**1900-1950s**

Breaking it down: you can approach those 50 years within the each era

First off:

* **PROGRESSIVE ERA (an urban movement)**

[1896-1917]

**QUESTION: What was the Progressive Era? How does this play into factors (causes) of economic prosperity?**

**To understand the factors which lead to economic prosperity you must understand what were the motivations or mindset of society which lead to reforms….**

**MOVING INTO THE PROGRESSIVE ERA:**

* + Early 1900s
  + United States enters a time of peace, prosperity, and progress
  + The nation expanding especially within the cities
  + Factory production flourished
  + Small businesses thrived
  + Incomes rose

**RESULT:** The promising outlook of the jobs and higher wages enticed, increasingly, people into the cities. The United States start to turn to a “nation of city dwellers”.

**Total population of 1900:** 30 million people occupied cities.

* + Emerging middle class: benefiting from growing incomes and increases in leisure time, the expanding city offered many advantages.
  + The mass migration of people into the cities enriched some people

**HOWEVER:**

* + This set off critical difficulties for others.

**Leading towards a beginning to a slight downturn**

**Estimated by 1904:**

* One in three people living in the cities was close to starving to death
* Many of the urban poor living in the city
* There were few city services to rely upon

**RESULT:**

* Give rise to a diminished standard of life
* The working class dwelled in a daily life of: overcrowding, deficient water facilities, unpaved streets, and disease.
* working class wages provided little more than subsistence
* A small number of, if any, prospects for advancement out of the city slums.

**BACK** to **ECONOMIC PROSPERITY**

**THE ORIGINS OF PROGRESSIVISM:**

* The progressive era wasn’t a unified movement

1. **PROGRESSIVISM: WHY IT OCCURRED?**

* The crisis of the 90's accented the problems of industrialization
* The crisis frightened middle class w/ the popularity of seeming loony or radical political groups-- i.e. Populists, Socialists, Wobblies, etc.
* This era is the where decades of problems in industrialization and urbanization are escalating
* There was a growing consciousness of the escalating authority of monopolies and business interests that disregarded worker or consumer interests
* This idea is evident through **muckraking:**  a movement which rose due to the spread of media: new printing technology led to cheap and mass exchange of magazines
* Demonstrated that local troubles were part of a larger, national issue.
* If the complications were universal, and not just the outcome of personal faults, then the “system” requires fixing.

1. **Situation of the people and causes toward reform:**
   1. The depression aggravated social strains and class gaps
      * the middle class feels those above are abusing the system and those below are becoming a Socialist threat
   2. The people for reform had been in the minority
   3. Era influenced by religious developments
      * Christianity produced what known as the Social Gospel
   4. There was also an outcry by the increasing number of middle-class professionals for better societal organization
   5. Rise of graduate schools of social sciences in Universities lead programs which shaped thinkers who efficiently contested Social Darwinism
   6. More middle-class women graduating from colleges which made up the first generation of social workers to go out into communities and tackle problems
   7. Businessmen beckoned for government regulation of business so that there would be more efficiency and prevention of monopolies forming

**THE OBJECTIVES OF PROGRESSIVES:**

* People want the government to become an “agency of human welfare”
* Slowly but surely, conversely, around 1900 extensive urge toward reforms are on the rise to lead the country's political life at all levels—local, state, and national.

**Rousing Consciousness, flourishing Educating, , and Unequivocal Action for Reform:**

* Education arises to truly dispute the 19th Century’s status quo as well as pose critiques of the pristine industrial order
* Prominent Progressive thinkers procured the popular philosophies of Laissez Faire and Social Darwinism
* Muckrakers understood that efforts to tackle these problems had to be in national scope because local attempts (such as **Granger Laws**) had failed

**REFORM:**

Encompassed an extensive variety of political and social actions aimed at resolving the obstacles of industrialization plus a broad assortment of people.

* Actions taken against urban political machines
* consumer and environmental protection
* **Interstate Commerce Act:** designed to further regulate interstate shippers which would aid in the regulating the nation’s railroads and railroad rates ensures the that the rates are reasonable
* regulation of business to stop monopolies and abuses of power: Roosevelt prosecutes illegal **trusts** and **holding companies** which would bring in more fair and promote competition rather than eliminate competition and businesses
* social justice for the poor and for workers: social gospelites, labor unions
* social control of morals (drinking, prostitution, movies) caused by the social gospelites and feminists

To make government function for the people a political revitalization is needed:

1. Progressives sought to free government from corruption either tied to big business or to political machines
2. Make government more accessible to ordinary people and away from the corrupt corporate interests

**The end result**: in doing this Progressives introduced major structural changes in the government:

1. A centralized bureaucracy
   * to regulate business to protect the "public interests"
   * to protect consumers & natural resources
2. Extension of Power of Presidency, part of revitalizing democracy
   * progressive Presidents proposed their own reform agendas--acting in the interests of the people
3. Professionalize the administration of various cities and to enact measures so that the mere “political hacks” could not get municipal jobs
4. By attacking a system that had given a degree of assistance and influence to the urban working classes

**Summary:** A torrent of social activism swooped through the nation which in turn roused widespread social and economic problems caused by muckrakers who were driven to create an improved nation by means of Christianity and education. This era proved to be the time where Americans pursued answers to the problems of industrialization where there was a renewed relationship between the government and "the people". The outcome of all this progressive work improved the condition of American cities, the plight of factory workers,