

## Lesson Plans: The Institutional Demands of Becoming a Teacher (Critical Issues in American Education)

### Progressive Movement Goals

What did the Progressives want? Progressives fought against numerous social ills of the era, which were the products of the swift industrial transformation and economic growth of the 1800s. During the Industrial Revolution (1820-1870), new technologies had allowed productivity to reach astounding new levels. Across the country, factories had opened their doors at breakneck speed, and thousands of people flocked to American cities to join the industrial workforce. These workers usually toiled in hazardous conditions and for exhaustingly long hours. Up to 20% of the workforce at this time was composed of children, some as young as six years old. The urban population lived in highly overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, where disease spread quickly.

The Gilded Age (1870-1900) followed this period and was characterized by exponential economic growth and a widening economic gap between America's richest and poorest. Rich industry tycoons held economic and political sway while impoverished factory workers continued to live in squalor. The Progressive Movement sought to address the many problems that arose during the Industrial Revolution and the Gilded Age. Its three main goals were eliminating corruption, strengthening democracy, and protecting laborers.

One central goal of the Progressive Movement was to eradicate corruption. Why did Progressives seek to eliminate government corruption? Progressives saw corruption as a problem in and of itself and as a cause of other social problems of the time. The movement thus targeted corrupt politicians who were responsible for legislation that was detrimental to social welfare and those who did nothing to promote Progressive Movement goals. The Progressives lobbied for the practice of direct democracy in order to reduce nepotism and corruption. They introduced new political mechanisms that would allow corrupt officials to be recalled from office, such as recalls and referendums.

Children worked long hours in factories with dangerous working conditions (pictured here in 1911).

### Belief in Modernization

Modernization was a core value of the Progressive Movement. Progressives believed that science, technology, and education could improve America's burgeoning urban-industrial society. Progressives wanted to mobilize advances in these areas to improve industrial efficiency and to better people's living conditions. They sought to eliminate wastefulness by improving education and increasing children's access to education. Progressives also believed in the obligation to intervene in economic and social affairs, seeing this as a way to eradicate government corruption.

### Middle Class Theory

Amidst the shifting wealth distribution among Americans, the Progressives garnered increasing disdain for the upper class. The upper class wielded

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individualistic values to justify their exorbitant wealth and power and to oppose government regulation. Individualism is a stance which exalts independence and self-reliance and prioritizes the goals of the individual before those of the state. Individualism holds that the state should not have much power over individuals. Wealthy industry magnates saw it as their right to determine what they produced, how and by whom these goods were produced, and at what price to sell.

Largely middle class themselves, the Progressives denounced this individualism and sought to bridge the growing class divides. One such Progressive was prominent activist and social worker Jane Addams (1860-1935). Addams promoted 'association' between classes, which she defined as forging relationships across class lines and between classes more broadly. Addams considered 'association' essential to offsetting the inflated individualism of the upper classes, who continued to grow in wealth and leave the rest of the population behind. Fostering solidarity among the classes raised public awareness of the dire situation of the working class and increased public support of social welfare reform. To this end, Addams became a 'social housekeeper' (defined below) and established Hull-House in Chicago. She transformed the Hull-House into a place where people of all classes and backgrounds could build community and engage in political dialogue.

### Muckraking to Expose Corruption

Muckrakers played a huge role in fighting the rampant political corruption of the Progressive Era. Muckrakers exposed corruption in government and big business by leveraging mass media to raise awareness. The publications of these writers, journalists, and photographers were often sensationalist and were geared at shocking the American public about the extent of corruption, exploitation, and social hardship.

McClure's Magazine was one of the most prominent muckraking publications. McClure's used investigative journalism to take on political machines and corporate monopolies such as the Standard Oil Company, owned by John D. Rockefeller.

Muckrakers also sought to expose unsafe working conditions, urban poverty, and child labor. In his 1906 book *The Jungle*, prominent muckraker Upton Sinclair exposed the unsanitary and exploitative conditions in the meat packing industry. His work helped influence the eventual passage of the Meat Inspection Act (1906) and the Pure Food and Drug

Act (1906).

#### Labor Unions

Labor unions became more widespread and active in the early 20th century. Labor unions helped achieve Progressive Movement goals related to workers' rights and workplace safety. However, the growing workforce comprised of Black Americans were often barred from joining these unions and benefiting from the protections they offered.

Labor unions of the Progressive movement initiated several measures to protect laborers including minimum work ages, maximum work hours, safety measures, and workers' compensation. Labor unions fought to impose restrictions on a judge's ability to intervene on the employer's side in labor disputes. Unions also pushed for the enforcement of regulations on corporations that would promote equal competition with small businesses. In addition, unions pushed for the introduction of benefits for workers suffering injury or illness because of their job. Notably, these efforts brought about the establishment of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs.

Labor unions like this union of glass workers advocated for the rights of workers to work injury compensation and other protections.

#### Civil Rights Issues

The civil rights of Black Americans were broadly neglected by the Progressive Movement. Despite the 14th Amendment's recognition of the equal citizenship of Black Americans, they continued to face extensive discrimination in nearly every area of life. The Jim Crow Laws imposed racial segregation and undermined the rights of Black Americans. During this period, the Ku Klux Klan and ordinary citizens frequently carried out lynching, beating, and other acts of violence meant to intimidate Black Americans from exercising their civil rights. These issues were broadly ignored by the Progressive Movement, which was overwhelmingly made up of white activists.

Women's rights, however, were addressed by the Progressive Movement. Indeed, women were a powerhouse of political activism during this time. During this period, women began to reject Victorian-era values that confined them to domesticity and passivity. More middle-class women began to pursue an education and seek opportunities beyond the home. Women joined forces and advocated for their rights. Progressive Era feminist activism is often referred to as

first-wave feminism. Its most prominent goal was to achieve women's suffrage, meaning the right to vote. The National American Woman Suffrage Association, led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, played a large role in bringing about the 19th Amendment, which recognized women's right to vote.

## Reference

[Nursing School Entrance Exams \(TEAS\) Flashcard Book + Online \(Nursing Test Prep\)](#)

[Why Students Underachieve: What Educators and Parents Can Do about It](#)