Chapter 19: Production and Consumption in the Gilded Age, 1865–1900

Chapter Review

I. AMERICAN COMMUNITIES Haymarket Square, Chicago, May 4, 1886

As rain approached the city, approximately 1,500 people gathered for a mass meeting in Haymarket Square to protest the brutality of the previous day, when Chicago police killed four strikers at the fiercely antiunion McCormick Reaper Works. As several speakers denounced the violence, the crowd dwindled to only 600 people. After a final speaker warned the crowd to prepare for war, police moved in to break up the meeting. Suddenly a bomb exploded “with terrific force, shaking buildings on the street and creating havoc among the police.”

In the days following the tragic incident at Haymarket Square, Chicago police arrested hundreds of working people, rounded up known anarchists, and searched their homes and detained them without warrants. Sentiment swung sharply against immigrants, among them many poor but politically active men from eastern and southern Europe who had been demanding the “radical” eight-hour day. Eventually eight labor activists—three who had not been at Haymarket—were charged with inciting murder, tried, convicted, and sentenced to hang. The violence in Chicago seemed emblematic of tensions in the nation as a whole within communities torn by economic and social conflict.

II. THE RISE OF INDUSTRY, THE TRIUMPH OF BUSINESS

Most American businesses were small enterprises, owned and managed by a single family, and producing goods for a local or regional market. By the turn of the century, businesses depending on large-scale investments had organized as corporations and grown to unforeseen size. These mammoth firms could afford to mass-produce goods for national and even international markets.

a. Mechanization Takes Command

The telephone, patented in 1876 by Alexander Graham Bell and shown at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition and at the opening of Thomas Edison’s Menlo Park laboratory, signaled the rise of the United States to world leadership in industrial technology. New technology was rapidly transforming America as the second industrial revolution (1871–1914) blossomed. New railroad lines linked sources or raw materials with factory and then markets, while mass-production machinery further boosted production and drove down prices. The system developed in the Chicago stockyards exemplified the changes, with the use of conveyer belts, power tools and mechanical cooling to process livestock into meat products with brutal efficiency. In some industries a single invention transformed production, such as the introduction of mechanical rolling equipment for cigarettes in 1881.
b. Expanding the Market for Goods

For generations, legions of sellers, or “drummers,” had worked their routes, pushing goods, especially hardware and patent medicines, to individual buyers and local retail stores. Growing directly out of these services, the successful Chicago-based mail-order houses drew rural and urban consumers into a common marketplace. Sears, Roebuck and Company and Montgomery Ward offered an enormous variety of goods, from shoes to buggies to gasoline stoves and cream separators. The chain store achieved similar economies of scale. Frank and Charles Woolworth offered inexpensive variety goods in five-and-ten-cent stores. Other chains selling drugs, costume jewelry, shoes, cigars, and furniture soon appeared, offering a greater selection of goods and lower prices than the small, independent stores.

Competing against advantages formerly enjoyed by specialty shops, these stores offered a spectrum of services that included restaurants, restrooms, ticket agencies, nurseries, reading rooms, and post offices. Elegantly appointed with imported carpets, sweeping marble staircases, and crystal chandeliers, the department store raised retailing to new heights. Advertising lured customers to the department stores, the chains, and the independent neighborhood stores. Ayer’s managed the accounts of such companies as Montgomery Ward, Wanamaker’s Department Store, Singer Sewing Machines, and the National Biscuit Company.

c. Integration, Combination, and Merger

Businessmen, faced with a cyclical economy with alternating booms and busts, worked to rationalize their operations and enlarge their markets. One method, vertical integration, focused on controlling each step of the manufacturing process from raw materials to merchandising. United Fruit Company nearly monopolized fresh fruit sales with these methods.

The second means of growth, horizontal combination, entailed gaining control of the market for a single product. The most famous case was the Standard Oil Company, founded by John D. Rockefeller in 1870. The Standard Oil Trust, established in 1882, controlled over 90 percent of the nation’s oil-refining industry. Although the 1890 Sherman Antitrust Act theoretically outlawed “combinations in restraint of trade,” court rulings gutted the law. By 1910, most of the giant industrial firms that would dominate the twentieth century were in place.
d. The Gospel of Wealth

Ninety percent of business leaders were church-going Protestants. They embraced a “gospel of wealth” which justified entrepreneurs’ gaining their unprecedented wealth by shady means. Herbert Spencer’s concept of social Darwinism likewise offered a convenient justification, arguing that rich and poor alike deserved their fates through “survival of the fittest,” and William Graham Sumner argued that welfare programs would actually be harmful to the natural progress of society.

Jay Gould made his fortune speculating in railroads, while Andrew Carnegie—the “Richest Man in the World”—rose from poor Scots immigrant to steel baron before selling out to J.P. Morgan for an astonishing $225 million in 1901. He retired to a life of philanthropy, gave most of his wealth away—although this proved a small consolation to the poorly paid workers who had made him rich. Publishing more than 100 rags-to-riches novels, Horatio Alger created heroes who manage to rise out of poverty by both hard work and luck and ultimately acquire, if not vast wealth, middle-class respectability and comfort, popularizing the self-congratulatory ideals of the entrepreneurs.

MHL document: Andrew Carnegie, Wealth at www.myhistorylab.com

III. LABOR IN THE AGE OF BIG BUSINESS

Like the gospel of wealth, the “gospel of work” affirmed the dignity of hard work, the virtue of thrift, and the importance of individual initiative. But unlike business leaders, the philosophers of American working people did not believe in riches as the proof of work well done, or in the lust for power as the driving force of progress. On the contrary, they contended that honesty and competence should be the badge of all morally responsible citizens.

Increasingly, Americans made their livelihoods by producing, not for their own subsistence, but exclusively for the market, and they earned wages in return for their labor. Big business thus found its mirror image in the labor movement spawned by the consolidation of the wage system.

a. The Wage System

As the mechanized factory system advanced, relations between workers and employers changed. Workers lost the autonomy of the craft shop, become a wage-earning commodities subject to strict management and replaceable at the foreman’s whim. Some business, such as the garment industry, resisted these changes, but generally industrialization drove down wages, especially as “green” immigrants flooded into the cities and accepted lower wages than native workers. African American and immigrant women, along with lower-class white women, entered the factory wage system as well, but better educated women found new opportunities in clerical and sales jobs. African American men and Chinese faced systematic discrimination and, after riots and protests
following the depression of the 1870s, a Chinese Exclusion Act all but closed the door to the Chinese immigrant.

The workplace was dangerous, tedious and exhausting; with 10 to 12-hour work days on the factory floor and longer hours for clerks, saleswomen, and domestics. A series of depressions led to massive unemployment; from 1866 to 1897, 14 years of prosperity were more than matched by 17 years of depression.

**MHL document: Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) at [www.myhistorylab.com](http://www.myhistorylab.com)**

b. The Knights of Labor

Founded in 1869, the Knights of Labor endorsed a variety of reform measures—the restriction of child labor, a graduated income tax, more land set aside for homesteading, the abolition of contract labor, and monetary reform—to offset the power of the industrialists. The Knights also challenged the wage system, promoting producers’ cooperatives such as cigar shops and grocery stores, often housed in their own assembly buildings. The Knights welcomed workers usually excluded by other unions. Nearly 3,000 women formed their own “ladies assemblies” or joined mixed locals. The Knights also organized African American workers—20,000 to 30,000 nationally—mainly in separate assemblies within the organization. The Knights reached their peak during the 1886 campaign for a shorter workday, but the Haymarket affair in Chicago, where the Knights were headquartered, virtually crushed the organization.

c. The American Federation of Labor

Unlike the Knights, the AFL accepted the wage system. Following a strategy of “pure and simple unionism,” the AFL sought recognition of its union status to bargain with employers for better working conditions, higher wages, and shorter hours, calling strikes only as a last resort.

With 140,000 affiliated members in 1886, the AFL rapidly pushed ahead of the rival Knights by organizing craft workers. AFL president Samuel Gompers disregarded unskilled workers, racial minorities, and immigrants, believing they were impossible to organize and even unworthy of membership. Under his leadership, the AFL advanced the interests of the “aristocrat of labor,” the best-paid worker in the world.

AFL leaders worked closely with urban reformer and civic-minded businessmen and politicians to pass the Illinois Factory Investigation Act of 1893 that monitored working conditions and, particularly, was designed to improve the woeful situation of the many women and children who worked in sweatshops. Never organizing more than 10 percent of American workers, the AFL nonetheless was influential. Politicians courted labor votes and Labor Day, first promoted by the AFL in the 1880s, became a national holiday in 1894.

**IV. THE NEW SOUTH**
“Fifteen years have gone over” since the Civil War, journalist Whitelaw Reid complained, yet the South “still sits crushed, wretched, busy displaying and bemoaning her wounds.” Devastated by the war, the South remained economically stagnant, its per capita wealth only 27 percent of that of the northeastern states. Overdependence on northern capital, continued reliance on cotton, and the legacy of slavery all held the South back.

a. An Internal Colony

In the 1870s, Atlanta editor Henry W. Grady began promoting the idea of a “New South” modeled on the industrial North. While the planter aristocracy resisted, northern investors responded, often with concessions from southern legislatures, built 22,00 miles of new rail lines and exploited natural resources, building textile, steel, and lumber mills, but shipping most of the products and profits back to the North. Despite the undeniable growth of the New South Grady promoted, economically the region remained a colony of the North.


b. Southern Labor

Industrial growth brought few benefits to African American workers. In the textile mills and cigarette factories the workforce was rigidly segregated and African Americans with janitorial jobs rarely worked alongside the whites who tended the machines. Nearly all African American women who earned wages did so as household workers; girls as young as ten worked as domestics or as nurses for white children. Most trade unions refused membership to black workers. In the 1880s, the Knights of Labor briefly organized both black and white workers. Other unions remained the exclusive preserve of white skilled workers. Wages throughout the South were low for both black and white workers. Black men earned at or below the poverty line of $300 per year, while black women rarely earned more than $120, and white women about $220 annually. The poorest paid workers were children, the mainstay of southern mill labor. Convict labor—90 percent African American—thrived as prisoners built “good roads” in near-slave conditions, a mark of progress to the white politicians who ran the system.

c. The Transformation of Piedmont Communities

After 1870, Piedmont farms and plantations gave way to railroad tracks, textile factories, numerous mill villages, and a few sizable cities. Rural poverty and the appeal of a new life encouraged many farm families to strike out for a mill town where men, women, and children found work. A typical mill community comprised rows of single-family houses, a small school, several churches, a company-owned store, and the home of the superintendent, who governed everyone’s affairs. “Practically speaking, the company owns everything and controls everything, and to a large extent controls everybody in the mill village.” Mill superintendents also relied on schoolteachers and clergy to set the tone of community life. Piedmont mill villages like Greenville, South Carolina, and

V. THE INDUSTRIAL CITY

By the end of the nineteenth century, 90 percent of manufacturing took place in cities. The metropolis stood at the center of the growing industrial economy, a magnet drawing raw material, capital, and labor, and a key distribution point for manufactured goods throughout the nation and worldwide. The industrial city became the home of nearly 20 million immigrants, mainly the so-called “new immigrants” from southern and eastern Europe, who hoped to escape famine, political upheaval, or religious persecution in their homelands or simply to make a better life for themselves and their families.

a. Populating the City

In 1860, only 16 cities had more than 50,000 residents. By 1890, 11 cities had over 250,000 and one-third of all Americans were city dwellers. The largest—New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Boston, and Baltimore—were noted for the size and diversity of their populations. Rural African Americans and foreign immigrants came to the cities seeking jobs. After 1890, the majority of immigrants came from southern and eastern Europe. Germans, Poles, and Irish came to stay, while many Greek and Italian men planned to return home. While most sought and found industrial jobs, some groups specialized—Jews in the northeastern garment trade, Cubans making cigars in Florida. Although most groups clustered in ethnic neighborhoods, newcomers often moved to new areas of growing cities or from one city to another; in some cities, population turned over three or four times a decade.

b. The Urban Landscape

Cities grew without master plans. Hills were leveled, ponds filled, and farms and houses disappeared to make way for factories and tenements. While the working poor lived in dense slum neighborhoods, the wealthy built mansions in elegant areas like New York’s Fifth Avenue with nearby libraries, museums, and orchestra halls. Brick gave way to steel as commercial buildings reached 10 and 20 stories—the new elevator moved people and goods higher. Architects influenced by the City Beautiful movement designed these structures, along with public buildings parks and bridges—including the innovative steel-cable suspension Brooklyn Bridge that opened in 1883. Elevated railroads, trolleys, and streetcars allowed people to spread out as well as up into new garden suburbs. In 1902, New York City opened its first subway, eventually the largest in America.

c. The City and the Environment

Suburbs offered professional workers quiet residential retreats from the city’s busy and dirty downtown. As electric trolleys replaced horse-drawn streetcars, the problem of removing tons of animal waste was replaced by a danger to pedestrians. Safer elevated
trains placed entire communities under the shadow of noisy and rickety wooden platforms. Modern water and sewer systems now constituted a hidden city of pipes and wires, mirroring the growth of the visible city above ground. These advances, which brought indoor plumbing to most homes, did not, however, eradicate serious environmental or health problems. Most cities continued to dump sewage into nearby bodies of water. Moreover, most municipal governments established separate clean-water systems through the use of reservoirs, rather than outlawing upriver dumping by factories. Pollution from coal furnaces and locomotives hung over the cities. Children’s diseases like whooping cough and measles spread rapidly through poor neighborhoods. Meanwhile, the distance between the city and the countryside narrowed. Nearby rural lands not destined for private housing or commercial development became sites for water treatment and sewage plants, garbage dumps, and graveyards—services essential to the city’s growing population.

VI. THE RISE OF CONSUMER SOCIETY

Industry provided and cities depended on mass-produced goods. Real wages rose, and prices dropped. Food from the farms became more abundant and varied and, for most, the standard of living improved from the consumer society.

a. “Conspicuous Consumption”

The “Gilded Age,” as Mark Twain dubbed the era following the Civil War, created a new class of wealthy businessmen and their leisured families. According to economist and social critic Thorstein Veblen, the rich had created a new style of “conspicuous consumption.” With palatial residences, country clubs and yachts, extravagant dinner parties, and luxurious hotels such as New York’s Waldorf Astoria, the newly rich flaunted their wealth with open curtains to allow the public to see the elegant interiors of their Fifth Avenue mansions. Some of this wealth went into patronage of the arts, funding museums, concert halls, and other uplifting elements of Old World culture.

MHL image: Residence of Andrew Carnegie at www.myhistorylab.com

b. Self-Improvement and the Middle Class

The new middle class of professionals and salaried employees differed sharply from the old middle class of doctors, lawyers and ministers. While men commuted to their jobs from suburban retreats and worked long hours to support a comfortable lifestyle, middle-class women cared for the home. Labor saving appliances began to replace servants and store-bought packaged foods, clothing, and personal luxuries could be purchased in markets and department stores. The mainly WASP middle class pursued leisure activities, patronizing libraries, and uplifting lecture series as well as literature and the fine arts. “Outdoor” pursuits and exercise activities grew in popularity and often required specialized, store-bought clothing and equipment. Specialized leisure became a mark of the middle class, out of reach of workers, and especially for their children for whom new toys and children’s books were popular.

MHL document: Frances E. Willard, On Riding the Bicycle (1895) at www.myhistorylab.com

c. Life in the Streets

Immigrants enjoyed few of these middle-class benefits, often living in crowded, unhealthy conditions with little privacy and restricted by law prejudiced to ethnic or racial urban districts such as San Francisco’s Chinatown and the Hispanic barrios of the South and West. Influenced by their Old World cultures, these groups varied widely in habits and customs. Labor saving devices adopted by middle-class women were out of the reach of the working class, and many children worked at home or in shops and factories. Some of the products of industry did reach the working class in cheaper, lower quality foods and clothing and patent medicines for those too poor for doctors. Old World entertainments and languages also persisted, and even the poorest could afford sitting on the stoop to trade stories and gossip. Immigrants developed their own social fraternities, churches, saloons, tea rooms, theaters, and ate their native cuisines. They also began to influence popular culture as Germans, African Americans, and Creoles helped shape ragtime music. Businessmen capitalized on the growing disposable income of the working class with amusement parks such as Coney Island and Riverside Park.

VII. CULTURES IN CONFLICT, CULTURE IN COMMON

The new urban entertainments, such as theater and popular music, brought together people from every class and background. Competing claims to schools and urban parks would spark conflict as well as contact.
a. Education

Despite the ideal of universal (white) public education and the need for a literate work force, the working class lagged behind and children as young as ten often left school for work. Most high schools continued to serve mainly the middle class and focused on college preparation rather than vocations. While the 1862 Morrill Act supported state agricultural and technical education, private colleges modernized as well and new institutions like the University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins and Stanford, supported by businessmen’s philanthropy, offered liberal arts and science programs. Women benefited from high school and vocational education, especially teacher-training “normal schools,” but few attended colleges other than at female-only institutions like Vassar, although a few colleges experimented with co-education. Working-class boys might be offered industrial education—the origins of “shop class”—to prepare for work rather than college.

Because African Americans were often excluded from colleges attended by white students, special colleges were founded shortly after the Civil War, some offering rigorous liberal arts curricula, while institutions such as Tuskegee in Alabama led by Booker T. Washington focused on industrial education. While race and class distinctions remained important, most Americans had greater educational opportunities.

MHL document: *Morrill Act (1862)* at www.myhistorylab.com

b. Leisure and Public Space

Most large cities set aside open land for leisure-time use by residents. New York’s Central Park opened in 1858, and by 1869, Chicago started a citywide system of six interconnected large parks. Soon Lincoln Park on the north side, was attracting crowds of nearly 30,000 on Sundays. Trapped in overcrowded tenements or congested neighborhoods, the working class wanted space for sports, picnics, and lovers’ trysts. Eventually, most park administrators set aside some sections for playgrounds and athletic fields and others for public gardens and band shells, often with restrictive, class-conscious and widely resented rules. African Americans were banned from many parks or were only allowed entrance during specific times—St. Louis’ public golf course on Monday mornings.

c. National Pastimes

By the late nineteenth century, urban middle-class whites began to embrace ragtime, the music of the lower class, with blacks performers such as Scott Joplin playing in white clubs. Vaudeville, the most popular form of commercial entertainment since the 1880s, also bridged middle- and working-class tastes while reinforcing ethnic stereotypes. Baseball clubs formed in many cities, and shortly after the Civil War traveling teams with regular schedules made baseball a professional sport. The formation of the National League in 1876 encouraged other spectator sports, but for generations baseball remained the most popular.
To attract more subdued middle-class fans, the National League raised admission prices, banned the sale of alcohol, and observed Sunday blue laws. Baseball, like many other sports, soon became incorporated into the larger business economy. By 1870, a Chicago Board of Trade sponsored city’s first professional club, the White Stockings. Effectively excluded, African Americans organized their own traveling teams. Players occasionally organized to regain control over their sport but owners such as Albert Spaulding resisted, creating the “reserve clause” to control players while also refusing to employ black players and managers. American sports had become big business, both crossing and reinforcing social and cultural divides.

VIII. CONCLUSION

As nineteenth-century America grew more urbanized, business, industry, and society were all transformed. Rich and poor alike benefited, but many antagonisms remained. As the Haymarket affair shows, the middle and upper classes distrusted and feared the working class, and peaceful reconciliation seemed far in the future.

Learning Objectives:

Students should be able to answer the following questions after studying Chapter 19:

1. What was the effect of the expansion in the production of both capital goods and consumer goods?
2. What were the sources of the new labor being recruited for factory work in Gilded Age America?
3. How did industrial development affect African Americans living in the South?
4. How did populations change and grow in Gilded Age cities?
5. What accounts for the rise of a consumer society, and how did various groups participate in its development?
6. What role did public spaces play in late nineteenth-century popular culture?

Discussion Suggestions and Possible Answers

1. Discuss the sources of economic growth in the decades after the Civil War. Historians often refer to this period as the era of the “second industrial revolution.” Do you agree with this description?

   Answer: The main engine of economic growth after the Civil War was the railroads. New technologies in both production and distribution led to a tremendous expansion of the American economy. The second industrial revolution is an accurate description of the mechanization of production and the use of raw materials such as coal, iron and timber used to fuel industrial growth.
2. Describe the impact of new technologies and new forms of production on the routines of industrial workers. How did these changes affect African American and women workers in particular? What role did trade unions play in this process?

**Answer:** As factory production replaced skilled crafts, many workers found themselves in a new environment where they were constantly supervised, as opposed to the autonomy they had previously enjoyed. Moreover, these new work places, particularly those such as meatpacking plants, could be extremely dangerous. Female workers enjoyed many new opportunities, as employment as a typist, secretary, and other clerical positions opened to them. African Americans, meanwhile, found themselves barred from many of the new trades that European immigrants claimed for themselves. After the Knights of Labor’s challenge to the wage system failed, a new group, the American Federation of Labor, emerged to give workers a voice in the work place.

3. Discuss the role of northern capital in the development of the New South. How did the rise of industry affect the lives of rural Southerners? Analyze these changes from the point of view of African Americans.

**Answer:** After the devastation of the Civil War, the South found itself dependent upon northern investment. Northerners won huge concessions from southern states to construct factories and railroads, but the South still lagged considerably behind the North. Rural areas were transformed as factory labor replaced farms and more and more Southerners sought better opportunities in the mill towns of the Piedmont. African Americans were limited to low-paying unskilled jobs, if they were men, or domestic labor, if they were women. Most trade unions refused black members.

4. How did urban life change during the Gilded Age? How did economic development affect residential patterns? How did the middle class aspire to live during the Gilded Age? How did their lifestyles compare with those of working-class urbanites?

**Answer:** Cities grew enormously during the Gilded Age, both upwards and outwards. Immigrants frequently found themselves crowded into tenement buildings. By the turn of the century, as many as 700 people could be packed into a single acre in New York City. Middle-class residents took advantage of new transportation options, such as streetcars, and moved to suburbs or other “bedroom communities” that enabled them to work in the city but avoid the overcrowding, air pollution, and noise there.

5. How did the American educational system change to prepare children for their adult roles in the new industrial economy?

**Answer:** School enrollments grew rapidly in the final decades of the nineteenth century. In particular, public high schools became much more common, albeit primarily for middle-class children. Women benefited from the expansion of education, both in vocational schools that prepared them for clerical jobs, and from women’s colleges and universities, that offered an education comparable to the leading’s men’s institutions. Although more children were
attending school, their race, class, and gender frequently determined the options available to them.

6. How did the rise of organized sports and commercial amusements reflect and shape social divisions at the end of the century? Which groups were affected most (or least) by new leisure activities?

**Answer:** Working and upper classes had different views about leisure. While middle-class residents enjoyed parks that prohibited picnics and walking on the grass, working-class people wanted space for sports, picnics, and other activities to avoid the congestion of city streets. New entertainments like vaudeville and baseball could sometimes bridge gaps between middle- and working-class patrons. The sale or prohibition of alcohol was used to appeal to different audiences as well.

**Lecture Outline**

American Communities: Haymarket Square, Chicago, May 4, 1886

The Rise of Industry, the Triumph of Business
   Mechanization Takes Command
   Expanding the Markets for Goods
   Integration, Combination, and Merger
   The Gospel of Wealth

Labor in the Age of Big Business
   The Wage System
   The Knights of Labor
   The American Federation of Labor

The New South
   An Internal Colony
   Southern Labor
   The Transformation of Piedmont Communities

The Industrial City
   Populating the City
   The Urban Landscape
   The City and the Environment

The Rise of Consumer Society
   “Conspicuous Consumption”
   Self-Improvement and the Middle Class
   Life in the Streets

Culture in Conflict, Cultures in Common
   Education
Leisure and Public Space
National Pastimes

Resources (Web, Films/Video)

Web
Haymarket Trial: http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/haymarket/haymarket.html

Films/Video


Edison’s Miracle of Light, from PBS’ American Experience series. (60 minutes). Color, 1995. Shows how Edison developed the components needed for an electrical system, yet lost control of the industry in a mess of personal, patent, and corporate battles.

The Gilded Age is the first of four segments in the PBS series The Emergence of Modern America; it could be useful for this chapter and the next.

My History Lab Connections

Reinforce what you learned in this chapter by studying the many documents, images, maps, review tools, and videos available at www.myhistorylab.com.

Read and Review

Read the Documents
Thomas Edison, The Success of the Electric Light (1880)
Andrew Carnegie, Wealth
Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
William D. Grady, The New South (1887)
Francis E. Willard, On Riding a Bicycle (1895)
Morill Act (1862)

See the Images
Residence of Andrew Carnegie
Research and Explore

Read the Documents
Exploring America: French Canadian Controversy
Industrializing America: Life and Labor in Smokestack America

History Bookshelf
Veblen, Theory of the Leisure Class

Read the Biographies
Samuel Gompers
Thomas Edison

Critical Thinking Exercises

The late nineteenth century saw a tremendous number of immigrants coming to America. Immigration, of course, continues. Students could interview recent immigrants and draw comparisons between the lives of immigrants today and those in the late nineteenth century.