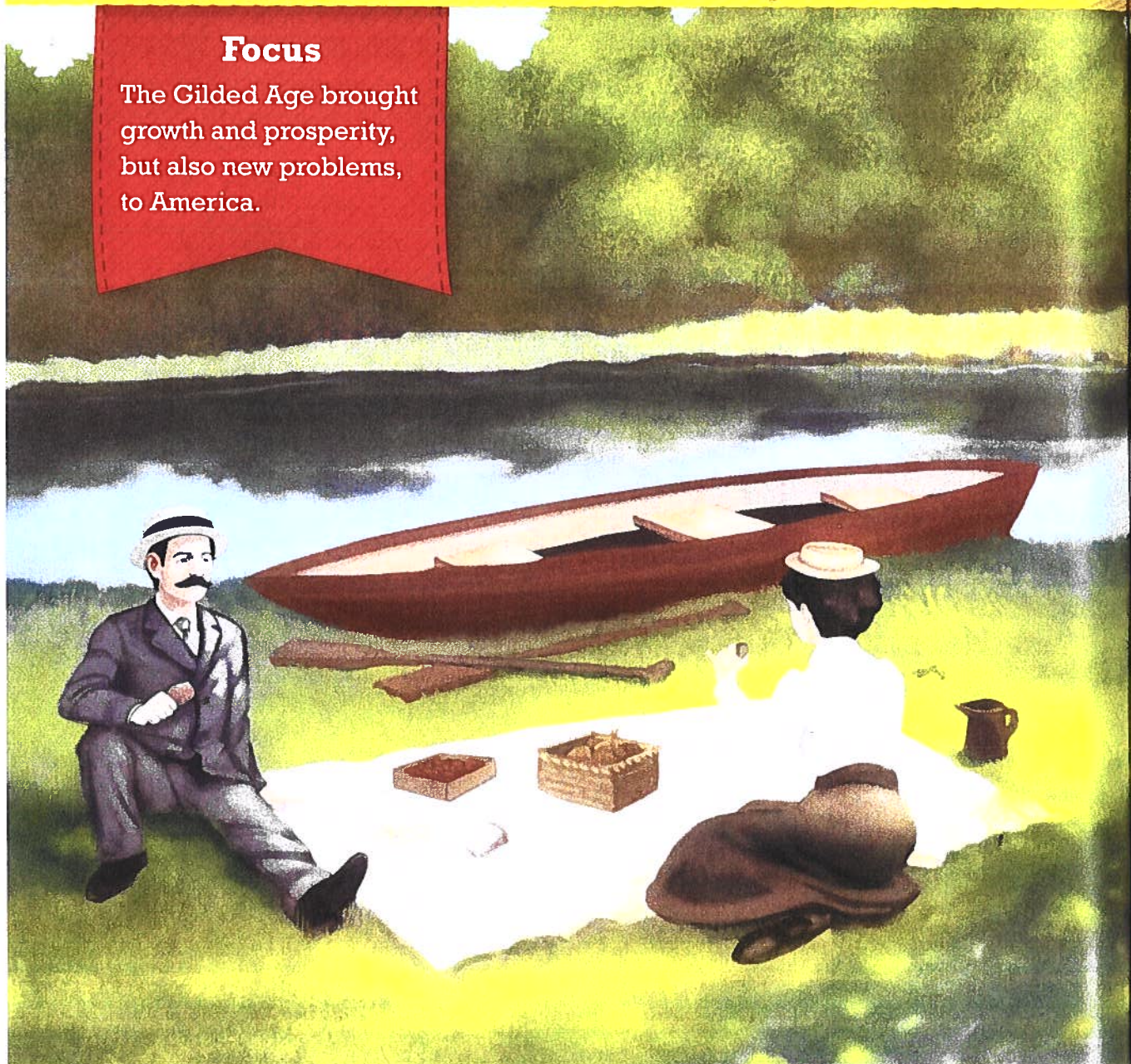


# 9

## The Gilded Age

### Focus

The Gilded Age brought growth and prosperity, but also new problems, to America.



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## An Age of Glitter

With the Civil War and Reconstruction behind them, Americans enjoyed a period of freedom from war. The late 1800s were a time of growing prosperity in the United States. New cities were beginning to thrive. In some parts of America, the landscape was changing. Instead of long, unbroken views of trees and fields, skyscrapers could now be seen on the horizon. Immigrants were pouring into the country, steadily increasing the population. More people in America meant more people to get work done. Inventors and businessmen were developing new ways to work faster and better. And some Americans were wealthier than they had ever been before.

Although this period was a prosperous time, it presented Americans with new problems. On the surface, life in America seemed to glitter like gold. But beneath the

surface, not everything was golden. The late 1800s in the United States is often called the Gilded Age.

## The Growth of Industry

The Gilded Age was an era of growth and success in American business. From the colonial period on, Americans had made their living mainly from farming, small businesses, and trades. Before the Civil War there had been a limited number of factories, mostly in the North. But now more factories opened, and cities grew up around them. America still had farms, but these farms did not need as many workers. New machines could do much of the work that people had done before. Some people decided to move from farms to cities to find new work opportunities. The number of Americans who lived on farms was slowly decreasing. Many more Americans began to work in large industries.

## Carnegie and the Steel Industry

One of the most important industries in this era was the steel industry. God had blessed the United States with abundant natural resources of iron ore. One English inventor had recently found an inexpensive way to produce steel from iron. The railroad and construction industries needed large amounts of steel. For all these reasons, the steel industry prospered in the United States.

**Andrew Carnegie** became America's most important manufacturer of steel. Carnegie came from a poor family that had immigrated from Scotland. But he worked hard at various jobs. He rose to a management position at the Pennsylvania Railroad. After the Civil War, he decided to invest in the steel industry. He opened his first steel plant near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1875. Carnegie quickly became the leading steel producer in the world. His success eventually made him a millionaire.

## Rockefeller and the Oil Industry

Another important industry during the Gilded Age was the production of oil. Up to the time of the Civil War, people had used oil from whales to light lamps and keep machines running smoothly. Now oil drilled from the ground was replacing whale oil. Oil from underground, or crude oil, could

be refined. Refined oil was useful for many different purposes. One of the most popular uses was making kerosene for lamps.

**John D. Rockefeller** was the nation's leader in the oil industry. He and two business partners opened an oil refinery in the 1860s. Rockefeller later became the president of his own oil company, Standard Oil. He was able to lower the price of kerosene so that many more Americans could afford it. Other oil companies could no longer compete with his prices. Standard Oil bought out other refineries until it controlled nearly all the oil production in the United States. The company employed hundreds of workers and paid good wages. It helped many families be able to enjoy a higher standard of living. It also made a fortune for the Rockefeller family.

## The Railroad Industry

Along with the rise of steel and oil industries came the expanding of America's railroads. The more products Americans manufactured, the more they needed railroads to transport these goods around the country. More people were traveling west to settle and farm or find jobs. More railroads were needed to transport these people. The transcontinental railroad had been completed in 1869. By 1900 four more lines ran across the continent to cities on the West Coast.



## Tracks Across America



**James J. Hill.** Hill wanted to build a good-quality railroad while keeping costs down. Many railroads of the day relied on money from the government. But Hill was able to build his railroad without using government money. He not only built a railroad, but he also helped settle the surrounding land. He allowed immigrants to travel west on his railroad for a low price. The only condition was that they must agree to build settlements along the railroad.

Hill bought several other lines over the course of his life. He constantly worked to improve his railroads. His wise management earned him the nickname "Empire Builder."

One of these, the Great Northern Railway, was the project of

### Corporations

During the Gilded Age, a new way of doing business began. Many owners of large businesses decided to form **corporations**. When a business becomes a corporation, it is owned not by one person but by many. These owners are called investors, or stockholders. Becoming a corporation allows a business to raise funds quickly by selling stock. Banks can also invest in corporations.

John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil corporation was called a **trust**. A trust combines several smaller companies into one gigantic corporation. Many other industries also formed trusts during the Gilded Age.

Which industries experienced growth during the Gilded Age and why?

## How It Was

Peter stood next to his father, listening to the low murmur of the crowd around him. The city had just finished installing Mr. Edison's new invention—an electric lighting system. Any moment now, the mayor would flip a switch and . . .

Suddenly the nearby buildings burst into light. The city was brighter than Peter had ever seen it before. A cannon blasted, and all around, people gasped and shouted. Then the crowd exploded into deafening applause. A band began to play.

"It's like magic!" Peter shouted.

"It's not magic, son," said his father. "It's progress."



## New Inventions

Another key to the progress in industry was new inventions. During the Gilded Age, God allowed several important scientific discoveries to be made. These advances in technology and communication changed the way Americans lived and worked.

### Bell and the Telephone

Electricity was the focus of many experiments in the late 1800s. People had been growing in their understanding of electricity throughout the nineteenth century. But during the Gilded Age, some of the most practical uses for electricity were found.

The telegraph was already using electrical signals to send coded

messages over a wire. But in the 1870s **Alexander Graham Bell** experimented with the use of electric currents to transmit spoken messages. Bell was a teacher of deaf children. He had researched the ear, the voice, and sound waves. The result of his study was the development of a working telephone. Although other inventors were experimenting with similar ideas, Bell was the first to get a patent for his invention.

As Bell and others improved the telephone, it became a valuable tool. By 1884, underground wires allowed people to talk over long distances by telephone. Few inventions have had as great an impact on the way people communicate as the telephone.



## Edison and Electric Light

**Thomas Edison** was one of several inventors to experiment with a light bulb. He was not the first to find a working design. But he was able to design a light bulb that was both practical and affordable. His light bulb lasted longer than others and was cheaper to produce. He also invented the system of power plants and wiring that would provide electricity for light bulbs.

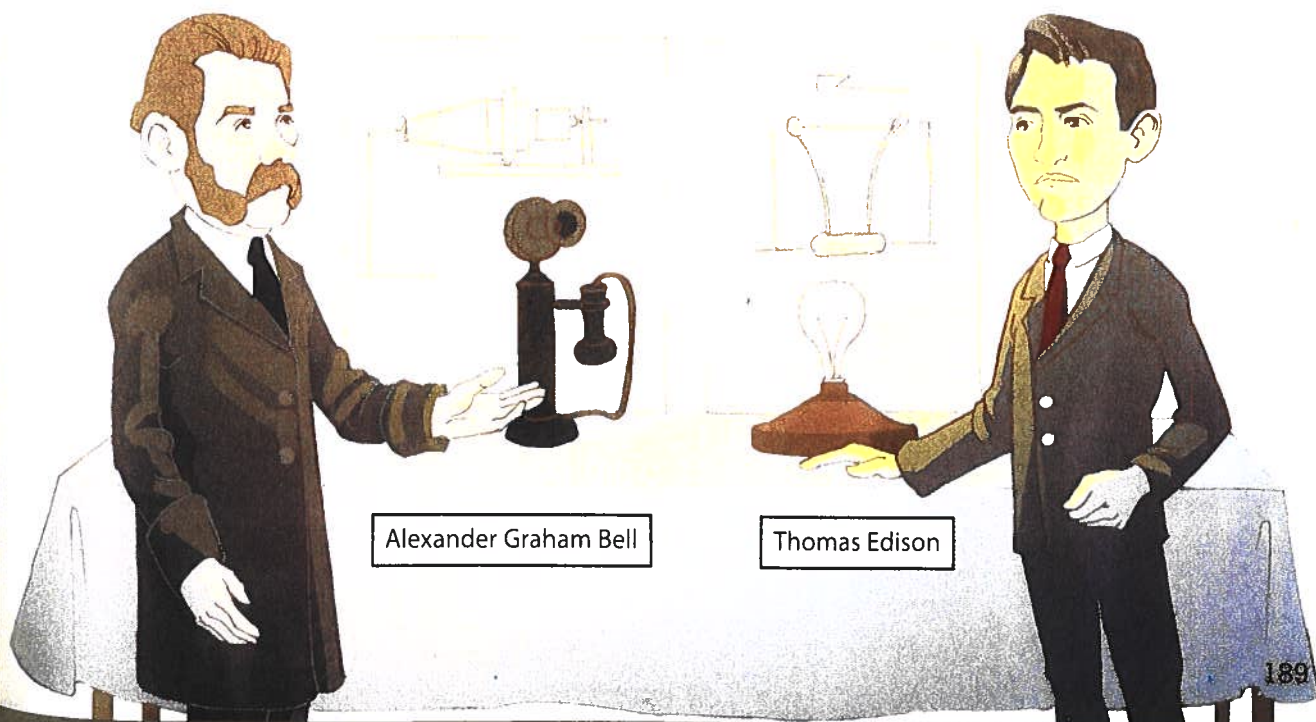
The light bulb changed the way Americans lived. Electric lighting was more affordable than kerosene. Before electric lighting, families often gathered around one light source in their homes in the evenings to read or do needlework. Now families could put more lamps in their homes and spread out around the house at night.

Factories and stores could stay open in the evenings. People could stay later at dinner parties and evening events. The light bulb may seem like a small invention, but it had an enormous effect on American family life and culture.

Along with the light bulb, Edison invented the phonograph. This device recorded the human voice and played it back. Edison also did some early work with motion pictures.

## Other Inventions

Not every invention created as much change as the telephone and electric lighting. And not every inventor was as well-known as Bell or Edison. But many other inventions improved everyday life for Americans during the Gilded Age.



Christopher Sholes is credited with inventing the typewriter. His machine was the first to use the QWERTY keyboard that is still in use today. Sholes's invention resulted in great progress in the publishing industry.

George Eastman invented the Kodak camera. It was the first camera that was easy enough for nearly anyone to use. Eastman also invented rolled film. A roll of film took the place of heavy plates and could be easily loaded in a camera.

George Westinghouse, like Edison, experimented with electricity. He worked with two different kinds of electrical current. He helped prove that alternating current (AC) is a

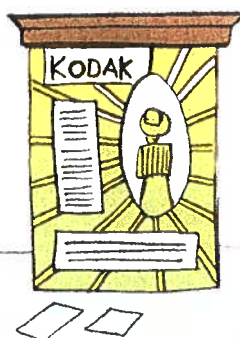
better electrical system than direct current (DC). But he is best known for inventing an air brake for trains in 1869. His brake invention controlled trains in a safer way and prevented the problem of runaway trains.

At the same time as the air-brake invention, George Pullman was also rising to fame in the railroad industry. His invention was the Pullman sleeping car. This comfortable train car allowed passengers to enjoy better sleep on long journeys. Some Pullman cars also had sitting rooms and dining areas.

Not all inventors were men. Margaret Knight was a factory worker who loved to observe the way machines worked. During the course of her life,



Christopher Sholes



George Eastman



# INVENTI OF THE GILDED AGE



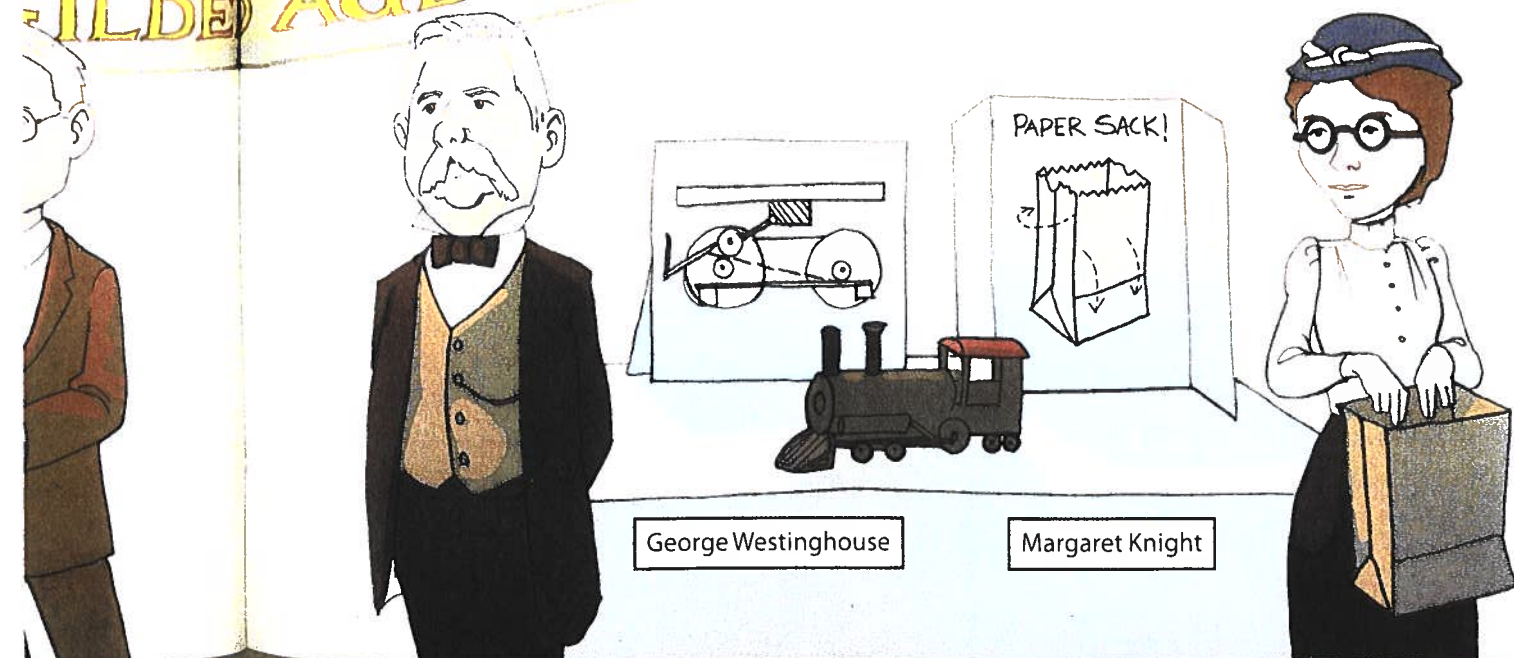
she invented numerous machines. Her most famous invention was a machine for folding and gluing a flat-based paper bag. Knight also patented many other inventions. Among them were a numbering machine, a sewing-machine reel, and a shield for protecting skirts from rain and dirt.

New inventions helped give the Gilded Age its glitter. Few of these inventors gave glory to God for their accomplishments. Many of them rejected the Christian faith entirely. Yet it was God who gave them gifted minds and creative skills. God allowed them to exercise these gifts to improve life for people in many parts of His world.

Changes that came from new inventions were not always improvements. For example, the changes caused by electric lighting sometimes kept families apart more than they were together. The telephone sometimes kept friends from making personal visits and speaking face to face. Inventions brought a challenge to Americans. They had to learn how to move forward with new tools without despising the God-given wisdom of people of the past.

Which inventions of this era brought the greatest changes to American life?

# INVENTIONS OF THE GILDED AGE





## Wealth and Work

Another source of the glitter of the Gilded Age was its wealth. Many wealthy businessmen had risen from poverty to riches in a fairly short time. In the past, most wealthy men had inherited wealth from their families. But men like Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Hill earned their fortunes from their industries. America's system of **capitalism** made it possible for some people to be richer than others. But it was also a system that encouraged hard work and competition among businesses. Competition often helped lower the prices of goods.

## Social Darwinism

By this time in history, many Americans had accepted Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. This belief states that all the types of plants and animals developed on their own over millions of years. Evolution teaches that humans developed gradually from animals.

Herbert Spencer, another evolutionist, promoted an idea called "survival of the fittest." He said that only the fittest members of a species can survive the harsh conditions of nature. He applied this principle to many areas of society, including business. The idea that only the fittest people can survive in society is known as **social Darwinism**.



Because people are naturally sinful and selfish, this belief was dangerous. Some businessmen would do anything to make money. They were not content to let healthy competition take place. Instead, some business leaders chose to hurt their rival companies. They used their power and wealth to force other companies out of business. These leaders justified their actions with the "survival of the fittest" principle. They were not living by God's command to love their neighbors.

Another problem was that workers sometimes suffered from the greed of their employers. Sometimes employees had to work long hours for little pay. Employers might lower the wages of employees without sharing the loss themselves. Employees might even be suddenly let go if they were injured by a machine at work.



## Responses to the Problems

The United States government found ways to respond to some of these problems. Many businessmen did not want the government to step in and help. Social Darwinists believed government control would make people lose their freedom as individuals. But others pressured the government to make laws protecting workers and small businesses.

Many lawmakers thought it was unfair for one corporation to control an entire industry. When this happened, there was no competition to keep prices down for customers. Lawmakers were concerned that Standard Oil and other large corporations had too much control of their industries. Congress passed the **Sherman Antitrust Act** in 1890. This act sought to limit the power a corporation could have.

Factory workers also responded to problems in their own way. Workers began to organize groups called **labor unions**. They thought that if large numbers of workers joined together, they could force their employers to make changes.

Some of the labor unions organized strikes. During a strike, workers refused to work until their employers agreed to their demands. Some strikes were successful. The workers got the higher wages or the better conditions they had

asked for. However, some strikes ended in violence. Property was damaged or destroyed, and in some cases, people lost their lives.

Sometimes the courts took action against labor unions. They ordered the unions to stop strikes. However, these orders did not always result in justice for everyone. The tensions between workers and employers would continue into the next century.



## Managing Millions

For the first time in its history, the United States had a very wealthy upper class. Many of the men who had made millions in industry built homes like palaces. They filled their homes with fine furnishings. They gave extravagant dinners and parties. They took expensive vacations. Becoming wealthy is not sinful, but making a show of wealth for selfish reasons is wrong.

America's wealthy people understood that riches can be a burden



Andrew Carnegie, seated in the center of the front row, donated a large sum of money to Tuskegee Institute, a college for African Americans, in Alabama.



as well as a blessing. Andrew Carnegie wrote an essay called "The Gospel of Wealth." In it he taught that it was better to give money away during one's life than to leave it to others after death. Large sums of money left to children could be a burden to them, or they could choose to use the money unwisely. Carnegie stated that it would be better to leave children only enough to live a comfortable life. The rest of one's wealth should be given away to help needy people and good causes.

Carnegie applied this advice to his own fortune. He believed everyone should have opportunities to read and learn. During his lifetime, he gave millions of dollars to build libraries. He also gave money to support schools, colleges, and churches.

Other wealthy men chose to give money away while still living. **Cornelius Vanderbilt** was the first man to make millions in the transportation

industry. He gave a large gift to found a university that now bears his name. John D. Rockefeller also gave money to schools. He donated millions to open an institute for medical research. George Eastman used his fortune from Kodak to support colleges and technology institutes.

The giving of large sums of money to help public causes is called philanthropy. We call men like Carnegie, Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, and Eastman **philanthropists**. People can have various motives for giving away money. The best motive is obedience to God's Word. Ephesians 4:28 emphasizes the need to work hard so that we will have the means to give to those in need. Giving out of love for God and others is the kind of philanthropy that brings Him glory.

What problems did social Darwinism create, and how were they handled?



## Expanding Cities

### Causes of Growth

The Gilded Age was a time of growth for cities. New cities were springing up in many parts of the country. Existing cities were becoming even larger. By 1880 the population of New York City had reached more than one million. Chicago's population tripled during the last two decades of the century.

The growth of cities had two main causes. One was that more and more people from rural areas were moving to cities. Often the children of farmers chose city life rather than staying on the family farm. Many came to cities hoping for opportunities to find higher-paying jobs. Young Americans were often lured by the dream of going from "rags to riches" in the big cities as Andrew Carnegie had done. Many also came to enjoy the entertainment that cities had to offer, or they came simply to meet new people.

Another reason for the growth of cities was immigration. Between 1870 and 1900, more than ten million people came

to America from other countries. They came seeking jobs, land, and a better life. Some came for greater freedom to practice their religion. Europeans usually came to the East Coast and Asians to the West Coast. Ellis Island in New York Harbor became America's first immigration station. The towering Statue of Liberty welcomed immigrants to America's shores.

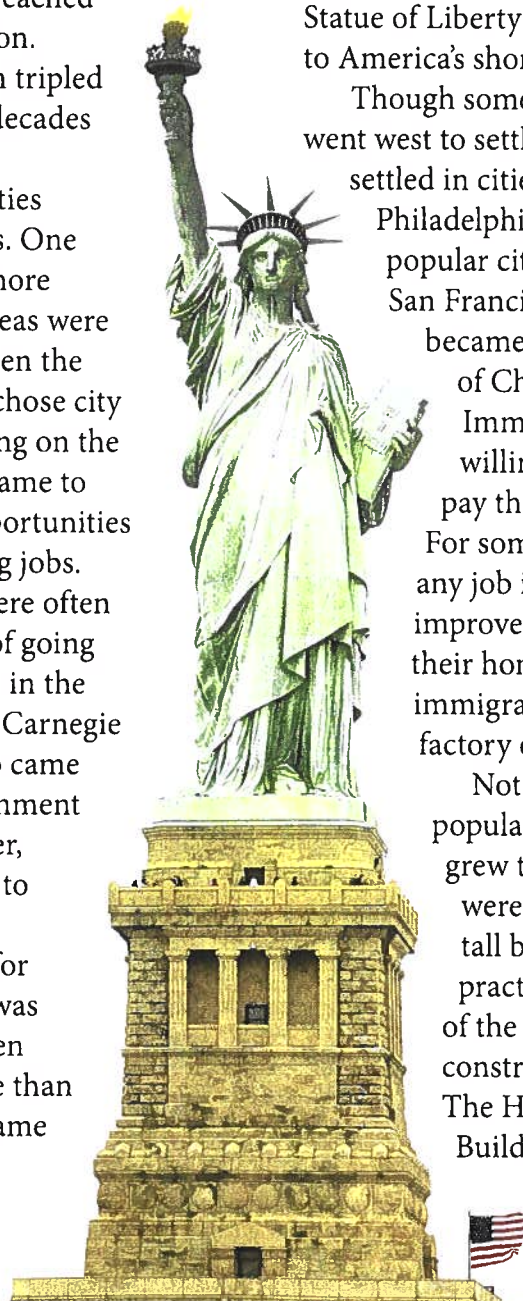
Though some European immigrants went west to settle on farms, many more settled in cities. New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago were popular cities for immigrants. San Francisco, California,

became home to thousands of Chinese immigrants.

Immigrants were often willing to work for lower pay than other Americans.

For some immigrants, any job in America was an improvement from life in their home countries. Many immigrants found low-paying factory or railroad jobs.

Not only did cities grow in population, but they actually grew taller. Before elevators were invented in the 1850s, tall buildings were not practical. But in the last half of the century, people began constructing taller buildings. The Home Insurance Building in Chicago was



the first modern skyscraper. It had a framework of steel. Steel was lighter than brick but could support more weight. With steel it was possible to construct very tall buildings. By the early 1900s, New York also had several skyscrapers.

Cities had other attractions that could not be found in rural areas. Large cities developed parks where people could relax in a beautiful outdoor setting. Museums, theaters, and art galleries drew crowds of people interested in the arts. Some cities even opened amusement parks with shows and rides for people to enjoy.

It is not hard to imagine why so many people were drawn to America's cities in the late 1800s. Cities promised them things that country life could not. Historians call this growth of cities the **urbanization** of America.

## Problems Along with Growth

Urbanization brought a new set of problems to America. The more crowded cities became, the harder it was to keep them clean. Horse traffic made the streets messy, and factory smoke polluted the air. Cities did not yet have modern sewer systems or workers who collected trash.

Providing housing for everyone was also difficult. Many city dwellers could not afford to buy houses. Poor families crowded into tenements. Tenements were buildings with small rooms and unhealthy living conditions. Most tenements had no running water or toilets and few windows to let in fresh air. With so many people living close together, diseases spread quickly. Many people in tenements suffered from tuberculosis, cholera, and typhoid. Children born in tenements often did not survive to adulthood.

Children who did survive were part of another problem. Among the poor, many children worked to help support their families. At this time, America had no laws against child labor. Many factories had jobs that children could



This photo by Jacob Riis shows an immigrant family in a tenement home.



do. Employers hired children to work long hours with very little pay. Often the conditions in these factories were unsafe for the children. These children could not go to school or have much free time to play as wealthy children did. By the year 1900 more than one million children under the age of sixteen worked in America's factories.



Some of the cities' problems were the result of sinful human nature. Cities had bars and gambling halls that profited from people's weaknesses. People were tempted to forget their problems by getting drunk or wasting money on risky games. Certain parts of the cities also had a high crime rate. Immigrants from the same country tended to settle together. Sometimes tensions broke out between people of different ethnic groups.

During the Gilded Age, the leadership within the cities was weak. City governments were slow to deal with these kinds of problems. Cities did not make changes until concerned citizens saw these needs and spoke out about them. The miserable part of city life was one of the problems beneath the glittering surface of the Gilded Age.

Name several problems that developed from the growth of cities.

## Activity

### Writing a Journal Entry

Create an imaginative journal entry. Pretend you are an immigrant coming to America for the first time. Or pretend that you are leaving America to live in another country. What hopes, dreams,

or fears might you experience? Write your thoughts about leaving your homeland and preparing to live in a new country.

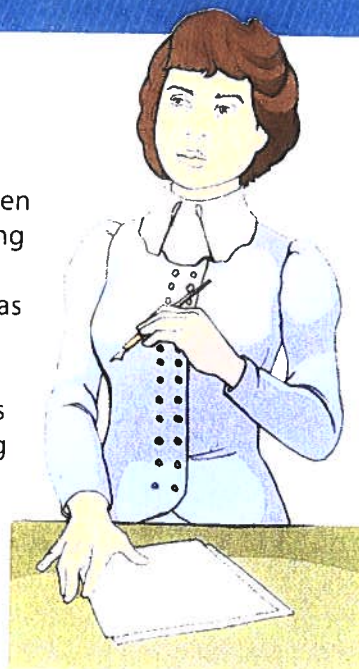
## Nellie Bly

**Who:** journalist

**When:** 1864–1922

**Where:** New York

Nellie Bly was born Elizabeth Cochran but took her pen name from a popular song by Stephen Foster. As a young woman she became a newspaper reporter for the *New York World*. Bly accepted an unusual assignment. She was to pretend to be insane, enter a New York asylum, and write an article about the conditions she found there. She spent ten days in a mental institution on Blackwell's Island. After her release, she wrote about the poor living conditions and the cruelty to the patients. Her work convinced a grand jury to investigate the asylum. As a result, the asylum was given funds to make necessary changes in its care for the mentally ill. For many years, Bly continued to work undercover to report on various injustices and to bring about social reforms.



## A Time for Change

During the Gilded Age, many people began to realize the need for changes. Some change did happen during this time. But it was not until the next century that change took place on a larger scale. Changes during the Gilded Age often came about because individuals cared enough to try to make a difference. People who try to solve problems in society are called **social reformers**.

### Jacob Riis

**Jacob Riis** immigrated to America from Denmark in 1870. He spent his first few years living in tenement

housing in New York City. He worked in a variety of jobs before he found more permanent work as a journalist. He began working as a police reporter in places where the crime rate was high. Riis saw firsthand the dirtiest and poorest parts of the city. He was saddened by what he saw. He wanted to help improve the lives of the city's poor. He decided that the best way to help would be to let as many people as possible know what life was like in New York's slums.

Riis taught himself photography so he could take pictures of the people and places he saw. He wrote articles and showed his pictures to middle- and



upper-class people. He finally decided to write a book about his findings.

In 1890 his book *How the Other Half Lives* was published. The book was a huge success. Many people were shocked at the horrible living conditions of the poor and wanted to help. As a result of Riis's work, some tenements were torn down, and others were improved.

## Jane Addams

Jane Addams grew up in Illinois. As a young woman she became concerned

about the immigrants living in the poor sections of Chicago. In 1889 she opened a settlement house for immigrant women. This home, called Hull-House, gave women practical help in adjusting to life in America. Hull-House offered medical care, English classes, lessons in art and music, a library, and childcare for working mothers.

More settlement houses opened in other large cities. Some were secular, and some were organized by churches. Many of these houses were for immigrants. Others focused on

black Americans who had migrated from the South to find work and a better life.

## The Temperance Movement

Many Americans, especially women, were concerned about the problem of alcoholism. Women noticed that families suffered when a father or mother drank too much. They wanted to protect their homes and their children from harm. The Temperance Movement had started earlier in the nineteenth century.



Jacob Riis worked to expose the problems of the lower class so others could help meet the needs.

But now there was a new interest in making alcoholic drinks illegal. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union began in 1874. Many of the women who joined the union were Christians. However, the union was not very concerned with pointing people to Christ. Women met to pray and to visit local bars to demand that they close their doors. The women asked people to make pledges not to drink, and they **campaigned** for new laws banning the sale of liquor.

The WCTU quickly became the largest organization for women in the United States. Its most powerful leader was Frances Willard. Under Willard's leadership, the union began to involve itself in other issues as well. The members worked for laws banning child labor and the sale of tobacco. They tried to reform America's prison system. They also campaigned for women's suffrage, the right of women to vote. American women were making their voices heard as never before.

## The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army had begun in London, England. By 1880 the organization had opened its first branch in the United States in the city of Philadelphia. The Salvation Army was



different from the other relief efforts because it openly preached the gospel to the needy. In addition, its workers took care of physical needs. They opened soup kitchens and provided shelters for the homeless.

## Other Reforms

Social reform was not the only kind of reform people wanted. Many people wanted to reform the government too. They wanted to stop leaders from using power in unrighteous ways. Other people wanted changes in business and education. Many of America's farmers wanted to limit the power of the railroads. They wanted to have a say in the prices for transporting crops. Behind the scenes during the Gilded Age, people in all parts of America hoped and worked for change.

What important social reforms began during the Gilded Age?



## Entertainment and the Arts

### New Ways to Play

During the Gilded Age, Americans had more leisure time than in the past. People on farms had often worked from dawn till dusk. But now more people worked industrial or office jobs. They had many new time-saving inventions to help them. As a result, middle- and upper-class Americans worked fewer hours. They had more free time in the evenings and on weekends. The average American also had more money to spend on entertainment than in the past. And the cities were filled with things to see and do. Americans were quick to find many new ways to play.

One popular form of entertainment was watching and playing sports. Baseball and basketball were newly invented games at this time. Crowds watched baseball and boxing matches. Tennis and golf were common sports to play. With the invention of the bicycle, cycling became a leisure activity. Even women rode bicycles. Some of them adopted a different style of dress for riding. Bloomers, women's trousers with wide, billowy legs, were safer than skirts for cycling. However, many people criticized bloomers as a symbol of the women's rights movement. They thought that women were trying to dress too much like men. Most American women continued wearing dresses and skirts for all activities.

Other forms of entertainment included going to plays and operas. Another popular kind of show called vaudeville developed around this time. Vaudeville shows were made up of a series of short acts. A show might contain acrobats, clowns, jugglers, and musical numbers. One type of vaudeville show was all about life in the West. It included cowboys on horseback, gunslinging, and staged fights between Indians and white settlers. Many of these shows were appropriate family entertainment. However, sometimes Christians objected to the content of these shows and chose not to attend.

### Expressions of the Times

#### Literature

Perhaps the most famous author of the Gilded Age is Samuel Clemens. He is better known by his pen name, Mark Twain. The name "Gilded Age" comes from the title of a book he and another author wrote together. Their novel showed the problems of greed and corruption during this era. Twain is also famous for his works about two young boys, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.

Twain's writing was more realistic than the literature of the past. The children in his books did not always behave well. They often got into trouble. The trend toward **realism** was true of many works of literature of this time.



Authors sought to portray life just as it was. Everyday events were the subjects of stories. People were presented as weak and sinful. The difficult side of life was not glossed over. Some other well-known authors of this time were Louisa May Alcott, William Dean Howells, and Stephen Crane.

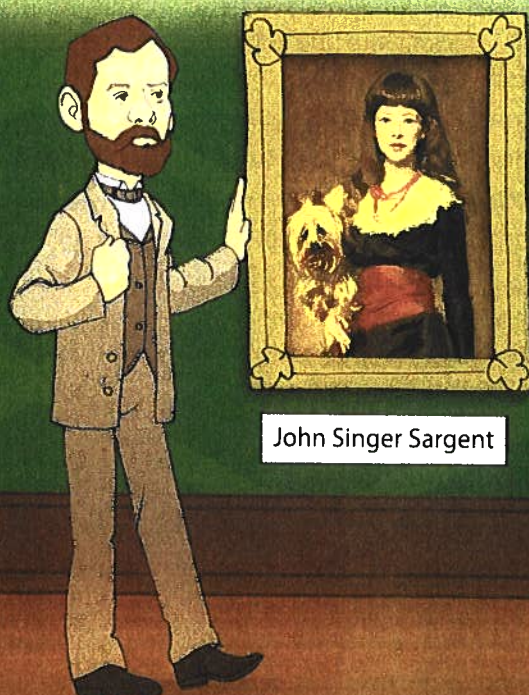
### Art

American art began to come into its own during the Gilded Age. The first art galleries were built in American cities. People enjoyed going to see works of art. Many people were wealthy enough to buy and display expensive paintings in their homes. Several American artists made a name for themselves with their own styles.

In wealthy families of this time, portraits were popular. People paid to

have themselves or a family member represented on canvas. Then they would hang the painting in their homes. John Singer Sargent was the best-known portrait painter of the day. He painted portraits of presidents, millionaires, and upper-class women. He also sometimes painted scenes from his travels. Mary Cassatt was also a well-known painter. She often portrayed women and children in her work.

Artists worked with other materials, or media, besides paint and canvas. Candace Wheeler became famous for painting textiles. Her fabrics and wallpapers decorated the furniture and walls of many homes. Louis Comfort Tiffany did much of his design work in glass. He often cut and painted pieces of glass to create mosaic designs.



John Singer Sargent



Mary Cassatt





The Tiffany style of lampshade is still popular today.

### Music

Attending concerts was a favorite pastime during the Gilded Age. Cities had concert halls where local performers filled the orchestra seats. Not only European operas, but also new music by American composers drew crowds to music halls. Marches by John Philip Sousa had audiences tapping their feet. The songs of Stephen Foster, such as "Oh! Susanna" and "Beautiful Dreamer," were popular. Black composer Scott Joplin was famous for a new style of piano music called ragtime. A major work of that time was the *New World Symphony* by Antonín Dvořák. The Bohemian composer wrote the symphony while living in America.

In the music he tried to express his feelings about the new land.

### Newspapers

The press took on a new importance during the Gilded Age. Newspapers competed with each other for readers. Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst both published newspapers in New York. But not everything they published was truthful. They added details to news stories to make them more exciting, hoping to sell more papers. In years to come, Americans would realize just how much influence newspapers can have on public thought.

Why did Americans have more free time during the Gilded Age?



Candace Wheeler

Louis Comfort Tiffany



## Religion in the Gilded Age

### Defending the Bible

During the 1800s, the Bible came under attack by many scholars in America's colleges. These scholars did not use their God-given reason as a tool for understanding the Bible. Instead, they exalted their reason above the Bible's authority. Some scholars did not believe the Bible was inspired by God. They rejected the Bible's accounts of miracles. They found fault with some of its most important doctrines. Some denied the deity of Christ.

Christians struggled to know how to think about these matters. Some people in America's churches respected and listened to these highly educated scholars. Some believers were unsettled in their faith. They wanted to know if there was truth in what these men were saying.

**B. B. Warfield** was a teacher at Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey. He was one of the best scholars of his time. He saw that modern scholars were rejecting key doctrines of the Christian faith.

He was able to point out the weaknesses in the arguments of these scholars. He spoke out for the truth of the Bible and its doctrines. He wrote articles encouraging Christians to take the Bible at its word.

### The Social Gospel

Another problem arose among Christians during the Gilded Age. Social reformers of the day were placing great emphasis on meeting people's physical needs. Many Christians wanted to improve people's living conditions. They tried to help people with both physical and spiritual needs. They sought to follow Christ's example of compassion. They hoped to make a difference in society along with sharing the gospel.

But some Christians began to lose sight of what was most important. They thought that preventing problems like poverty and drunkenness was more important than telling people about Christ. These Christians had been influenced by the unbelieving scholars who had

A volume on American birds and mammals is said to have been Warfield's chief treasure when he was young.

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield was once described as "a gentleman to his fingertips" by the president of Princeton.

Warfield studied math and physics in college but later became one of the greatest Bible scholars of his day.





denied key Bible doctrines. They emphasized doing good works above the gospel. The movement that placed social reform above the salvation of souls was called the Social Gospel. This movement had its beginning in the Gilded Age. But it became much larger as America moved into the twentieth century.

### **D. L. Moody**

**Dwight L. Moody** trusted Jesus Christ after his Sunday school teacher shared the gospel with him. He then moved to Chicago. There he began a mission Sunday school for the youth of the city. He realized that more than anything, people needed Christ.

Because so many of America's people were city dwellers, Moody focused his ministry in cities. He began a church in Chicago. He later became a traveling evangelist. Eventually he opened Christian schools for young people. His ministry reached thousands of people, both in America and overseas, with the message of salvation in Christ.

### **Gospel Hymns**

Along with Moody's ministry, a new style of hymn became common in America's churches. Ira Sankey traveled with Moody and sang at his meetings. He began writing songs that focused on the gospel. These new songs were often more personal than many well-known hymns. They helped people express their feelings about what Christ had done for

them. Many of these songs encouraged unbelievers to place their trust in Christ.

Perhaps the most famous writer of gospel hymns in America was **Fanny Crosby**. Blind from childhood, she taught for many years at a school for the blind in New York City. Later she spent most of her time writing hymns. She also visited the tenements and prisons of the city. She spoke to people she met about Christ. She is believed to have written thousands of hymns, although not all of them were published under her own name. Hymns such as "Blessed Assurance," "To God Be the Glory," and "Rescue the Perishing" have been loved and sung for more than a century.

### **Beneath the Glitter**

In many ways America sparkled with wealth and progress during its Gilded Age. Cities flourished, industries grew, and people prospered. But beneath the glitter of America's Gilded Age were many problems and needs. God raised up people who saw these needs. Individuals tried in various ways to make life better for all Americans. Now the nation stood poised at the edge of a new century. The twentieth century would bring changes to America that people in the Gilded Age had only begun to imagine.

Who were some of the people God used to meet spiritual needs in the Gilded Age?