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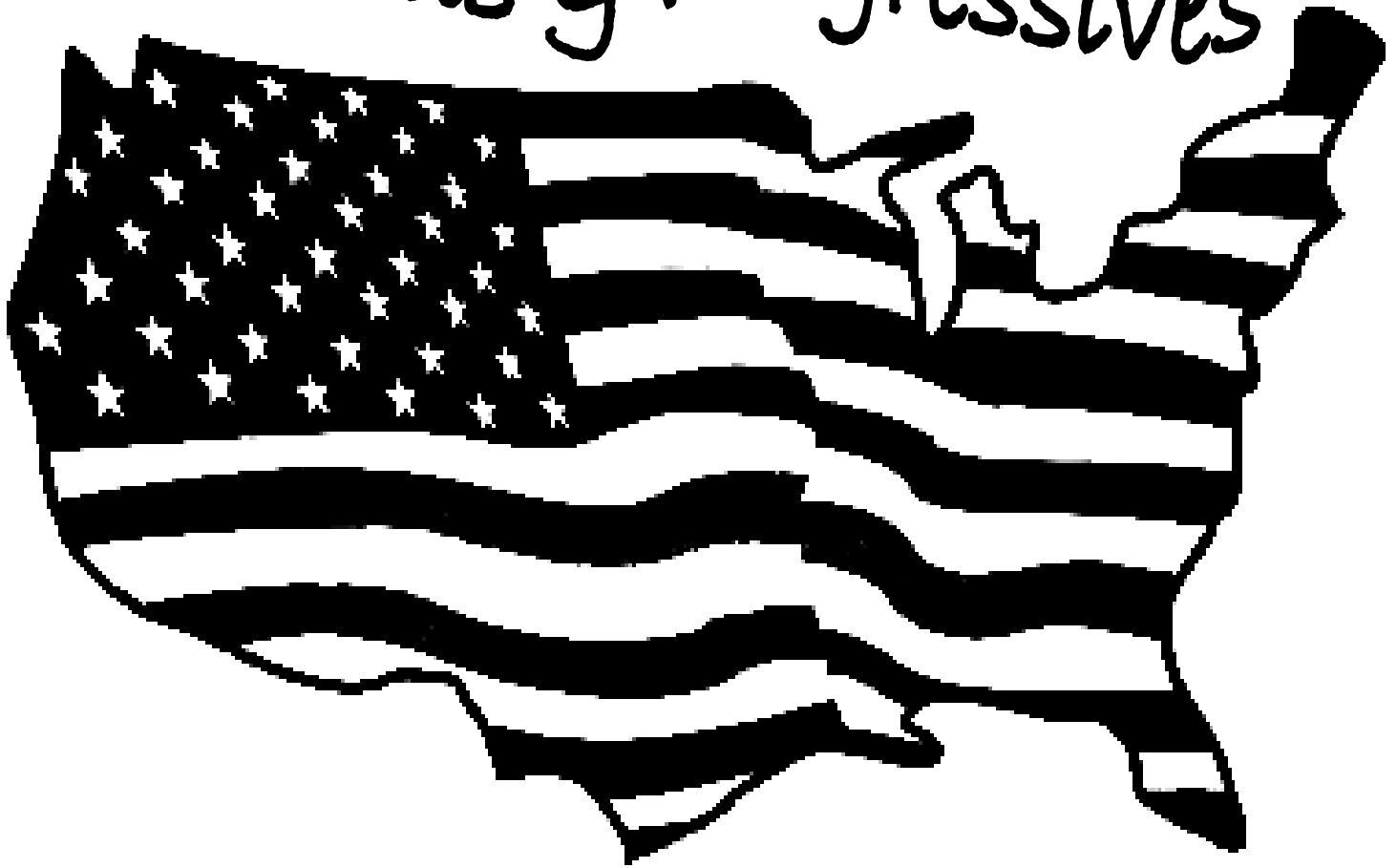
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# i Think : U.S. History

## Problems & Progressives



by Sharon Coletti  
and Kendra Corr

\*\* It is the goal of InspirEd Educators, Inc. to create instructional materials that are interesting, engaging, and challenging. Our student-centered approach incorporates both content and skills, placing particular emphasis on reading, writing, vocabulary development, and critical and creative thinking in the content areas.

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## All That Glitters Is Not Gold

### Springboard:

Students should read “The Gilded Age” and answer the questions.

**Objective:** The student will be able to explain what the Gilded Age was and some of the progress and problems of the era.

**Materials:** The Gilded Age (Springboard handout)  
Predicting Problems (handout)

**Terms to know:** **Golden Age** - period of peace and achievement  
**political machine** - group that controls the activities of a political party  
**political party** - organization that works to achieve agreed-upon goals and get its members elected to offices

### Procedure:

- After reviewing the Springboard and lesson terms, explain that in this lesson the student(s) will be doing some brainstorming to predict some of the problems associated with the Gilded Age.
- Distribute the “Predicting Problems” handout. The student(s) should work individually, in pairs, or groups, using 20/20 hindsight as desired, to predict the problems that plagued the Gilded Age.
- Have them share their answers and discuss. (*Answers may vary but should reflect the beginnings of an understanding that the time period was one in which a few people grew very rich, while most people suffered from low wages, poor working and living conditions, terrible discrimination, and many other problems.*) During the discussion, have the student(s) answer these questions:
  - ? What underlying problems or attitudes led to the problems of the Gilded Age? (*greed, selfishness, hunger for power, prejudice, etc.*)
  - ? What modern examples would be similar to those of the Gilded Age (positive developments having negative consequences)? (*Answers may vary widely including such problems as: global warming affected by human activities and fuel usage; animal extinction due to hunting and destruction of habitats; epidemics of diseases spread easily by world travel; weapons build-ups in the name of peace and security; etc.*)
- In summary, explain to the student(s) that this unit of study examines the progress and problems of the Gilded Age and later efforts to solve those problems.

# THE GILDED AGE



*The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* is an 1876 novel by the famous writer Mark Twain and co-author Charles Dudley Warner. The novel is set in the period of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; a time when greed and political corruption ruled the land. The term “Gilded Age” was used to show the contrast between the other “Golden Ages” in history, and the time in which these men lived.

Periods called Golden Ages around the world were usually times of peace, during which advancements in art, architecture, trade, technology, or other fields occurred. While there were certainly achievements during the Gilded Age, they brought serious ill-effects. The word “gilded” refers to jewelry or other metals on which a thin layer of gold covers over tin, iron, or other less-costly metal.

In the late 1800’s the nation underwent tremendous change. The West was tamed and settled, the U.S. developed a thriving economy based on industry and trade, and railroads and telegraphs crossed the land. Those who oversaw these changes grew very, very rich, along with members of local, state, and national government who worked to pass laws to help the growth and their cronies. In addition, powerful political machines who supported big business and enriched themselves ensured that political offices were filled with people who did their bidding.

Explain why Mark Twain and his co-author referred to the period in which they lived as the “Gilded Age.”

Which definition **BEST FITS** the use of the word “cronies” at the end of the passage?

- A. wise women
- B. associates
- C. close friends
- D. ugly old hags

According to the passage, the Gilded Age was

- A. a time of peace and great achievements.
- B. the age of America’s greatest advancement.
- C. a period of political and economic corruption.
- D. the era when U.S. political officials were corrupt.

Which of these subjects was **LEAST** likely to have been addressed in *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*?

- A. jewelry-making
- B. railroad bosses
- C. local governments
- D. political machines

# THE GILDED AGE ANSWERS AND EXPLANATIONS



*The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* is an 1876 novel by the famous writer Mark Twain and co-author Charles Dudley Warner. The novel is set in the period of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; a time when greed and political corruption ruled the land. The term “Gilded Age” was used to show the contrast between the other “Golden Ages” in history, and the time in which these men lived.

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Explain why Mark Twain and his co-author referred to the period in which they lived as the “Gilded Age.” **Answers may vary somewhat, but should reflect an understanding that the period was NOT a Golden Age. It looked good on the outside in that much technological progress was made and the nations developed. However, under the “good” was widespread corruption and mistreatment of people.**

Which definition BEST FITS the use of the word “cronies” at the end of the passage?

- A. wise women
- B. associates \*
- C. close friends
- D. ugly old hags

**(Choices A and D have nothing to do with the usage. C is possible, but political and business deals were not only conducted among friends; B is most correct.)**

According to the passage, the Gilded Age was

- A. a time of peace and great achievements.
- B. the age of America’s greatest advancement.
- C. a period of political and economic corruption. \*
- D. the era when U.S. political officials were corrupt.

**(A and B are wrong. D isn’t totally wrong, but C is a better choice. There are often corrupt officials.)**

Which of these subjects was LEAST likely to have been addressed in *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*?

- A. jewelry-making \*
- B. railroad bosses
- C. local governments
- D. political machines

**(The book was critical of the era’s industry, technological development, and government.)**

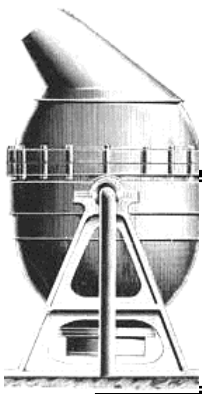
# PREDICTING PROBLEMS



**DIRECTIONS:** For each area of progress during the Gilded Age, brainstorm as many problems as you can think of that may have occurred as a result.

PROGRESS	PREDICT the PROBLEMS
Farming or Herding Western Land	
Industrial Growth	
Tremendous Wealth of the Upper Class	
National Transportation and Communication Systems	
Former Slaves Free and Many New Immigrants	
Powerful Political Machines	





## Industrial Explosion

### Springboard:

Students should read “The Bessemer Process” and answer the questions.

*(Industry was transformed by machinery being made of steel,  
transportation improved with rails, cars, ships, etc.,*

*and taller and stronger buildings and skyscrapers were built of steel.)*

**Objective:** The student will be able to explain the industrial development of the late 1800’s and early 1900’s.

**Materials:** The Bessemer Process (Springboard handout)  
Transforming the Nation (2-page handout)

**Terms to know:** **alloy** - substance composed of a mixture of metals  
**patent** - a document granting sole rights to an invention  
**philanthropist** - one who gives charitable donations to improve the human condition

### Procedure:

- After discussing the Springboard, explain that *in addition to Bessemer, many inventors and industrial giants profited from steel production and the growth this invention spurred.*
- Distribute the “Transforming the Nation” handouts. Have the student(s) work individually, in pairs or small groups to *briefly research the three people in each cluster to learn about their accomplishments and then generalize what they think each cluster of people had in common in terms of their impact on the nation.*
- Have students share their answers and discuss. *(Suggested answers include:*

**Alexander Graham Bell** - *invented the telephone*

**Thomas Edison** - *invented many things including the phonograph, light bulb, and established a think tank, the Invention Factory, in Menlo Park, New Jersey*

**Henry Ford** - *designed several passenger vehicles and the first to mass-produce an automobile, the Model T*

**Summary Sentence** - *All helped advance American technology.*

**Jay Gould** - *amassed a fortune owning railroads and telegraph companies.*

**Leland Stanford** - *made a fortune in California selling supplies to miners, went into politics, and grew MUCH richer by running the Central Pacific Railroad*

**Cornelius Vanderbilt** - *earned a fortune in the shipping business and gained control of the New York Central Railroad which was subsequently controlled by his heirs*

**Summary Sentence** - *All were businessmen who grew rich and invested in railroads.*

**Andrew Carnegie** - *amassed a fortune in steel manufacturing through Carnegie Steel and gave away huge sums, building of libraries and cultural centers*

**J.P. Morgan** - *made his fortune in banking, railroads, and steel; gave much away*

**Charles M. Schwab** - *earned a fortune as an executive in steel companies*

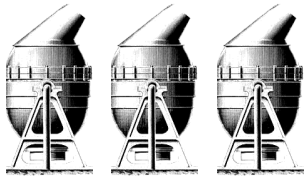
**Summary Sentence** - *All made large portions of their fortunes in steel manufacturing.*

**Andrew Carnegie** - *gave to many causes such as the building of libraries and cultural centers, many of which bear his name*

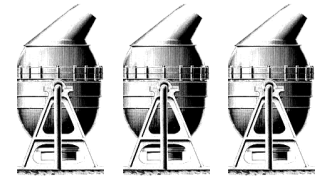
**J.P. Morgan** - *gave large sums of money to various causes*

**John D. Rockefeller** - *gave much of his fortune to charities and causes including research facilities and universities*

**Summary Sentence** - *These men were all philanthropists.*



# The Bessemer Process



Since as early as 1,400 B.C. people have been melting iron and forming it into tools and weapons, but iron can rust and deteriorate. Over the centuries the process of melting iron ore had been improved by the addition of other molten metals, making a much stronger and more durable alloy, steel. However the process of producing steel was so difficult and time-consuming, the miracle alloy was not mass-produced until the late 1850's.

In 1855 Henry Bessemer received a patent for a new process for steel manufacturing. In the Bessemer Process iron is melted and poured into a container called a converter (pictured above), where it is mixed with air and an alloy of carbon and manganese. For the next century the Bessemer Process was used in Europe, the U.S., and elsewhere, transforming not only steel manufacturing but industry, transportation, and construction as well.

Explain how you think the Bessemer process transformed each area of development:

Industry -

Transportation -

Construction -

# TRANSFORMING THE NATION

Find information about the achievements of each group of people. Then write a sentence summarizing how EACH GROUP transformed the nation.

Alexander Graham Bell -

Thomas Edison -

Henry Ford -

Summary Sentence -

Jay Gould -

Leland Stanford -

Cornelius Vanderbilt -

Summary Sentence -

# TRANSFORMING THE NATION - CONTINUED -

Andrew Carnegie -

J.P. Morgan -

Charles M. Schwab -

Summary Sentence -

Andrew Carnegie -

J.P. Morgan -

John D. Rockefeller -

Summary Sentence -



## Promise of Liberty

### Springboard:

Students should read “The New Colossus” and answer the questions.

*(Answers may vary, but she saw America as a haven for oppressed immigrants.)*

**Objective:** Students will be able to explain some of the difficulties faced by American immigrants of the late 1800’s and early 1900’s.

**Materials:** The New Colossus (Springboard handout)  
Coming to America (2 page handout)  
A Paper Son (2 page handout)  
Account Analysis (handouts)

**Terms to know:** **tenement** - a run-down, overcrowded apartment building

### Procedure:

- In discussing the Springboard, explain that Ellis Island was the processing facility for immigrants coming to the U.S. mainly from Europe from 1892 to 1954. Go on to explain that most Asian immigrants came to America’s west coast and were processed from 1910 to 1940 at Angel Island off the coast of San Francisco. Go on to explain that this lesson examines the experiences of immigrants who came through both sites in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s.
- Distribute the “Coming to America” and “A Paper Son” handouts. The student(s) should work individually or in pairs to read the two stories and complete the “Analyzing Accounts” Venn diagram. (**FYI:** Both accounts are fictitious based on the author’s research. The poetry is from the walls of Angel Island but the authors are unknown.)
- Have students share their answers and discuss. (*Chart information could include:*  
**Ellis Island:** *Thousands of immigrants arrived daily from Europe carrying all their belongings; Statue of Liberty was a symbol of hope but immigrants feared being sent back; some processed in a day or less; others housed in dormitories during process; new immigrants settled mostly in cities in overcrowded tenements with others from their homeland, as in “Little Italy,” “Germantown,” etc.; kept to themselves; with others of similar language and culture; often suffered job and other discrimination, or exploited by other ethnic groups and own kind, such as “padrones.”*  
**Angel Island:** *Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited Immigration; 1906 earthquake destroyed San Francisco immigration records; “paper sons and daughters,” detained at Angel Island for questioning; had to “prove” themselves to be children of Chinese already in America; studied “paper family” histories and circumstances to answer questions; immigrants imprisoned on Angel Island for weeks, even months; little to do so some wrote poems on walls.*  
**Both:** *Many who came were poor, seeking jobs, and better lives; were examined physically and questioned by immigration officials; some allowed entrance, but others were sent back to homelands; both groups suffered discrimination; many found menial jobs with low wages; eventually many were granted citizenship.)*
- **EXTENSION:** Have the student(s) write their own a poem expressing how they might have felt in similar circumstances.