lives in the late 19th century. As well as driving industrialization, it also had a big impact on cities.

This was most obvious in their appearance, where steel made new feats of engineering possible, such as skyscrapers.



Electricity was also crucial in transforming cities and city life. Electric lighting allowed many activities to take place more easily without natural light. Many appliances that utilized electricity were also invented. These included both labor-saving devices and forms of entertainment.





Urbanization and the rapid growth of cities created many new problems. Poor housing, transportation, water supply and sanitation were issues, and crime and fire posed threats. Press on the buttons to find out more about the problems of city life.

Press **start** to begin.

start





A new form of politics developed to manage the growing cities. In addition to the official city government administration, unofficial city **political machines** developed.



These machines contained many local committee men headed by a **political "boss."** In return for patronage or payoffs, political machines provided services.

Although the machines ran on corruption, they also provided vital services for the cities' poor.

What does the cartoon say about political "bosses"?



Immigration was a big reason for U.S. population growth in the late 19th century. About 20 million immigrants arrived in America between 1870 and 1920.

The pattern of immigration shifted over time. Early immigrants were mainly from the British Isles or Northern Europe, mainly Ireland and Germany, and came to seek a better life.

From the 1890s, far more Eastern Europeans came. They wanted to escape poverty and ethnic persecution. Immigrants from China and then Japan also made their way to the U.S. to seek work as laborers.



What were the push and pull factors for immigrants?



European immigrants arrived at Ellis Island in New York Harbor as their gateway to America. There, they passed the Statue of Liberty, a symbol of freedom and hope. Explore the harbor to find out more about the arrival of immigrants from Europe to the U.S.

Press **start** to begin.

start





During the second half of the 19th century, huge numbers of immigrants arrived in the U.S. from Europe. Over time, the pattern of immigration changed, with fewer immigrants from Britain, Ireland and Germany and more from Russia, Italy and Eastern Europe. Press on a date to find out how many immigrants entered the U.S. from each country during that decade. Press **start** to begin.

start



What were some of the challenges immigrants faced?

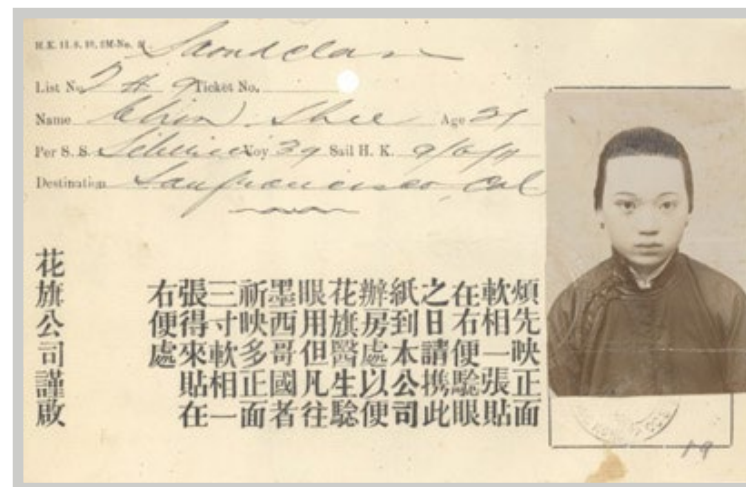


Prejudice against immigrants



By the time Eastern Europeans were arriving in large numbers, others had already been there for a generation or more. Most immigrants settled in cities. By 1900, 30% of urban dwellers were not born in the U.S.

Many people had prejudices against these new arrivals who seemed poor and dirty, and who they feared would take their jobs by working for lower wages.



Immigrants also faced racial, ethnic and religious prejudice. In response to the continuing stream of immigration, a wave of **nativism** swept the country.





Immigration became a big issue and various groups pressured the government into acting.

The causes and effects of anti-immigration legislation were varied, with increasing demands for tighter immigration control.
Can you drag the causes and and government responses into chronological order?

Press **start** to begin.

start

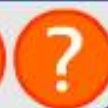




Not everyone wanted to restrict immigration. People advocated immigration for various reasons. Can you match the different groups of people to the reasons why they favored immigration?

Press **start** to begin.

start



Is the debate on immigration still relevant today?