

Unit Template

Progressive Unit Timeline

- 1879 The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was formed with Frances Willard as the president. In 1880, Willard launched a crusade to win the vote for women so they could vote to outlaw liquor. The WCTU believed in a woman’s traditional role in society, and they worked for prison reform, labor arbitration, and public health.
- 1886 The Haymarket Square bombing in Chicago kills seven police officers and wounds sixty. Anarchist leaders are arrested, three are executed, and none was ever linked to the bombing.
- The Knights of Labor, founded in 1869 and led by Terence Powderly, welcomed all wage earners including women and blacks, reached its peak in 1886 of about 750,000 members. They believed in community-wide organizing and offered a far-reaching critique of industrial America. Their organization was undercut by the Haymarket bombing.
- The American Federation of Labor (AF of L) was founded, with Samuel Gompers as president. Unlike the Knights of Labor, AF of L’s membership was restricted to skilled craftsmen, did not include women, believed in a stable relationship with business leaders, and did not challenge the existing economic system. They also worked over the years with the national Democratic Party leadership.
- 1889 Jane Addams founds Hull House settlement house in Chicago. Addams rejected the traditional attitude toward helping the poor (that blamed poverty on individual moral failure). Drawing on the popular middle-class ideal of true womanhood as supportive and self-sacrificing, Addams turned Hull House into a social center for recent Italian immigrants in the surrounding neighborhoods. Addams and the other young educated women who lived with her as residents at Hull House, held classes in English, civics, cooking, and dressmaking. They also set up a kindergarten, laundry, employment bureau and day nursery for working mothers. And, hoping to upgrade the filthy and overcrowded housing, they published systematic studies of city housing conditions and pressured politicians to enforce sanitary regulations.
- 1890 By 1890 the seeds of Progressivism were planted. In this period and before farmers had organized into the Populist reform movement.
- Under Willard’s leadership the WCTU with nearly 150,000 members became the nation’s first mass organization of women. Through it, women gained experience as lobbyists, organizers, and lecturers, in the process undercutting the assumption of “separate spheres.”
- 1892 Ellis Island opens to screen immigrants. Twenty million immigrants passed through it before it was closed in 1954.
- Homestead Strike. Henry Clay Frick, who managed Andrew Carnegie’s

Unit Template

steelworks at Homestead, Pa., cuts wages, precipitating a strike that begins June 26. In a pitched battle with Pinkerton guards, brought in to protect the plant, ten strikers and three Pinkertons are killed. Pennsylvania's governor then sent in the state militia to protect strikebreakers. The strike ended Nov. 20.

The World's Columbian Exhibition opens in Chicago to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Columbus's discovery of the New World. The first features the first Ferris Wheel.

- 1893 Largely through the work of Florence Kelley (who had been trained at Hull House), Illinois prohibited the employment of children under fourteen in factories – but factory owners evaded this law.
- 1893-97 Depression and Panic: no depression had ever been as deep and tragic as the one that lasted from 1893-97. Millions suffered unemployment especially during the winters of 1893-94 and 1894-95. Thousands of tramps wandered the country sides in search of food. Cities efforts at relief were not enough.
- 1894 Coxey's Army: Five hundred unemployed marched on Washington, DC. Armed police prevented them from entering the Capitol and herded them into camps.
- Pullman Strike. Workers at the Pullman sleeping car plant in Chicago go on strike after the company cut wages without reducing rents in company-owned housing. On June 26, the American Railway Union begins to boycott trains carrying Pullman cars.
- President Grover Cleveland used military and judicial means to crush striking railroad workers in Chicago.
- 1895 The national Anti-Saloon League was founded with Howard Russell as their head, and it shifted the emphasis from working with individuals and moral suasion to the legal abolition of alcoholic beverages. They supported prohibition as the cure all for health problems, family disorder, child abuse, political corruption, and workplace inefficiency. The ASL was also supported by the WCTU.
- 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson. The US Supreme Court rules that segregation of blacks and whites was permitted under the Constitution so long as both races receive equal facilities.
- 1897 By this time the AF of L had about half a million members.
- 1898 The battleship Maine blows up and sinks while anchored in Cuba's Havana harbor. Spanish-American War. As a result of the conflict, the United States acquires Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines.
- 1899 Florence Kelley became leader of the National Consumers' League that sought to use organized consumer pressure to force improved factory conditions. Campaigning for a federal child-labor law Kelley angrily asked: "Why are seals,

Unit Template

bears, reindeer, fish, wild game in the national parks, buffalo, and migratory birds all found suitable for federal protection, but not children?"

1900 At this point, the number of hours worked per day in industry averaged 9 1/2 and in mills 13 hours.

The International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) was formed.

Carrie Chapman Catt becomes president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). She followed Susan B. Anthony who retired. [Remember that Anthony worked closely with Elizabeth Cady Stanton (who had helped organize the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 to demand rights for women). Anthony worked tirelessly to gain married women's rights to property, wages, and all women's rights to suffrage.] Growing ranks of middle class women, increasingly educated, found it absurd that they couldn't vote particularly when recently arrived immigrant men, often less educated, could vote.

1901 U.S. Steel is organized, becoming the country's first billion dollar corporation.

President William McKinley is shot in Buffalo, N.Y. by Leon Czolgosz, an anarchist. The president died on September 14, and is succeeded by Theodore Roosevelt.

New York State passed a tenement house law that required fire escapes, light in dark hallways, and a window in each room.

1902 The United Mine Workers stage a strike against coal mine operators to gain not only higher wages and shorter hours, but also recognition as a union. The mine owners refused even to talk to the UMW leaders, but after five months – with winter looming and coal supplies dwindling – Roosevelt acted. He summoned the deadlocked parties to the White House and forced them to accept an arbitration commission to settle the dispute. The UMW called off the strike. Miners were granted a 10 percent wage increase and a reduction of the working day from 10 to 9 hours.

Maryland passed a Workmen's Compensation Law providing benefits for workers injured on the job.

1903 Illinois passed a law forbidding night work for children under 16.

1904 Theodore Roosevelt elected president.

A group of progressive reformers founded the National Child Labor Committee whose goal was to abolish child labor. It hired teams of investigators to gather evidence of children working in harsh conditions and then organized exhibitions of photographs and statistics to dramatize the plight of these children. Lewis Hine, a former NYC schoolteacher and photographer, became their most famous

Unit Template

investigative photographer – traveling around the country, photographing children in coal mines, meatpacking houses, textile mills, and canneries.

Lincoln Steffens writes *Shame of the Cities* on political corruption in St. Louis. One of the first “muckrakers,” Steffens emphasized facts rather than abstractions. The name muckrakers comes from Roosevelt referring to a character in Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* who spends all his time raking up filth.

1905 Socialists and labor radicals form the International Workers of the World (the IWW or the Wobblies) in Chicago. Unlike the AFL, which restricted its membership to skilled craftsmen, the IWW opened membership to any wage earner regardless of occupation, race, or sex.

1906 Upton Sinclair (another muckraker) publishes *The Jungle*, an expose of working conditions in Chicago’s meatpacking houses. Sinclair had hoped to generate sympathy for the working class, but wound up making the public concerned about adulterated food. “I aimed at the public’s heart,” he quipped, “but by accident hit it in the stomach.”

The Pure Food and Drug Act bars the sale of adulterated foods and drugs. That same day, to address the problems of contaminated and mislabeled meat, Congress passes the Meat Inspection Act providing for enforcement of sanitary regulations in the meat packing industry.

1907 By this time about 30 states had abolished child labor.

1908 The Supreme Court in the Danbury Hatters case sharply limited unions’ rights to set up boycotts in support of strikes.

In its decision in *Muller v. Oregon*, the Supreme Court acknowledged the need for facts, not just legal arguments, to establish the reasonableness of social legislation. Louis Brandeis, chief counsel for the State of Oregon, used social science data that had been researched by Florence Kelley, to prove the reasonableness of Oregon’s law to restrict the hours that a woman could work.

William Howard Taft, a Republican, elected president.

1909 ILGWU carried out a successful strike in New York City.

Henry Ford introduces his Model T. Priced originally at \$850, the Model T’s price had fallen to \$240 by 1924.

A biracial group of religious leaders and humanitarians incorporates as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The organization demanded equal civil, political, and educational rights, and enforcement of the 14th and 15th Amendments.

Unit Template

- 1910 By this time about 400 settlement houses had been established in cities, starting with Jane Addams and Hull House in Chicago. In these settlement houses women, forming the new profession of social work, improved conditions in tenement houses, began the public playground movement, crusaded to abolish child labor, and demanded better hours and wages for working women.
- At this point, women could vote in only four sparsely populated western states.
- 1911 The Triangle Fire took place in New York City killing 146 Jewish and Italian immigrant women working in a shirtwaist factory.
- After this fire, New York set up a Factory Investigating Committee and as a result NY enacted 56 worker-protection laws, including ones tightening factory safety standards, permitting pregnancy leaves, and requiring chairs with backs for garment workers who toiled at sewing machines all day.
- The National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage was formed – led by Josephine Dodge. The “Antis” leader was the widow of one of New York City’s richest capitalists. The “Antis” believed that women already had vast behind-the-scenes influence, and that to invade the male realm of politics could only diminish their vital moral and spiritual role.
- 1912 Presidential Election in which ex-president Theodore Roosevelt ran on the newly formed Progressive Party ticket, newcomer Woodrow Wilson ran as a Democrat, William H. Taft ran as a Republican, and Eugene Debs ran as a Socialist. Woodrow Wilson was elected president.
- The Progressive Party platform endorsed practically every one of the Progressive reforms including: woman suffrage, the abolition of child labor, the eight-hour workday, workers’ compensation, tariff reduction, business regulation, the direct primary and the direct election of senators.
- 1913 The 16th Amendment permits an income tax. The federal income tax levies a tax of 1 percent on incomes above \$3,000 for single individuals and above \$4,000 for married couples. A 1 percent surtax is imposed on incomes above \$20,000 rising to 6 percent on those above \$500,000.
- 1914 By 1914 twenty-five states had passed laws making employers liable for job-related injuries and deaths.
- The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, by a Serbian nationalist, ignites a chain of events that results in World War I.
- 1915 D.W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* made – disparaged blacks and glorified the Ku Klux Klan.

Unit Template

Between 1911 and 1915 there was a renewal of the woman-suffrage movement starting at the grassroots level. In New York, Chicago and Los Angeles and other cities, suffragists developed innovative forms of publicity, including street meetings and parades – and became more militant. Under Carrie Chapman Catt, the NAWSA adopted their “Winning Plan”: grassroots organizing within a frame of tight centralized coordination.

1916 To prevent a nationwide railroad strike, the Adamson Eight-Hour Act mandates an 8-hour workday in the railroad industry.

Clayton Anti-Trust Act passed with a clause that exempted strikes, boycotts and peaceful picketing from the anti-trust laws. Gompers hailed this as “labor’s Magna Carta.”

The Keating-Owen Act was passed barring from interstate commerce products manufactured by child labor. ** But this was declared unconstitutional in 1918. But this law and others paved the way for the final abolition of child labor by the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, during the New Deal.

Workmen’s Compensation Act provided accident and injury protection for federal workers.

Adamson Act established an 8-hour workday for interstate railway workers.

1917 In a speech asking Congress to declare war against Germany, President Wilson says, “The world must be made safe for democracy.” The United States declares war on the Central Powers. Six Senators and 50 Representatives vote against the declaration. The United States institutes a military draft. All men 21-30 are required to register.

New York state voters approved a woman-suffrage referendum.

In 1917 – a wartime year – Alice Paul and her followers, for woman-suffrage but using different tactics, picketed the White House with signs that said: “President Wilson is deceiving the world when he appears as the prophet of democracy... he is responsible for the disfranchisement of millions of Americans...” Several of the demonstrators were arrested, jailed, and when they went on a hunger strike, force-fed.

During the war thousands of women served directly in the military and in volunteer agencies at home and in France, as well as about 1 million women who began to work in war plants and munitions factories.

1918 President Woodrow Wilson issues his 14 Point plan for a lasting peace. It calls for open peace treaties without secret agreements; freedom of the seas; arms reductions, and establishment of a League of Nations. French Prime Minister Clemenceau responds: “Even God Almighty has only ten.”

Unit Template

A deadly influenza epidemic reaches its height. Altogether, the epidemic killed nearly 500,000 Americans.

1919 The Versailles Peace Treaty ending World War I strips Germany of land and natural resources; mandates steep reductions in the size of the Germany army and navy; and levies punitive reparations later set at \$32 billion.

The 18th Amendment to the Constitution bans “the manufacture, sale, or transportation of liquors.” At the time the amendment was adopted, prohibition was already in effect in all southern and western states except California and Louisiana.

By 1919 twenty-six states petitioned Congress to pass a woman-suffrage amendment to the Constitution, and in 1919, by overwhelming margins the House and Senate did just that.

1920 By this time the AF of L had grown from half a million members in 1897 to about four million members. But this number represented only about 20 percent of the non-farm labor force.

Women’s Suffrage, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified.