Period 7: 1890-1945

AP United States History

Imperialism and the Spanish-American War

Period 7 runs from **1890** to **1945** - the longest and densest period. Three storylines run through it: the growth of federal power in the economy, the rise of mass culture and the arguments it provoked, and the country's move to global power.

New **territorial ambitions** grew from a search for markets, naval strategy, and beliefs about national mission. Victory in the **Spanish-American War** gave the United States overseas possessions and forced a genuine argument.

The **imperialism debate** is the examinable point: supporters argued for markets, strategic bases, and a civilising mission; opponents argued that ruling people without their consent contradicted the country's founding principles, and some argued on racial or economic grounds. Both positions must appear in a strong answer.

FOR EXPANSION	AGAINST IT
markets and coaling stations for a trading power	ruling people without their consent contradicts the republic's own founding
a naval strategy that needs bases	the cost of holding territory
a claimed civilising mission	racial objections to incorporating new populations

Both sides argue from **American principles** — which is why this is a debate about what the country is, and why it did not end in 1898

The Progressive Era

The United States continued its transition from a rural, agricultural economy to an **urban, industrial** one, and **Progressives** responded to the problems that came with it.

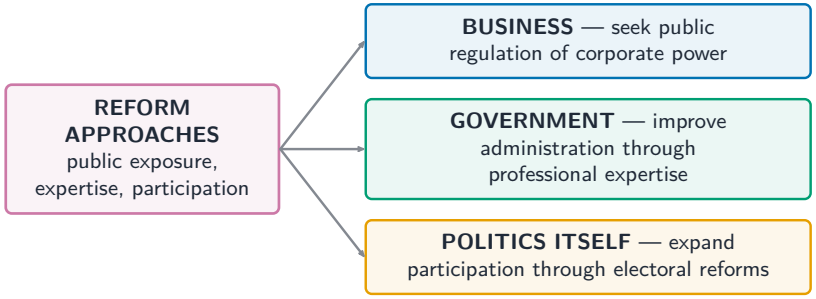
Try it – compare reform approaches. Teacher-written cases grounded in CED Topic 7.4: A journalist exposes political corruption and calls for action. A reformer wants professional experts to make government more efficient. Another wants voters to participate more directly in political decisions. Identify each approach. Do the last two give ordinary voters the same role? Explain a shared reform aim and a difference in method.

Worked comparison. Journalists exposed corruption, social injustice and inequality, creating pressure for change. Expert administration emphasised **expertise and evidence** to diagnose problems and improve efficiency. Reform of **politics itself** could expand voter participation through direct primaries, initiatives, referendums and direct election of senators. Both sought better government, but expert administration and greater voter participation assigned authority differently. Progressives did not follow one fixed sequence.

Document practice – adapted from 2019 AP US History DBQ, Document 2. Paraphrase, not a quotation: in a 1902 speech, President Theodore Roosevelt treated corporations as creations of the state and argued that government had a right and duty to supervise them when they caused harm. He recognised that corporations could also do useful work. Identify the proposed government role. Does this support abolishing every corporation? Does the speech alone prove regulation was enacted and enforced?

Worked reading. Roosevelt advocated public supervision, not elimination of every corporation. Roosevelt used corporations' dependence on state authority to justify public supervision, challenging entirely private control. A speech establishes an expressed position; laws, enforcement and effects require further evidence. This is practice with one document, not a complete answer to the 2019 DBQ on political change, 1890–1920, and implies no score.

Progressives were divided over many issues. Some supported Southern segregation; others ignored it. They also disagreed over immigration restriction. Reform did not mean a shared commitment to equal rights. National reform efforts included economic regulation, expanding democracy and moral reform, including constitutional amendments concerning prohibition and women's suffrage.



Connect a reformer's **goal and approach**; assess the effect and limits. Progressives disagreed over participation, expertise, race and immigration

World War I and Its Aftermath

Entry into the **First World War** mobilised the economy and expanded federal power, but it also **intensified debates about the nation's role in the world** and about civil liberties at home, where dissent was prosecuted.

The war triggered the **Great Migration**, as African Americans moved north

for wartime industrial jobs, reshaping northern cities and politics.

Afterwards the United States pursued a **unilateral foreign policy** - rejecting the League of Nations while remaining economically engaged abroad.

The 1920s: Mass Culture and Backlash

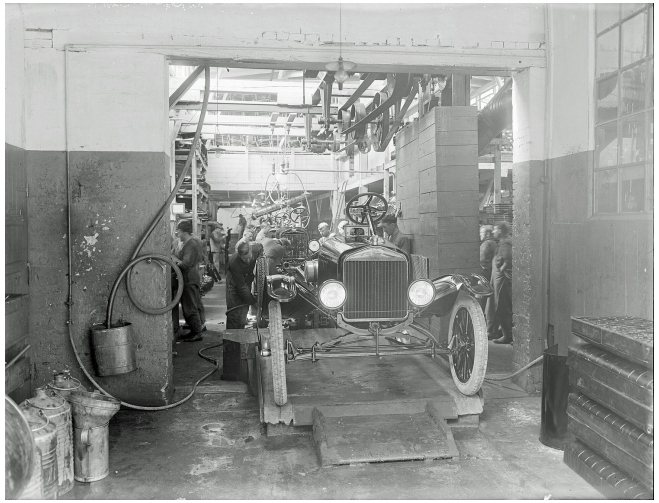
Innovations in communication and technology - radio, film, mass-circulation magazines, and the automobile - contributed to the growth of **mass culture** , which increasingly set national tastes.

The same decade produced **sharp divisions** over what the country should be:

- **Immigration restriction** through national-origins quotas.
- Conflict over **religion and science**, and over **prohibition** .
- A revived **Ku Klux Klan** K and organised nativism.
- The **Harlem Renaissance** and the "New Woman" as assertions of new cultural identities.

A NATIONAL MASS CULTURE	AND THE REACTION TO IT
radio, film and the car new roles and freedoms for women the **Harlem Renaissance**	**immigration restriction** religion against science; **prohibition** the revived **Ku Klux Klan**

One decade, not two halves. The **sharp divisions** are the answer to a 1920s prompt — naming only the jazz or only the Klan answers half of it



Depression and the New Deal

The **Great Depression** brought mass unemployment and social dislocation. **Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal** used government power to provide **relief** , stimulate **recovery** and pursue **reform** .

Try it – explain programme functions. Teaching summaries: A, the Works Progress Administration employed people on public projects. B, the Agricultural Adjustment Act sought higher farm prices by reducing crop production. C, federal deposit insurance protected covered deposits when an insured bank failed. Match each to relief, recovery or reform, explaining its function. Could an employment programme also help recovery?

Worked purposes. A provided relief through income from work; spending could also support economic activity, so purposes could overlap. B aimed at recovery by reducing output to raise farm prices and improve farmers' incomes. C reformed the financial system through a continuing safeguard for covered deposits. It was not a promise to prevent every future crisis. Sorting agencies alone neither demonstrates success nor makes an argument.

RELIEF	RECOVERY	REFORM
help people now	*restart the economy*	*create continuing safeguards*
- Civilian Conservation Corps - jobs for young men	- Agricultural Adjustment Act - raise farm prices	- Social Security Act - pensions and unemployment
- Works Progress Administration - public works jobs	- National Industrial Recovery Act - codes for industry	- Wagner Act - the right to organise a union
- Federal Emergency Relief - direct aid to states	- Tennessee Valley Authority - power and development	- FDIC and SEC - bank deposits and stock markets

The New Deal did not end the Depression

reforms and political changes lasted; programme purposes could overlap

Explain the programme's function and assess its effects rather than treating these categories as exclusive.

Radical, union, and populist movements pushed Roosevelt toward more extensive measures. Conservatives in Congress and the Supreme Court sought to limit the New Deal's scope. Broader action and opposition both shaped contested policies; avoid a single-cause explanation.

Try it – judge effects. Teaching evidence paraphrased from CED Topic 7.10: the New Deal did not end the Depression, but left reforms and regulatory agencies and

helped create a lasting political realignment toward the Democratic Party among many ethnic groups, African Americans and working-class communities. Assess the claim that continued depression means the New Deal had no economic or political effects.

Worked judgment. Failure to end the Depression was a limit, not an absence of effects. Relief programmes and lasting safeguards changed government's economic responsibilities. Institutions themselves affected economic life. Political realignment was another lasting effect. Judge a specific purpose with evidence rather than claiming complete success or that nothing changed.

The Second World War

Americans viewed the war as a fight for the **survival of freedom and democracy** against fascist aggression.

Mass mobilization helped end the Great Depression, and it changed society:

- Mobilisation and **military service** provided opportunities for **women and minorities** to improve their status, though within continued segregation and discrimination.
- Migration from **Mexico** and elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere increased to meet labour demand.
- Japanese Americans were forcibly **interned**, the period's clearest case of wartime rights denied.

Victory came through **Allied cooperation**, industrial capacity, and technological advantage, ending with the use of atomic weapons against Japan.

Postwar Diplomacy

The war-ravaged condition of Asia and Europe, and the dominant U.S. role in the Allied victory and in the occupations that followed, left the United States as the strongest power in the world - and set up the confrontation with the Soviet Union that Period 8 begins with.

Comparison in Period 7

Comparison is one useful reasoning skill for this period. Compare Progressive-era reform and the New Deal through their contexts, goals, government action and limits, using specific evidence.

Exam transfer – 2024 AP US History, Set 2, short-answer Q4(c), paraphrased. Explain how one development from 1900 to 1940 contributed to government involvement in the economy. Try either corporate growth and Progressive regulation or the Great Depression and New Deal relief. Explain how the development prompted a particular response; a sequence alone does not explain causation.

Teacher-written model. Mass unemployment during the Great Depression created demand for help that expanded federal involvement in the economy. New Deal employment programmes such as the WPA provided paid work on public projects to people needing income.

Why this fits. The official scheme accepts the Great Depression contributing to the New Deal. The model explains a need and a government response within the dates. Providing relief does not prove a programme ended the Depression. This is our Q4(c) model, not an official sample or a guarantee of credit.

Exam tips

- When asked to compare imperialist and anti-imperialist positions, explain **both** with relevant evidence.
- Compare Progressive goals, approaches and limits; reformers disagreed about participation, expertise, race and immigration.
- Sort New Deal programmes by **relief, recovery, reform**. Explain their functions, overlapping purposes and effects.
- State the CED's verdict directly: the New Deal did **not** end the Depression but left a lasting legacy.
- Wartime opportunity for **women and minorities** was real *and* limited. Use relevant evidence; acknowledging a limit alone does not guarantee complexity.
- Match evidence to the prompt and dates; explain a causal connection in Q4(c).

Vocabulary card meanings

territorial ambitions: Aims to control land beyond the existing borders. Spanish-American War: The 1898 war in which the United States took overseas possessions

from Spain. imperialism debate: The argument over whether the United States should rule other peoples. urban, industrial: A society organised around cities and factory production. Progressives: Reformers who used expertise and government to address industrial problems. expertise and evidence: Specialist knowledge and facts, which Progressives trusted as guides to policy. politics itself: The workings of parties and government, which some reformers tried to clean up. First World War: The 1914-18 war that the United States entered in 1917. Great Migration: The early-twentieth-century movement of African Americans out of the South to cities in the North and the West. unilateral foreign policy: Acting abroad without binding the country to allies. mass culture: Entertainment and goods shared by a wide public, such as radio and film. sharp divisions: Deep splits over immigration, race, religion, and modern life. Immigration restriction: Laws that sharply limited who could enter the country. prohibition: The constitutional ban on the manufacture and sale of alcohol. Ku Klux Klan: A white supremacist organisation revived in the 1920s with a broader list of targets. Harlem Renaissance: A flowering of African American art and literature centred in New York. Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal: The 1930s programmes of relief, recovery, and reform during the Depression. relief: Immediate help for people without income. reform: Lasting changes to the rules of banking, labour, and welfare. Mass mobilization: Putting the whole economy and population onto a war footing. women and minorities: Groups whose wartime work and service changed, without ending inequality. interned: Forced into camps, as Japanese Americans were during the Second World War. Allied cooperation: Joint strategy among the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and others.