The Roots of Progressivism

- Laissez-faire economics and unregulated markets were thought to have led to social problems that the government would be able to fix.
- Progressives thought urbanization and industrialization had created many social problems.
- Progressives thought progress in science and knowledge could improve society.
- Muckrakers were journalists focused on social conditions and government corruption.
- Cities adopted commissions and city management forms of government.
- States adopted the direct primary system; allowed initiatives, referendums, and recall votes; and the Seventeenth Amendment, which provided for direct election of senators by popular vote, was passed.
- Many progressives joined the movement to win the right to vote for women, culminating in the Nineteenth Amendment.
- Zoning laws and building codes improved urban housing.
- Many progressives focused on social welfare programs, such as child labor laws and safer working conditions.
- The temperance movement began.

Roosevelt and Taft

- President Roosevelt, a Social Darwinist, took on big business with reform programs that became known as the Square Deal.
- The Interstate Commerce Commission was strengthened when Roosevelt pushed the Hepburn Act through Congress.
- Consumer protection acts, such as the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act were passed.
- Concerned about the exploitation of public lands, Roosevelt urged Americans to conserve the environment, including the nation’s forests.
- President Taft called for a special session of Congress to lower tariffs.
- Taft brought more antitrust cases than Roosevelt, and was a dedicated conservationist.

The Wilson Years

- The election of 1912 was held between three major candidates, including President Taft, former president Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson.
- The Federal Reserve System was created to regulate the country’s money supply.
- The Clayton Antitrust Act granted labor unions more rights.
- The progressives failed to address racial and religious discrimination.