Chapter 20: Democracy and Empire, 1870–1900

Chapter Review

I. AMERICAN COMMUNITIES The Annexation of Hawai‘i

On January 17, 1891, Lili‘uokalani succeeded her brother, King Kalakaua, to become the queen of Hawai‘i. A Christian-educated woman, her allegiance to the Hawaiian people—and her strong opposition to a movement to annex Hawai‘i to the United States—brought her downfall. American missionaries and sugar planters had brought Hawai‘i into the national consciousness, leading to a thinly veiled movement to bring the islands under American control. After coming to the throne, Lili‘uokalani resisted the planters’ plans and was deposed, despite her protests to President Cleveland. Sanford B. Dole, Honolulu-born son of Protestant missionaries, stepped in as the president of the new provisional government of Hawai‘i, now a protectorate of the United States.

After investigating the situation, President Cleveland ordered Lili‘uokalani’s reinstatement as queen. In 1900, however, the newly elected McKinley pushed annexation through Congress. Commercial interests and political ambitions overwhelmed the queen. As American politics struggled to deal with the challenges of industrialization, much more than the fate of Hawai‘i would be at stake.

II. TOWARD A NATIONAL GOVERNING CLASS

At the end of the nineteenth century, more common citizens and business leaders increasingly looked toward government, from the local level upward, for public education, military veterans’ pensions, and other social services. The expansion of government, especially commercial oversight, laid the foundation for an expansion abroad. While some reformers sought to rein in corruption, other politicians sought control of a larger government for their own interests

a. The Growth of Government

Before the Civil War, local governments took a limited view of their responsibilities. Both the demands of war and the growth of the economy demanded greater activity. Cities gradually introduced professional police and firefighting forces, and began to finance expanding school systems, public libraries, roads, and parks—an expansion requiring huge increases in local taxation. At the end of Reconstruction, while the army was reduced to a fraction of its swollen size, federal revenues and government programs continued to grow, with an expanding bureaucracy and new regulatory agencies such as the ICC. Federal regulation of trade and oversight of state and local governments set a precedent for an expanding government into the twentieth century.

b. The Machinery of Politics
Republicans and Democrats slowly adapted to government expansion. A series of razor-close elections brought undistinguished men to the White House; neither party were able to govern effectively, and Congress passed little legislation before 1890.

The main issue that separated the parties was the tariff. Pro-business Republicans supported high tariffs, while Democrats, with agrarian and urban support, pushed to lower them. Despite national differences, the two political parties operated essentially as state or local organizations focusing on electioneering to boost turnout rather than promoting significant issues. Local party machines—such as New York City’s Tammany Hall—used bribery and corruption to hold power and catered to their supporters racial and ethnic prejudices.

A large number of federal jobs changed hands each time the presidency passed from one party to another as the victors took their “spoils.” James Garfield served less than four months as president before being assassinated by a disgruntled job seeker in July 1881, leading his successor, Chester Arthur, to press for civil service reform.

**MHL image: Nast Cartoon: Boss Tweed** at www.myhistorylab.com

c. The Spoils System and Civil Service Reform

As early as 1865, civil service reform legislation was introduced in Congress, but the majority, fearing the political costs, refused to pass reform legislation. Finally, a group of professionals organized the Civil Service Reform Association and enlisted Ohio Democratic senator George H. Pendleton to sponsor reform legislation.

In January 1883, a bipartisan congressional majority passed the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act, establishing a system of standards for federal jobs and instituting open, competitive examinations. The Act barred candidates from funding campaigns by assessing a “tax” on the salaries of holders of party-sponsored government jobs.

Although patronage did not disappear entirely, many departments of the federal government took on a professional character similar to that which doctors, lawyers, and scholars were imposing on their fields through regulatory societies such as the American Medical Association and the American Historical Association. With the Circuit Courts of Appeals Act of 1891, Congress granted the U.S. Supreme Court the right to review all cases at will.
III. FARMERS AND WORKERS ORGANIZE THEIR COMMUNITIES

During the late nineteenth century, disgruntled farmers seeking more democratic government and less control by the plutocrats became increasingly politically active and adopted more radical proposals. Allied with industrial workers, agrarian reformers created the Populist movement, the first significant challenge to the two-party system since the Civil War.

a. The Grange

In 1867, white farmers in the Midwest formed the Patrons of Husbandry for their own “social, intellectual, and moral improvement.” Faced with droughts, blizzards, and falling commodity prices, Grangers began to blame their problems on banks, railroads, and corrupt politicians rather than natural economic forces. In 1874, several midwestern states responded to agrarian pressure and passed “Granger laws,” establishing maximum shipping rates. Grangers also complained to their lawmakers about the price-fixing policies of grain wholesalers and operators of grain elevators. In 1873, the Illinois legislature passed a Warehouse Act establishing maximum rates for storing grains. In other states, Grangers ran banks as well as fraternal life and fire insurance companies.

In the mid-1880s, the Supreme Court overturned most of the key legislation regulating railroads and the depression of the 1870s wiped out many Granger cooperatives, but the agrarian reformers had introduced the idea that government would respond to citizens as well as to special interests.

b. The Farmers’ Alliance

Falling cotton prices brought Southern farmers together. With more than 500 chapters in Texas alone, and cooperative stores complemented by the cooperative merchandising of crops, the Southern Farmers’ Alliance became a viable alternative to the capitalist marketplace—if only temporarily.

The Northern Farmers’ Alliance in the Great Plains states led to even larger organizations in Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, and the Dakota Territory, as summer drought, winter blizzards, and ice storms reduced wheat harvests by one-third. In 1889, the regional organizations joined forces to create the National Farmers’ Alliance and Industrial Union, soon claiming 3 million white members. Grangers had pushed for reform legislation, but had not run candidates for office. In comparison, the Farmers’ Alliance had few reservations about entering electoral races. By 1890, the alliances gained control of the Nebraska legislature, and held the balance of power in Minnesota and South Dakota.

c. Workers Search for Power

Industrial workers also became more active, with widespread strikes against railroads, mines, and factories, and launched labor parties in dozens of industrial towns and cities. Henry George, with Central Labor Council, Knights of Labor, and Irish community
support ran for New York City mayor on the United Labor Party ticket in 1886. Despite opposition from Tammany Hall, George got 31 percent of the vote. In the late 1880s, labor parties won seats on many city councils and state legislatures. The Milwaukee People’s Party elected the mayor, a state senator, six assemblymen, and one member of Congress. In smaller industrial towns where workers outnumbered the middle classes, labor parties did especially well. The victories of local labor parties caught the attention of farmers, who began to weigh their prospects for a political alliance with discontented urban workers. Although the Union Labor Party won only 1 percent of the vote in 1886, the successes in local communities nurtured hopes for a viable political alliance of the “producing classes,” rural as well as urban.

d. Women Build Alliances

Women activists helped build both the labor and agrarian protest movements while campaigning for their own rights as citizens. Women made up as many of one quarter of Alliance membership and orators such as Mary Lease urged farmers to raise less corn and more hell.

Women found their greatest leader in Frances E. Willard. From 1878 until her death in 1897, she led the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), whose members preached total abstinence from alcohol, but ultimately endorsed Willard’s broad reform agenda, including the right to vote. By 1890, she had mobilized nearly 200,000 paid members into the largest organization of women in the world.

Under Willard’s leadership, the WCTU grew into the major force for woman suffrage, far surpassing its rivals. By 1890, when two suffrage associations merged to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the WCTU had brought the suffrage campaign into the Great Plains states and the West. In Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, and especially Kansas, agitation for the right to vote provided a political bridge among women in the WCTU, Farmers’ Alliance, Knights of Labor, and various local suffrage societies.

MHL document: Frances E. Willard on the Reorganization of Government (1891) at www.myhistorylab.com

e. Populism and the People’s Party

In December 1890, the Farmers’ Alliance called a meeting in Ocala, Florida, to press for the creation of a national third party rather than continuing to work within the Democratic Party in the South and the Republican Party in the Midwest. In 1892, reformers meeting in St. Louis created a People’s Party, calling for government ownership of railroads, banks, and telegraph lines; prohibition of large landholding companies; a graduated income tax; an eight-hour workday; restriction of immigration and federal subtreasuries—where farmers could store their crops until prices reached acceptable levels. Frances Willard’s universal suffrage proposal failed to pass. The party convened again in Omaha in July 1892 and nominated James Baird Weaver of Iowa for president and, to please the South, the
Confederate veteran James G. Field from Virginia for vice president. The Populists, as supporters of the People’s Party styled themselves, quickly became a major factor in American politics. Although Democrat Grover Cleveland regained the presidency in 1892 (he had previously served from 1885 to 1889), Populists scored a string of local victories.

**MHL document: The People’s Party Platform (1892) at www.myhistorylab.com**

**IV. THE CRISIS OF THE 1890s**

Populist Ignatius Donnelly wrote in the preface to his pessimistic novel *Caesar’s Column* (1891) that industrial society appears to be a “wretched failure” to “the great mass of mankind.” On the road to disaster rather than to a truly democratic community, “the rich, as a rule, hate the poor; and the poor are coming to hate the rich . . . society divides itself into two hostile camps . . . They wait only for the drum beat and the trumpet to summon them to armed conflict.” Many feared—while others hoped—that the entire political system would topple.

a. Financial Collapse and Depression

Tight credit, falling agricultural prices, a weak banking system, and railroad overexpansion, along with similar European financial problems triggered a collapse of the U.S. economy in 1893. In May and June the stock market crashed, panicking banks and businesses, while agricultural prices plummeted to new lows. As unemployment soared to 3 million, few people starved, but many suffered. Unable to buy food, clothes, or household items, families learned to survive with the barest minimum. Populist Jacob Sechler Coxey decided to gather the masses of unemployed into a huge army and then to march to Washington, D.C., demanding the federal government create public works jobs. Only 600 marchers reached Washington and were met with police attacks. “Coxey’s Army” quickly disbanded, but not before voicing the public’s expectation of federal responsibility for the welfare of its citizens.

**MHL document: Jacob Coxey, Address of Protest (1894) at www.myhistorylab.com**

b. Strikes: Coeur d’Alene, Homestead, and Pullman

Three major strikes dramatized workers’ demands and business/government resistance. Wage cuts in the Idaho mines led to lockouts and violence, and Idaho’s governor proclaimed martial law dispatching a combined state-federal force of about 1,500 troops. The troops broke the strike at Coeur d’Alene. At Homestead, Pennsylvania, members of the Amalgamated Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, the most powerful union of the AFL, had carved out an admirable position for themselves in the Carnegie Steel Company. In 1892, when the Amalgamated’s contract expired, company president and Carnegie ally Henry C. Frick announced a drastic wage cut. Once again, after violence broke out, the state National Guard was sent in and strikebreakers replace union workers, imposing more pay
cuts and a longer workday. Within a decade, every major steel company operated without union interference.

The Pullman Palace Car Company had been a model employer, deducting rent, library fees, and grocery bills from each worker’s weekly wages but leaving workers a decent livelihood. As the depression deepened, Pullman cut wages but not rents and other charges, sparking a strike in May of 1894. Pullman workers found their champion in Eugene V. Debs, whose American Railway Union (ARU) brought railroad workers across the continent into one organization. When Debs organized a sympathy strike by railroad workers across the country, federal authorities moved in, jailing Debs and replacing striking workers with army troops. In prison, Debs converted to socialism and a program of workers’ control of government.

MHL image: Homestead Strikers Surrendering at www.myhistorylab.com

c. The Social Gospel

Debs defined socialism as “Christianity in action,” and Washington Gladden warned that churches ignored social issues at their peril in Applied Christianity (1886). The Social Gospel movement inspired books imagining Christ coming to Chicago or Boston, with the simple question, “what would Jesus do?” More Protestants than Catholics embraced the Social Gospel, but Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical Rerum Novarum (1891) endorsed labor unions. Women in the movement supported voluntary associations such as orphanages as well as the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) to address urban problems, while Catholic laywomen and nuns sponsored similar agencies. Excluded by whites-only rules from the YWCA, African American women developed their own organizations such as Chicago’s Phyllis Wheatley Home to provide a Christian influence.

MHL document: Eugene V. Debs, The Outlook for Socialism in America (1900) at www.myhistorylab.com

V. POLITICS OF REFORM, POLITICS OF ORDER

The presidential election of 1896 marked both a dramatic realignment of voters and the centrality of economic issues. It also sanctioned the popular call for a stronger government and highlighted the link between domestic problems and the expansion of markets overseas.

a. The Free Silver Issue

For generations, reformers had advocated “soft” currency—that is, an increase in the money supply that would loosen credit. During the Civil War the federal government took decisive action, replacing state bank notes with a national paper currency popularly called “greenbacks” (from the color of the bills). The Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890 directed the Treasury to increase the amount of currency coined from silver mined in the West and also permitted the U.S. government to print paper silver certificates. The Panic of 1893 persuaded Cleveland of the merits of hard money
and led to the acts’ repeal, costing him the Democratic nomination. The “Silver Democrats” of Cleveland’s own party vowed revenge and began to look to the Populists, mainly Westerners and farmers who favored “free silver”—that is, the unlimited coinage of silver.

b. Populism’s Last Campaigns

Populists had been buoyed by the 1894 elections, which delivered to their candidates nearly 1.5 million votes—a gain of 42 percent over their 1892 totals. Nebraska Democratic Congressman William Jennings Bryan, a spellbinding orator who adopted the free silver issue, threatened the Populists’ prospects. At the 1896 party convention, Bryan thrilled delegates with his evocation of agrarian ideals in his “Cross of Gold” speech. The next day, Bryan carried the Democratic presidential nomination. The Populists realized that Bryan and the Democrats had stolen their thunder. In the end, Populists nominated Bryan for president and Georgia Populist Tom Watson for vice president. Most of the state Democratic Party organizations, however, refused to put the “fusion” ticket on the ballot, and Bryan and his Democratic running mate Arthur Sewall simply ignored the Populist campaign.


c. The Republican Triumph

After Cleveland’s blunders, Republicans anticipated an easy victory in 1896, but Bryan’s nomination, as party stalwart Mark Hanna warned, “changed everything.” Luckily, they had their own handsome, knowledgeable, courteous, and ruthless candidate, Civil War veteran William McKinley. In 1896, the Republicans outdid all previous campaigns in expense and scope, establishing a precedent for future elections. Delivering a hard-hitting negative campaign, they consistently cast Bryan as a naysayer.

With Democrats and Populist alike divided, McKinley triumphed in the most important presidential election since Reconstruction, ending the popular challenge to the nation’s governing system. In office, the probusiness McKinley supported a higher tariff along with cautious business regulation and a return to the gold standard. On the heels of returned prosperity and calls for a “full dinner pail,” McKinley easily won reelection in 1900 over the hapless Bryan and meager Populist effort.

d. Nativism and Jim Crow

Neither McKinley nor Bryan was prepared to address the issues of racism and nativism. Foreign radicalism was increasingly blamed for labor problems, while the American Protective Association equated race and nationhood. To uphold “the supremacy of the white race,” southern states enacted new legislation segregating restaurants, public transportation, and even drinking fountains. The Supreme Court upheld the new discriminatory legislation. In Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education (1899),
the Court allowed separate schools for blacks and whites, even where facilities for African American children did not exist. In 1896, *Plessy v. Ferguson* openly embraced racial separation with the doctrine of “separate but equal,” and a series of voting rights cases gutted the Fifteenth Amendment.

Race riots broke out across the nation, including the “Wilmington Massacre” in which whites ran elected black official out of town, while whites openly murdered blacks in Rosewood, Florida and Tulsa, Oklahoma. Thousands of lynchings—often popular public spectacles—took place. Black women like Ida Wells resisted and denounced lynching, although she was driven out of her native Memphis. Few white reformers rallied to defend African Americans; white supremacy, both at home and abroad, was widely supported by white America.

**VI. THE PATH TO IMPERIALISM**

The depression of 1893–97 revealed that the economy was overbuilt, producing more goods than markets could absorb. As disparities between rich and poor mounted, Americans began to look abroad for new markets.

a. **All the World’s a Fair**

Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exposition, commemorated the 400th anniversary of Columbus’s landing with “an exhibition of the progress of civilization in the New World.” “The White City” celebrated the achievements of American business in the global economy. One of the most popular exhibits, attracting 20,000 people a day, featured a mock ocean liner built to scale by the International Navigation Company, where fairgoers could imagine themselves as tourists, sailing in luxury to distant parts of the world. One enormous sideshow recreated Turkish bazaars and South Sea island huts. Very popular was the World Congress of Beauty, parading “40 Ladies from 40 Nations” dressed in native costume. By celebrating the brilliance of American industry and simultaneously presenting the “uncivilized” people of the world as a source of exotic entertainment, the planners of the fair delivered a powerful message. Former abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who attended the fair on “Colored People’s Day,” recognized it immediately. Ida Wells boycotted the special day set aside for African Americans, while Douglass attended, using the occasion to deliver a speech upbraiding those white Americans for their racism. Historian Frederick Jackson Turner, who had recently announced the closing of the internal frontier, called for expansion toward a new frontier abroad, underlining prevalent ideas about the preeminence of American civilization as well as the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race.

b. **The “Imperialism of Righteousness”**

After the Civil War, the major evangelical Protestant denominations all sponsored missions directed at foreign lands, following Josiah Strong’s urging that Americans should be agents of Christianization and civilization. In all, some 23 American Protestant churches had established missions in China by the turn of the century, the majority
staffed by women. Young Protestant women rushed to join foreign missionary societies. Since the early part of the nineteenth century, Protestant women had headed “cent” and “mite” societies, which gathered money to support overseas missionaries. By 1820, women were accompanying their minister husbands to distant parts to convert the “heathens” to Christianity. By 1900, the various Protestant denominations were supporting 41 women’s missionary boards; several years later more than 3 million women had enrolled in societies to support this work, together surpassing in size all other women’s organizations in the United States. Women’s foreign missions ranged from India and Africa to Syria, the Pacific Islands, and nearby Latin America. Missionaries played an important role both in generating public interest in foreign lands and in preparing the way for American economic expansion. As Josiah Strong aptly put it, “Commerce follows the missionary.”

MHL document: Josiah Strong, from Our Country (1885) at www.myhistorylab.com

c. The Quest for Empire

Seward, Lincoln’s Secretary of State, correctly predicted that foreign trade would play an increasingly important part in the American economy. Meanwhile, with European nations launching on their own imperialist missions in Asia and Africa, the United States increasingly viewed the Caribbean as an “American lake” and all of Latin America as a vast potential market for U.S. goods. Unlike European imperialists, powerful Americans dreamed of empire without large-scale permanent military occupation and costly colonial administration. Americans focused their expansionist plans on the Western Hemisphere, determined to dislodge the dominant power, Great Britain. Central and South America proved more accommodating to American designs (see Map 20.3).

Bilateral treaties with Mexico, Colombia, the British West Indies, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic allowed American business to dominate local economies, importing their raw materials at low prices and flooding their local markets with goods manufactured in the United States. Often, American investors simply took over the principal industries of these small nations, undercutting national business classes. The Good Neighbor policy depended on peace and order in the Latin American states. If popular uprisings proved too much for local officials, the U.S. Navy would intervene and return American allies to power. Navy Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan became the leading proponent of naval power as a key to both power and prosperity, advocating expansion in the Pacific and Caribbean, and promoting a naval buildup.

VII. ONTO A GLOBAL STAGE

Influenced by Mahan, McKinley supported expansion for economic, democratic, and humanitarian purposes. Despite the peaceful annexation of Hawai‘i, the 1898 Spanish-American War would prove McKinley wrong, and he admitted “isolation is no longer possible.” At the turn of the century, the United States had joined Europe and Japan in the quest for empire and claimed territories spread out across the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific.
a. A “Splendid Little War” in Cuba

Americans had contemplated annexation of Cuba before the Civil War. After failing several times to buy the island outright, the United States settled for the continuation of the status quo and resolved to protect Spain’s sovereignty over Cuba against the encroachment of other powers, including Cuba itself. As Spanish power eroded, an independence movement in Cuba led by José Martí prompted Spain to send the repressive Gen. Valeriano Weyler to the island to crush the rebellion, forcing real and imagined rebels into deadly concentration camps.

In the United States, the popular press whipped up support for the movement for Cuba Libre, circulating sensationalistic and even false stories of Spain’s atrocities against the insurgents. After the battleship Maine exploded in Havana harbor in February 1898, press and public alike demanded revenge for the death of 266 American sailors. McKinley asked Congress for a declaration of war against Spain in April, leading to a quick victory over the inept Spanish and making Teddy Roosevelt a national hero. The United States secured Cuba’s independence from Spain, but not its own sovereignty. Under the Platt Amendment, sponsored by Republican senator Orville H. Platt of Connecticut in 1901, Cuba was made a protectorate dominated by the United States.


b. War in the Philippines

After Congress declared war, McKinley sent 5,000 troops to occupy the Philippines and George Dewey commanding the American Asiatic Squadron, was ordered to “start offensive action.” Dewey quickly destroyed the Spanish fleet at Manila. Once the war ended, McKinley refused to sign the armistice unless Spain relinquished all claims to its Pacific islands. When Spain conceded, McKinley quickly drew up plans for colonial administration. The Filipino rebels, like the Cubans, at first welcomed American troops and fought with them against Spain. But when the war ended and American troops were not preparing to leave, the rebels, led by Emilio Aguinaldo, turned against their former allies and attacked the American base of operations in Manila in February 1899. Predicting a brief skirmish, American commanders seriously underestimated the population’s capacity to endure great suffering for the sake of independence. A brutal war ensued. Most resistance ended in 1902, but on some Philippine islands, intermittent fighting lasted until 1935. Meanwhile the United States forced Spain to cede Puerto Rico and bought island territories in the Caribbean and Pacific, cementing America’s global power. Josiah Strong defending it all as necessary for superior whites to bring the rule of law to inferior races, but many Americans wondered if empire threatened democratic ideals for Americans and subject people.

MHL image: Filipino Guerillas at www.myhistorylab.com
c. Critics of Empire

Mark Twain, Andrew Carnegie, William Jennings Bryan, and Harvard philosopher William James strongly opposed imperialism and Bostonians organized the Anti-Imperialist League. Morrison Swift, leader of the Coxeys Army contingent from Massachusetts, formed a Filipino Liberation Society and sent antiwar materials to American troops. Others, such as Samuel Gompers, a league vice president, felt no sympathy for conquered peoples and simply wanted to prevent colonized nonwhites from immigrating into the United States and “inundating” American labor.

Military leaders and staunch imperialists did not distinguish between racist and non-racist anti-imperialists, calling them all traitors. Newspaper editors accused universities of harboring antiwar professors, although college students as a group were enthusiastic supporters of the war.

Within the press, which overwhelmingly supported the Spanish-American War, the voices of opposition appeared primarily in African American and labor papers. Untouched by the private tragedies of dead or wounded American soldiers and the mass destruction of civilian society in the Philippines, the vast majority could approve Theodore Roosevelt’s defense of armed conflict: “No triumph of peace is quite so great as the supreme triumphs of war.”

VIII. CONCLUSION.

Agrarian reformers who gave rise to the Populist movement failed to halt the growth of national government in the late nineteenth century. Racism, nativism, and regional tensions continued to plague the nation. Queen Lili’iokalani’s dream of an independent Hawai’i, despite support from the likes of Bryan, had no place in expansionist America. Yet unaddressed problems would prove increasingly difficult to ignore or overcome after 1900.

Learning Objectives:
Students should be able to answer the following questions after studying Chapter 20:

1. What factors contributed to the growth of government in the late nineteenth century?
2. How and why did workers and farmers organize to participate in politics during this era?
3. In what ways did the election of 1896 represent a turning point in U.S. political history?
4. Why did the United States take on imperialist ventures in the late nineteenth century?
5. Why did the United States go to war with Spain in 1898, and with what results?

Discussion Suggestions and Possible Answers
1. Discuss some of the problems accompanying the expansion of government during the late nineteenth century. What role did political parties play in this process? Explain how a prominent reformer such as James Garfield might become a leading “machine” politician.

Answer: Government grew rapidly, as industrialization and urbanization created a demand for government services such as education, public safety, and other public works like roads and parks. Political machines dominated as political loyalties at the local level were chiefly determined by ethnicity, race, and religion. The patronage system forced members of each party, such as President Garfield, to succumb and offer government positions to party loyalists in order maintain his political power.

2. What were the major causes and consequences of the Populist movement of the 1880s and 1890s? Why did the election of 1896 prove so important to the future of American politics?

Answer: Falling prices, economic uncertainty, and a rising alienation from the urbanized East led to the formation of the People’s or Populist Party as a way of giving farmers a political voice. Although they failed to achieve national office and their party platform such as government ownership of telegraph lines and railroads was rejected, other Populist ideas such as the income tax would eventually become enacted. The election of 1896 ended the popular challenge to the political system and pushed America toward overseas expansion.

3. Discuss the role of women in both the Grange and the People’s Party. What were their specific goals?

Answer: Female activists helped organize both labor and agrarian social movements and became important leaders and spokeswomen for these movements. Furthermore, these groups helped to spur the growth of other women’s movements for suffrage.

4. Discuss the causes and consequences of the financial crisis of the 1890s. How did various reformers and politicians respond to the event? What kinds of programs did they offer to restore the economy or reduce poverty?

Answer: Falling agricultural prices, tight credit, less overseas demand as European economies were in turmoil and overexpansion, especially in key industries like the railroads, led to a major depression in 1893. Jacob Coxely led a march of unemployed workers on Washington, D.C., demanding federal assistance to those devastated by the economic crisis. The federal government took limited action, printing additional currency backed by silver and raising tariffs to try and protect American industry.

5. How did the exclusion of African Americans affect the outcome of populism? Explain the rise of Jim Crow legislation in the South and discuss its impact on the status of African Americans.

Answer: The mass disenfranchisement of African Americans—only 5 percent of the southern black electorate voted in 1896—meant that many supporters of populism could not vote. The rise of Jim Crow legislation, most notably Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896, imposed
segregation throughout the South and left reminders of black inferiority throughout society as they were excluded from restaurants, water fountains, and other public establishments. Black schools enjoyed far fewer resources then those for white students.

6. Describe American foreign policy during the 1890s. Why did the United States intervene in Cuba and the Philippines? What were some of the leading arguments for and against overseas expansion?

**Answer:** American foreign policy in the 1890s focused on the Western Hemisphere, as European countries established colonies in Asia and Africa. The heart of American overseas expansion was a belief that the nation’s economy depended on creating new markets for American goods overseas. A belief in spreading American ideals of democracy and religion and a humanitarian concern also contributed to this foreign policy. Some critics charged that free trade, not domination, was the proper means of expanding the economy, while labor leaders feared an influx of minority immigrants would take away jobs.

**Lecture Outline**

American Communities: The Annexation of Hawai‘i

Toward a National Governing Class
- Growth of Government
- Political Machines
- Spoils System and Civil Service Reform

Farmers and Workers Organize Their Communities
- The Grange, Granger Laws
- The Farmer’s Alliance
- Workers Search for Power
- The WCTU and Women Reformer
- Populism and the People’s Party

The Crisis of the 1890s
- Financial Collapse and the Depression of 1893
- Labor Strikes: Coeur d’ Alene, Homestead, and Pullman
- The Social Gospel

Politics of Reform, Politics of Order
- Free Silver
- William Jennings Bryan and the Populists
- McKinley and the Republican Victory
- Nativism and Jim Crow Laws—*Plessy v. Ferguson*

The Path to Imperialism
- All the World’s a Fair
- The Imperialism of Righteousness
- The Quest for Empire
Onto a Global Stage
A Splendid Little War in Cuba
War and Rebellion in the Philippines
Critics of Empire

Resources (Web, Films/Videos)

Web
Mark Twain’s Mississippi: http://dig.lib.niu.edu/twain/index.html

Films/Video
Hawaii’s Last Queen (55 minutes). PBS, The American Experience
America 1900 (55 minutes). PBS, The American Experience

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
Frances E. Willard on the Reorganization of Government (1891)
The People’s Party Platform (1892)
Jacob Coxey, Address of Protest (1894)
Eugene V. Debs, The Outlook for Socialism in America (1900)
William Jennings Bryan, “Cross of Gold” Speech (1896)
Josiah Strong, from Our Country (1885)

See the Images
Nast Cartoon: Boss Tweed
Homestead Strikers Surrendering
African American Troops in the Spanish-American War
Filipino Guerillas

Research and Explore

Read the Documents
Exploring America: White Man’s Burden
Exploring America: Homestead Strike of 1892
Read the Biographies
Queen Liliuokalani
Williams Jennings Bryan

Critical Thinking Exercises

A central theme in this chapter is the difficulty of radically reforming the political system. Most students have had no experience in political reform. Yet people with that experience are all around. Students could interview people who have had experience in reform politics: environmental or animal-rights activists, or politicized evangelicals, are all prospects.