Period 6 (1865-1898)

Rise of Big Business
Encourage mass migration & urbanization, sparked government & popular efforts to reshape the U.S. economy & environment, & renewed debates over U.S. national identity

I. Large-scale production (massive tech. change, expanding communication networks, & pro-growth gov’t policies) fueled the development of a “Gilded Age” marked by emphasis on consumption, marketing & business consolidation.

A. Gov’t subsidies for transportation & comm. systems opened new market markets in N. Am. (After Civil War) Tech. innovations & redesigned financial & management structures (monopolies) sought to maximize exploitation of natural resources & growing labor force

B. Businesses & foreign policymakers increasingly look outside U.S. borders to gain greater influence & control over markets & natural resources in Pacific, Asia & Latin Am.

C. Bus. Leaders consolidated corporations into trusts & holding companies – defended their resulting status & privilege through theories such as Social Darwinism
   -John D. Rockefeller – Standard Oil – initially used horizontal integration (buying or eliminating competitors)
   -J.P. Morgan - banking
   -Andrew Carnegie – Steel – vertical integration (controlling every aspect of production – raw materials to final product)

D. As cities grew in size & number, some segments of America enjoyed lives of extravagant consumption while many others lived in poverty
   -“Gilded Age” coined by Mark Twain --- layer of extravagance covered internal poverty & corruption

II. As leaders of big biz & allies in gov’t aimed to create a unified industrialized nation, they were challenged in different ways by demographic issues, regional differences, & labor movements.

A. Industrial workforce expanded through migration across nat’l borders & internal migration, leading to a more diverse workforce, lower wages, & increase in child labor.

B. Labor & management battled for control over wages & working conditions, w/ workers organizing local & nat’l unions and/or directly confronting corporate power
   -Knights of Labor – Terence Powderly – accepted skilled & unskilled workers – declined after blamed for Haymarket Bombing in Chicago
   -American Federation of Labor – Samuel Gompers – skilled workers only – more successful of unions
   -Industrial Workers of the World – Mother Jones – successful in organizing workers

C. Despite industrialization of some segments of southern econ., a change promoted by southern leaders who called for a “New South”– agrarian sharecropping, & tenant farming systems continued to dominate region
   -“New South” – idea of building southern economy on industry, improved transportation – modern Economy
III. Westward migration, new systems of farming & transp., & econ. instability led to political & popular Conflicts

A. Gov’t agencies & conservationist organizations contended w/ corporate interests about the extension of public control over natural resources, including land & water
   -Dept. of Interior

B. Farmers adapted to new realities of mech. Ag. & dependence on railroad by creating local & regional organizations that sought to resist corporate control of ag. markets
   -the Grange – social & educational org. for farmers & families – isolated life – grew into politics to fight RR abuses (high rates)
   -Colored Farmers’ Alliance

C. Growth of corp. power in ag. & econ. instability of farming sector inspired activities to create the Populist Party (People’s), which called for political reform & a stronger gov’t role in American economic system
   -Also pushed for free silver coinage

D. Business interests battled conservationists as latter sought to protect sections of unspoiled wilderness through establishment of nat’l parks & other measures

Emergence of Industrial Culture
Led to both greater opportunities for, & restrictions on, immigrants, minorities & women

I. Internat’l & internal migrations increased both urban & rural pop., but gender, racial, ethnic, religious & socioeconomic inequalities abounded, inspiring some reformers to attempt to address these Inequities

A. Increased migrations from Asia & southern & eastern Europe, as well as African American migrations within & out of the South, accompanied mass movement of ppl into cities & rural and boomtown areas of West
   -Cities offered economic opportunities
   -Growth of cities – street cars/electric trolleys; skyscrapers; ethnic neighborhoods; suburbs

B. Cities dramatically reflected divided social conditions among classes, races, ethnicities & cultures, but presented econ. opportunities as factories & new biz proliferated

C. Immigrants sought to “Americanize” & maintain unique identities; along w/ some African-Am & women, able to take advantage of new career opportunities even in face of widespread social prejudices

D. Access to power was unequally distributed, in urban areas- political machines provided social services in exchange for pol. support, settlement houses helped immigrants adapt to new language & customs, & women’s clubs & self-help groups targeted intellectual development & social/political reform
   -Hull House – Jane Addams – classes to help immigrants to assimilate – English, skills, daycares
   -Temperance Union – abstinence for alcohol
   -Tammany Hall – Boss Tweed – Political machine – brought down by Thomas Nast & political cartoons

II. As transcontinental rr were completed, bringing more settlers west, U.S. military actions, the destruction of the buffalo, the confinement of Am. Ind. To reservations, & assimilation policies reduced # of Am. Ind. & threatened native culture & identity
A. Post-Civil War migration to American West, encouraged by econ. opportunities & gov’t policies, caused the fed. Gov’t to violate treaties w/ Am. Ind. Nations in order to expand land available to settlers
- Transcontinental RR – May, 1869 – Central Pacific built from CA (Chinese immigrants) & Union Pacific built form NE (Irish immigrants)
- 3 more in less than 15 years
- Opened west to settlers, connected west to markets
- Slaughter of buffalo & forced removal devastated Plains Indian’s culture

B. Competition for land in West among white settler, Indians, & Mex-Americans led to an increase in violent conflicts
- Little Big Horn – 1876 – Custer’s Last stand – defeated by Sitting Bull & Crazy Horse – later to be defeated by U.S. troops
- Wound Knee – 1890 – more than 200 American Indians (many women & children) killed – Ghost Dance – end of Indian Wars

C. U.S. gov’t generally responded to Am. Indian resistance w/ military force, eventually dispersing tribes onto small reservations & hoping to end Am. Ind. Tribal identities through assimilation
- Dawes Act – 1887 – divided tribal lands into plots of 160 acres, granted to those families who stayed – attempted to assimilate into American culture
- Chief Joseph

New Cultural & Intellectual Movements of “Gilded Age”
Along with political debates over economic & social policies

I. Gilded Age politics tied to big biz & focused nationally on econ. issues – tariffs, currency, corporate expansion & laissez-faire led to numerous calls for reform.
A. Corruption in gov’t – esp. related to big biz – energized public demand for increased control & reform of local, state, & nat’l gov’t – minor changes to major overhauls of capitalist system
- Initiative – allowed local voters to consider legislation
- Referendum – allowed citizens to vote on proposed laws
- Recall – local voters can remove corrupt politicians
- Socialism – Eugene Debs
- Interstate Commerce Act -1886 – required fair railroad rates; set up Interstate Commerce Commission to regulate & investigate practices
- Civil Service Reform – Pendleton Act 1881 – Civil Service Commission & system of exams for federal jobs

B. Increasingly prominent racist & nativist theories, w/ Supreme Court decisions like Plessy v. Ferguson, used to justify violence as well as local & nat’l policies of discrimination & segregation
- Chinese Exclusion act – 1882 – ban on all new immigrants form China
- Plessy v. Ferguson – Supreme Court ruled separate facilities are acceptable as long as equal
- Jim Crow Laws

II. New cultural & intellectual arguments both buttressed & challenged social order of Gilded Age

A. Cultural & intellectual arguments justified success of those at top of socioeconomic structure as both appropriate & inevitable – even as some leaders argued wealthy had some obligation to less fortunate
- Gospel of Wealth – Andrew Carnegie – responsibility of philanthropy by the wealthy to benefit society
- Social Darwinism – applying survival of the fittest to the economy – argued the concentration of wealth by a few (Fit) benefited everyone

B. Number of critics challenged dominant corporate ethic in U.S. & sometimes capitalism itself, offering alternate visions of good society through utopianism & Social Gospel.
   - Social Gospel – Walter Rauschenbusch – applying Christian principles to social problems – encouraged members to help alleviate problems in society

C. Challenging their prescribed place, women & Af. Am. activists articulated alternative visions of political, social & economic equality
   - Booker T. Washington – founded Tuskegee Institute to teach Af – Am. a skill – hard work & economic self-help
   - Ida Wells – campaigned against lynching & Jim Crow
   - Elizabeth Cady-Stanton – continued to fight for voting rights for women