

# Era 7: The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)<sup>1</sup>

## Instructional Plan Support

### Overview

*Adapted from the National Standards for American History by the National Center for History in the Schools:* The study of how the modern United States emerged begins with the Progressive era. Progressives were a diverse lot with various agendas that sometimes jostled uneasily, but all reformers focused on a set of corrosive problems arising from rapid industrialization, urbanization, waves of immigration, and business and political corruption. As its name implies, it stood for progress, and that put it squarely in the American belief in the perfectible society.

Students cannot fully understand the Progressive movement without considering its limitations, particularly its antagonism to radical labor movements and indifference to the plight of women, African Americans, and other minorities. All issues of American foreign policy in the 20th century have their origins in the emergence of the United States as a major world power in the Spanish-American War at the end of the 19th century and in the involvement of the United States in World War I. The American intervention in World War I cast the die for the United States as a world power for the remainder of the century. Students can learn much about the complexities of foreign policy today by studying the difficulties of maintaining neutrality in World War I while acquiring the role of an economic giant with global interests and while fervently wishing to export democracy around the world. The 1920s displayed dramatically the American urge to build, innovate, and explore. The cultural and social realms also contain lessons from history that have resonance today.

### Big Idea

From *Lessons from History*: Students can best understand the significance of this era if they approach it as a chapter in the **evolution of democracy in the United States**, when the nation confronted a new dilemma of the industrial age: could the political vision of the nation's democratic ideals, formed in a simpler agrarian era, be maintained in a vast industrialized society harboring problems undreamed of by Jefferson, Madison, Locke, or Montesquieu?<sup>2</sup>

### Standards

(I) How Progressives and others addressed problems of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and political corruption. (II) The changing role of the United States in world affairs through World War I. (III) How the United States changed from the end of World War I to the eve of the Great Depression.

### Essential Questions

“Essential Questions represent **enduring questions** that cannot be answered with a simple

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<sup>1</sup> I will present this information for Era 8 at the Winter Colloquium.

<sup>2</sup> Crabtree, Nash, Gagnon, and Waugh, *Lessons from History: Essential Understandings and Historical Perspectives Students Should Acquire*, National Center for History in the Schools (1992), p. 128.

yes or no response. By connecting material to a significant theme that resonates with the lives of our students, essential questions can add relevance and focus to a unit of study. Essential Questions can be used to guide curricular decisions and can provide the backbone for assessments. As such, they are different than “unit questions” or “standards,” which focus the teacher and students on the general and particular details of a particular unit of study.

*Essential Questions should be...*

- Open ended. Essential Questions cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”; they have no “right” answer.
- Made explicit to students. The questions can be written on the board and referred to during discussions and other activities.
- Deliberately framed to engage students, using student-friendly language that makes the question relevant and easy-to-understand.
- Limited to 2-5 questions per unit. A single question per unit also is appropriate.
- Connect to students’ lives and past, present or future experiences.
- Used to design curriculum – activities and materials should be selected on the basis of how they help students explore the essential questions of the unit.

The essential questions of that you devise for your instructional plans should relate directly and closely to the brief essay in which you present the historical background for your plan. **Your historical background essay, in effect, answers, illuminates, or illustrates the essential question that drives your instructional plan.** The background essay should be written like an entry in an historical encyclopedia: brief, but providing enough detail that the reader of your plan easily understands how your plan addresses your essential question. Remember to use biography as its central pivot.

### ***Possible Essential Questions for your Instructional Plans***

- 1) In what ways does perspective matter when studying the Progressive Era?
- 2) How progressive was the Progressive Era?
- 3) Progressives sought to address unintended consequences that arose from rapid industrialization, economic expansion, and the U.S.’s involvement in a global market. How equal was Progressive reform?
- 4) In what ways were Progressives able to maintain the material benefits flowing from the industrial revolution while bringing the powerful forces creating those benefits under democratic control and also enlarging economic opportunity? In what ways did they fail?
- 5) How did Progressives tackle the issue of how to maintain democracy and national identity amid an increasingly diverse influx of immigrants and amid widespread political corruption and the concentration of political power?
- 6) Were Progressive policies more nationally focused, or more locally focused? Why?
- 7) There is a saying in the study of history—That nothing is inevitable. We see it that way because of our perspective from the present. With that in mind, in what ways was the U.S.’s involvement in WWI inevitable?
- 8) How did the post-war, modern, capitalist, economy of the 1920s reflect in American society and culture?

- 9) How did the post-war, modern, capitalist, economy of the 1920s reflect in American foreign policy?
- 10) What did progress mean to early 20<sup>th</sup> century Americans?

### **Topics<sup>3</sup>**

1. The Social Justice Movement
2. Reform in the Cities and the States
3. Progressivism and National Politics in the White House, Congress, and the Supreme Court
4. War and the Waning of the Progressive Era

Within these topics of study, students should understand<sup>4</sup>

- The women's struggle for equality, which had political, economic, and cultural dimensions.
- How radical labor movements and radical ideologies provoked widespread fear and even hysteria.
- The recurring racial tensions that led to Black Nationalism, the Harlem Renaissance, and the first great northward migration of African Americans on the one hand and the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan on the other hand.
- The powerful movement to Americanize a generation of immigrants and the momentous closing of the nation's gates through severe retrenchment of open-door immigration policies.
- The continuing tension among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, most dramatically exemplified in the resurgence of Protestant fundamentalism.

### **Sources/Resources**

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*  
 Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*  
 W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*  
 Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities*  
 Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*  
 Muckraker journalism  
 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment  
 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment  
 Sacco-Vanzetti trial

Red Scare  
 Black Nationalism  
 Ku Klux Klan  
 Jim Crow  
 Great War  
 Jazz Age  
 Harlem Renaissance  
 NAACP  
 Scopes Trial

### **Biography**

W.E.B. DuBois  
 Jan Addams  
 Jacob Riis  
 Lewis Hine  
 John D. Rockefeller, Jr.  
 Theodore Roosevelt

Frederick Jackson Turner  
 Florence Kelley  
 Ernest Hemingway  
 Sinclair Lewis  
 Zora Neale Hurston  
 James Weldon Johnson  
 Langston Hughes

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>4</sup> National Standards, Era 7 Overview

Mayor Tom Johnson  
Governor Hiram Johnson  
Governor Robert M. LaFollette  
Governor Woodrow Wilson  
George Norris  
Burton K. Wheeler  
Robert M. LaFollette  
Herbert Hoover  
Ida Tarbell  
William Jennings Bryan  
F. Scott Fitzgerald  
Booker T. Washington

Countee Cullen  
Marcus Garvey  
Manuel Gamio  
Charlotte Perkins Gilman  
Eugene V. Debs  
Randolph Bourne  
John A. Fitch  
Clarence Darrow  
Alain Locke  
Gifford Pinchot  
Charles Lindbergh

***Guided Discovery Activities (These can all potentially include Primary Source Analysis)***

|  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| Tic-Tac-Toe Choice Activities                | Found Poems                |
| Facebook/Social Media                        | Mock Trials                |
| Glogster Posters                             | Debates                    |
| “Pins”                                       | Maps                       |
| Research papers, projects, and presentations | Podcasts                   |
| Timelines                                    | Re-enactments              |
| Posters                                      | Journaling                 |
| Newspapers                                   | “Quilts”                   |
| Museums                                      | Simulations                |
| Reader’s Theater                             | Supreme Court Case Studies |
| Balance Sheets                               |                            |

***Instructional Plans***

1. Essential Question  
The essential question serves as the foundation for the entire IP. This question is consistently referred to throughout the lesson.
2. Historical Background  
The historical background contains the teachers’ approaches to answering the essential question. The instructor writes historical background essays as graduate level essays, with their answer to the EQ serving as their thesis. Biography is at the heart of the lesson, not an afterthought.
3. Guided Discovery Activity/Student Learning Activity
  - a. As part of this activity, students will examine and analyze at least 2 primary sources.
4. Assessment Plan  
We really need student pre- and post-test data and student samples in order to complete our grant performance measures for Objective 3. Please help us!
5. Bibliography  
Use the Chicago Manual of Style template to cite all of your sources.  
Citation Guide: [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)
6. Personal Reflection  
Address, in personal narrative form, the questions on the IP checklist.