

Progressive Voices

Progressive Era

- Started around 1890's although some say it didn't start until the 1900's
- Some say it was kick started by Edward Bellamy (1888) and Jacob Riis (1890)
- Boosted Republican victory in 1896 – decisive in deciding who would influence the nation. This saw the collapse of the agrarian rooted people's party. They failed to unite people in a common cause.
- People accepted that capitalism was here today and so tried to reform the nations – reform rather than revolution
- Important 'revisionists' – Upton Sinclair, Edward Bellamy, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Jacob Riis, Harmin garland, Lewis Hine
- Writers, artists, photographers – all driven to change things and make them better.
- 'Muckrakers' the *History of Standard Oil*, *the Octopus*, *The Jungle*
- Many were from middle class backgrounds – their drive often came from evangelical, moralistic values
- They believed in structure and organization
- Progressivism was mostly a middle class reform movement
- Progressives focused largely on city issues, to restore order and harmony to the urban and industrial communities. Also formed out of fear of the urban poor.
- TEMPERANCE – one of the central pillars, to exert a moral influence onto people, onto the lives of city folk.
- Often disguised the regulation and policing of the working classes 'we know what's best' from the middle classes.

crowded, tenements, unemployed, sickness, strikes, unstable population of laborers” (Cecelia Tichi)

- Born into a privileged family
- Was aware of the problems faces in society
- In the mills of Chicopee Falls, children worked 12-14 hour days
- At age 17 he failed in his efforts to join the army
- Struggled with his health all his life
- Goes travelling in Europe
- 1868-9: studied in Germany
- Finds out about German socialism
- Qualified as a lawyer
- He only takes one case in his career, short lived. He successfully convicts a widow of non paying rent and she is evicted. He is appalled by this and quits the profession in disgust.
- Worked as a journalist on NY’s Evening Post
- Paper noted for its reformist drive and conscience. Campaigned for an improvement in city living
- Early 1800’s: returns home to write for Springfield Union and focus energies on exposing “riches and rottenness”
- Looking Backwards sold 400,000 copies in the U.S
- Equality – sequel to Looking Backwards – 1897
- 1880: more than one million children working more than 10 hours a day in American factories and mills
- Politicians were failing the public
- Scandal and corruption marked public life
- The gilded age was a triumph for only a few (Carnegie, Rockefeller, Morgan...)
- Looking backwards echoed the national trauma of the time
- Julian West – wakes up 113 years in the future in Boston and finds that his city and America is transformed into the perfect society – a social utopia. Technology has progressed and everyone is rich. There is no conflict, no boom and busts, Americans live as equals. People enter the workforce at 21 and end at 45, after which citizens can enjoy the