

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** 领土野心 grew from a search for markets, naval strategy, and beliefs about national mission. Victory in the **Spanish-American War** 美西战争 gave the United States overseas possessions and forced a genuine argument.

The **imperialism debate** 帝国主义之争 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.

The Progressive Era

The United States continued its transition from a rural, agricultural economy to an **urban, industrial** 城市工业化 one, and **Progressives** 进步主义者 responded to the problems that came with it.

Progressivism was a broad reform impulse, not a single programme, but its methods are consistent:

- Use **expertise and evidence** 专业知识与证据 to diagnose social problems - the work of muckraking journalists and social surveys.
- Use **government** to fix them: regulation of food, drugs, working conditions, and monopolies.
- Reform **politics itself** 政治改革 through the direct primary, the initiative and referendum, and direct election of senators.

Its limits are examinable too. Progressive reform largely excluded African Americans, and some Progressives supported segregation and immigration restriction.

World War I and Its Aftermath

Entry into the **First World War** 第一次世界大战 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** 大迁徙, as African Americans moved north for wartime industrial jobs, reshaping northern cities and politics.

Afterwards the United States pursued a **unilateral foreign policy** 单边外交政策 - 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** 大众文化, which increasingly set national tastes.

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

- **Immigration restriction** 移民限制 through national-origins quotas.
- Conflict over **religion and science**, and over **prohibition** 禁酒令.
- A revived **Ku Klux Klan** 三 K 党 and organised nativism.
- The **Harlem Renaissance** 哈莱姆文艺复兴 and the "New Woman" as assertions of new cultural identities.

Depression and the New Deal



The New Deal did NOT end the Depression - but it left a permanent legacy of reform

radical, union and populist pressure is what pushed Roosevelt toward the wider measures

Sorting New Deal programmes by purpose - relief, recovery, reform - is what turns a list into an argument

The **Great Depression** 大萧条 brought mass unemployment and social dislocation, and policymakers responded by expanding the federal role in the economy.

Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal 罗斯福新政 attempted to end the Depression through **relief** 救济, **recovery** 复苏, and **reform** 改革. **Radical, union, and populist movements** 激进派、工会与民粹运动 pushed Roosevelt toward more extensive measures - which is why the "Second New Deal" is more ambitious than the first.

The verdict the CED states plainly: the New Deal **did not end the Depression**, but it left a lasting legacy of reform - Social Security, federal deposit insurance, labour rights, and the expectation that government is responsible for economic security.

The Second World War

Americans viewed the war as a fight for the **survival of freedom and democracy** 自由与民主的存续 against fascist aggression.

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

- Mobilisation and **military service** provided opportunities for **women and minorities** 妇女与少数族裔 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** 拘禁, the period's clearest case of wartime rights denied.

Victory came through **Allied cooperation** 盟国合作, 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

The period's reasoning skill is **comparison**. The most useful pairing is **Progressive-era reform against the New Deal**: both expanded federal power, but the New Deal did so on a far larger scale and in response to collapse rather than to growth.

Worked example (a real AP exam question). The 2024 exam set the long essay *"Evaluate the extent to which beliefs about threats to the United States shaped society from 1917 to 1945."* A strong thesis names the beliefs and what they produced: *"Beliefs about internal and external threats shaped American society to a great extent between 1917 and 1945, producing wartime restrictions on dissent, immigration quotas in the 1920s, and the internment of Japanese Americans, even as the same fears mobilised broad support for federal power."* Notice the shape: the prompt is about **beliefs**, so the evidence must be things beliefs *caused* - policies and social changes - not simply a narrative of the wars.

Exam tips

- Give **both sides** of the imperialism debate; a one-sided answer misses the point of the question.
- Progressivism is a **method** - expertise, then government action, then political reform. Its exclusion of African Americans is examinable.

- Sort New Deal programmes by **relief, recovery, reform**. That structure converts a list into an argument.
- State the CED's verdict directly: the New Deal did **not** end the Depression but left a permanent legacy.
- Wartime opportunity for **women and minorities** was real *and* limited. Saying both is what earns complexity.
- For 1917-1945 prompts about fear or threat, use **civil liberties, immigration quotas, and internment** as your evidence.