

Period 6: 1865-1898

AP US History ■ Period 6

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What we will cover

- 1 Westward Expansion after the Civil War
- 2 The Rise of Industrial Capitalism
- 3 Labour in the Gilded Age
- 4 Migration and the Cities
- 5 The New Middle Class and Reform
- 6 Politics and the Populist Challenge

Westward Expansion after the Civil War

Period 6 runs from 1865 to 1898 – the **Gilded Age** 镀金时代. Industry, migration, and the West transform the country, and every transformation produces a political argument about who benefits.

But the same forces squeezed farmers: **consolidation in agricultural markets** 农产品市场集中化 left them facing high freight rates, expensive credit, and falling crop prices.

The Rise of Industrial Capitalism

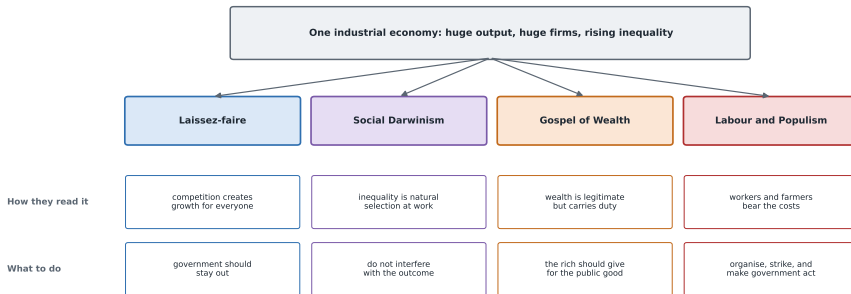
Large-scale industrial production, accompanied by massive technological change, produced enormous output and enormous firms.

- New **corporate structures** 公司组织形式 – trusts and holding companies – allowed **consolidation** 合并 and, in some industries, near-monopoly.
- New **transportation and communication** networks, above all the railroad, created a genuinely national market.
- Business leaders defended their position with **laissez-faire** 自由放任 arguments: competition promoted growth, and government should stay out.

The Rise of Industrial Capitalism, continued

The same period produced **rising inequality** 不平等加剧 and recurring financial panics, which is why the economy itself became the central political question.

Labour in the Gilded Age



the distinction this unit turns on

Labour in the Gilded Age

A **variety of perspectives** 各种不同的立场 on the economy and labour developed. Workers faced long hours, dangerous conditions, and wages that fell during downturns.

Strikes 罢工 were frequent, often large, and frequently broken by state or federal force, which itself became an argument about the role of government.

Migration and the Cities

International and internal migration increased urban populations and fostered the growth of **cities** 城市.

New arrivals came increasingly from **southern and eastern Europe** 南欧与东欧, alongside Chinese migration to the West – which met the **Chinese Exclusion Act** 排华法案, the first significant federal restriction on immigration by nationality.

The New Middle Class and Reform

Corporations' need for **managers** 管理人员 and for male and female **clerical workers** 文职人员 expanded a new **middle class** 中产阶级, with new patterns of consumption and leisure.

- **Social Darwinism** 社会达尔文主义 used evolutionary language to justify inequality as natural.
- The **Gospel of Wealth** 财富福音 argued that the wealthy had a **moral obligation** 道德义务 to use their fortunes for the public good.
- Agrarians, utopians, socialists, and artists criticised industrial society from the other direction.
- Many women sought greater equality, often through **voluntary organizations** 自愿团体 – temperance, settlement houses, and suffrage work.

Politics and the Populist Challenge

The major parties appealed to lingering divisions from the Civil War and competed over **patronage** 政治分肥 more than policy, producing close elections and limited legislation.

Populism failed as a party but placed on the agenda the idea that government should intervene in the economy – the argument Period 7 takes up.

Continuity and Change in Period 6

The period's reasoning skill is **continuity and change**.

Industrialisation changed where people lived and what they did, while inequality, sectional political loyalties, and racial exclusion persisted.

Exam tips

- Explain farmers' anger with mechanisms: **freight rates**, **credit**, and **falling crop prices** – not "farmers struggled".
- Keep the four Gilded Age responses distinct: **laissez-faire**, **Social Darwinism**, the **Gospel of Wealth**, and organised **labour and Populism**.
- For immigration, name the shift to **southern and eastern Europe** and the **Chinese Exclusion Act** as the first nationality-based federal restriction.
- **Political machines** are examinable as both corruption and social provision. Saying both is what earns the complexity.
- **Populism** matters less for winning than for putting government intervention on the agenda.
- On continuity-and-change prompts, name a specific continuity. Racial exclusion and unequal wealth are the safest here.