

Politics and Reform 1877–1896



Why It Matters

During this period, political parties often focused on party competition rather than on important issues. Rural Americans were suffering economically, and they began to organize to obtain relief. Many states passed laws segregating African Americans and limiting their voting rights.

The Impact Today

Events of this period remain significant today.

- To ensure fair hiring, a federal civil service system was created.
- Segregation created problems that Americans are still working to overcome.



The American Vision Video The Chapter 16 video, "The 1893 Chicago World's Fair," captures the feeling of this influential age.

1877
• Farmers' Alliance founded in Texas

1881
• President Garfield assassinated

1883
• Civil Service Act adopted

1876 Hayes 1877–1881

1881 Garfield 1881 Arthur 1881–1885

1886 Cleveland 1885–1889

World

1878
• Russians defeat Turks in war over control of Balkans

1880
• France annexes Tahiti

1884
• First subway in London



Electioneering in a Country Town by E.L. Henry

1887

- Florida initiates Jim Crow laws
- Interstate Commerce Act adopted

1890

- Sherman Antitrust Act passed

1895

- Booker T. Washington gives Atlanta Compromise speech

1896

- Democrats support free silver

B. Harrison
1889–1893

Cleveland
1893–1897

1891

1896

1893

- France acquires a protectorate over Laos

1894

- Sino-Japanese War breaks out

HISTORY
Online

Chapter Overview

Visit the *American Vision* Web site at tav.glencoe.com and click on **Chapter Overviews—Chapter 16** to preview chapter information.

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Stalemate in Washington

Guide to Reading

Main Idea

From 1877 to 1896, the Republicans and Democrats were so evenly matched that only a few reforms were possible at the national level.

Key Terms and Names

patronage, Stalwart, Pendleton Act, rebate, Interstate Commerce Commission

Reading Strategy

Organizing As you read about the electoral politics of the 1880s, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by filling in the ideals of each Republican Party faction listed.

| Stalwarts | Halfbreeds |
|-----------|------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |

Reading Objectives

- **Explain** why the Republicans and Democrats were so evenly matched during this period.
- **Cite** the economic problems of the period and the basic viewpoints of each political party.

Section Theme

Continuity and Change Political parties relied on support from different groups and regions of the country.

Preview of Events

A horizontal timeline with a red bar. Above the bar are the years 1881, 1884, 1887, and 1890. Below the bar are the years 1881, 1883, 1887, and 1890, each with a line pointing to a specific event.

| Year | Event |
|------|---|
| 1881 | Garfield assassinated; succeeded by Chester A. Arthur |
| 1883 | Civil Service Act adopted |
| 1887 | Interstate Commerce Act adopted |
| 1890 | Sherman Antitrust Act adopted |



Pitcher depicting James Garfield

★ An American Story ★

After the election of President James A. Garfield in 1880, many of his supporters tried to claim the “spoils of office”—the government jobs that follow an election victory. One of these job-seekers was Charles Guiteau. In the spring of 1881, Guiteau made daily trips to the White House or State Department, repeatedly asking for a job. Finally, the night of May 18, he had a crazed inspiration: “[I]f the president was out of the way,” he thought, “everything would go better.” Unlike Garfield, Guiteau reasoned, Vice President Chester Arthur was comfortable with the old spoils system. Arthur would give him the position he deserved. On July 2, 1881, Guiteau shot President Garfield in a train station near Capitol Hill. In a note left behind, Guiteau stated:

“The President’s tragic death was a sad necessity, but it will unite the Republican party and save the Republic. . . . I had no ill-will toward the President. His death was a political necessity. I am a lawyer, theologian, and politician. I am a Stalwart of the Stalwarts. . . .”

—quoted in *Garfield*

A Campaign to Clean Up Politics

For many, the assassination of President Garfield highlighted the need to work seriously on reforming politics. Traditionally, under the spoils system, or **patronage**, government jobs went to supporters of the winning party in an election. Many Americans believed the spoils system prevented government from addressing the nation’s issues and corrupted



those who worked for the government. By the late 1870s, a movement to reform the civil service had begun to build support.

Stalwarts and Halfbreeds When Rutherford B. Hayes entered the White House in 1877, he attacked the practice of patronage by appointing reformers to his cabinet and replacing officials who owed their jobs to party bosses. His actions infuriated New York senator Roscoe Conkling, who, like other local bosses of Republican political machines, was called a “**Stalwart**” in the newspapers.

The Stalwarts were already angry with Hayes for abandoning Reconstruction, because this abandonment allowed Democrats to regain full control of the South. Conkling labeled the Republican reformers “**Halfbreeds.**” He accused them of backing reform simply to create openings for their own supporters. “They are wolves in sheep’s clothing,” he charged. “Their real object is office and plunder.”

As the presidential election of 1880 approached, Hayes announced that he did not intend to run again. The Republicans nominated a mixed ticket—a Halfbreed, James Garfield, for president, and a Stalwart, Chester A. Arthur, for vice president. Despite the party’s feud, its ticket managed to win the election. A few months into his presidency, however, Garfield was assassinated.

The Pendleton Act Garfield’s assassination further excited public opinion against the spoils system. In 1883 Congress responded by passing the **Pendleton Act**. This law allowed the president to decide which federal jobs would be filled according to rules laid down by a bipartisan Civil Service Commission. Candidates competed for these jobs through examinations, and appointments could be made only from the list of those who took the exams. Once appointed, a civil service official could not be removed for political reasons.

Although President Arthur was a Stalwart, he supported the Pendleton Act. He placed 14,000 jobs (about one-tenth of the total) under the control of the civil service. The federal government had finally begun to shift away from the spoils system.

✓ Reading Check **Explaining** Why did Garfield’s assassination highlight the need for political reform?

Two Parties, Neck and Neck

Although many people thought corruption prevented the government from addressing the nation’s problems, a major reason few new policies were

introduced in the 1870s and 1880s was the political system itself. The Republicans held a voting edge in New England and the upper Midwest. As the party that had preserved the Union and established pensions for Civil War veterans, the Republicans had the support of former Union soldiers and Americans who were strongly patriotic. In addition, Republicans had the support of big business and strong support among farmers on the Great Plains. The Republicans were also seen as the party of reform because they supported abolition, temperance, and other reforms. Most Republicans were Protestants who viewed their party as the defender of traditional American morals and values.

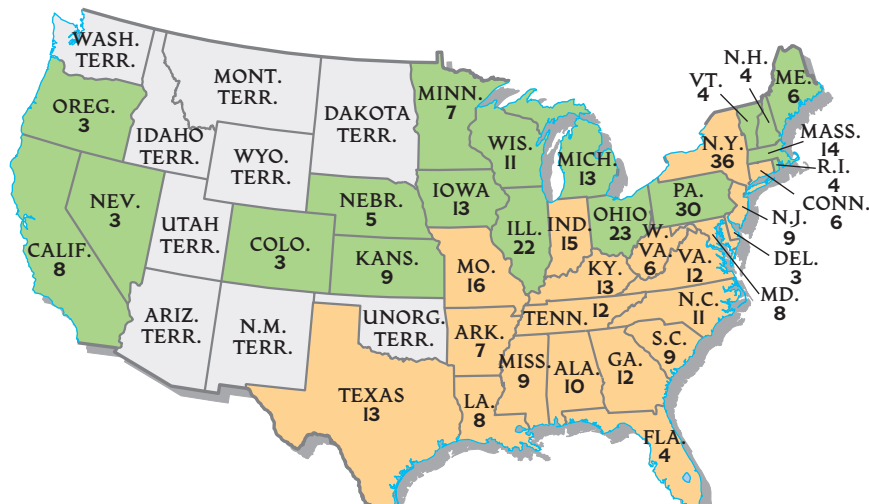
While Republicans were sometimes seen as the “party of morality,” Democrats portrayed themselves as the “party of personal liberty.” The Democrats dominated the South, where white voters remained anti-Republican following the Civil War and Reconstruction. The Democrats also enjoyed strong support in big cities, where large numbers of Catholics and immigrants lived.

From 1877 to 1896, these voting patterns gave the Democrats an edge in the House of Representatives, where voters in each congressional district elected

Picturing History

National Tragedy A newspaper artist captured the attack on President Garfield. Why was Charles Guiteau obsessed with the idea of killing the president?





Campaign ribbon

| Presidential Election, 1884 | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--------------|------------|
| Candidate | Electoral Vote | Popular Vote | Party |
| Cleveland | 219 | 4,879,507 | Democrat |
| Blaine | 182 | 4,850,293 | Republican |

Geography Skills

- Interpreting Maps** What regions did Blaine carry?
- Applying Geography Skills** Which three states do you think each candidate most hoped to win? Why?

members directly. The Republicans had the upper hand in the Senate, because state legislatures chose senators and Republicans generally controlled a majority of state governments.

Both parties were well organized to turn out the vote in elections, and narrow margins decided most presidential elections between 1876 and 1896. The elections of 1880 and 1888 came down to the swing states of New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, with their big blocks of electoral votes. Twice during this period, in 1876 and 1888, a candidate lost the popular vote but won the election. This happened because even if candidates win several states by slim popular vote margins, they still receive all the electoral votes in those states. These narrow victories then give the candidate an Electoral College majority, regardless of the overall popular vote count.

Although the Republicans won four of the six presidential elections between 1876 and 1896, the president often had to contend with a House controlled by Democrats and a Senate dominated by Republicans who did not always agree with him on the issues. Furthermore, this was an era when local political bosses, not the president, controlled the party. The nearly even division of power produced political deadlock at the federal level.

Reading Check Summarizing What were the results of most presidential elections between 1876 and 1896?

Democrats Reclaim the White House

As the election of 1884 approached, Democrats saw their best chance to win the White House since before the Civil War. Republicans remained divided over reform, and Democrats went after the votes of pro-reform Republicans by nominating Governor Grover Cleveland of New York. Cleveland was an opponent of **Tammany Hall**, the corrupt Democratic political machine in New York City.

Cleveland's Republican opponent was James G. Blaine, a former speaker of the House of Representatives and chairman of the Maine committee of the Republican Party since 1859. Blaine was wildly popular among party workers. When his name was placed in nomination at the Republican convention in Chicago, delegates launched into a riotous celebration. The cheers "deepened into a roar fully as deafening as the voice of Niagara," a witness reported. "The air quivered, the gas lights trembled and the walls fairly shook."

The campaign was sensational and frenzied. Because so many voters believed corruption was the main problem in American government, they focused their attention on the personal morals of the

candidates. The wild show of support for Blaine offended *New York Evening Post* editor Edwin L. Godkin, who called it a “disgrace to decency” and compared the celebration to a “mass meeting of maniacs.” Godkin disliked Blaine, who had been accused during the *Crédit Mobilier* scandal of profiting financially from a political favor he did for the Union Pacific Railroad while serving as Speaker of the House in the 1870s.

Some Republican reformers were so unhappy with Blaine that they abandoned their party and supported Cleveland. These renegade reformers became known as “**Mugwumps**,” from an Algonquian word meaning “great chiefs.” They thought of themselves as moral leaders who were more concerned with helping the nation than with helping a particular political party. Mugwumps believed that Blaine was too entrenched in the old system of politics to support their reform issues. Most Mugwumps came from New York and Massachusetts.

Cleveland, a bachelor, also faced moral criticism during the campaign when a newspaper revealed that he had fathered a child 10 years earlier. Aides asked Cleveland how they should respond to reporters seeking to know more about this story, and he replied, “Tell the truth.” By admitting to the charge, Cleveland preserved his reputation for honesty and retained the support of many Mugwumps.

Blaine hoped that he could make up for the loss of the Mugwumps by persuading Roman Catholics to defect from the Democratic Party. His mother was an Irish Catholic, and there were half a million Irish Americans in New York state alone at the time. During the campaign, however, Blaine met with a Protestant minister who denounced the Democratic Party for its ties to Catholicism. Because Blaine was slow to denounce the remark, he lost most of the Irish American vote. To make matters worse for Blaine, many pro-temperance Republicans in upstate New York backed the candidate of the Prohibition Party, which was dedicated to banning the sale of alcohol. Cleveland won New York by a margin of about 1,000 votes out of more than 1,000,000 cast, and his victory there decided the election.

 **Reading Check** **Describing** From what sources did Grover Cleveland gain support in the 1884 presidential election?

A President Besieged by Problems

Grover Cleveland was an easy-going man who enjoyed the personal side of politics. Like his predecessors, he was shocked by the crowds that flocked to the White House seeking jobs. “This dreadful . . .

office-seeking hangs over me and surrounds me,” he complained, “and makes me feel like resigning.”

As the first elected Democratic president since 1856, he faced a horde of supporters who expected him to reward them with jobs. Mugwumps, on the other hand, expected him to multiply the number of positions covered under the merit system. Cleveland chose a middle course and wound up angering both sides. Economic issues, however, soon overshadowed the debate about political reform.

ECONOMICS

The Interstate Commerce Commission With greater industrialization and the growth of the labor movement, unrest among workers was mounting across the country. Many strikes occurred in this period, and police and paid guards sometimes attacked workers with clubs. This period of violence culminated in 1886 when a bomb exploded at a labor demonstration in Haymarket Square in Chicago.

The power of large corporations also concerned Americans. In particular, small businesses and farmers had become angry at the railroads. While large corporations such as Standard Oil were able to negotiate **rebates**—or partial refunds—and lower rates because of the volume of goods they shipped, others were forced to pay much higher rates. Although the high fixed costs and low operating costs of railroads caused much of this problem, many Americans believed railroads were gouging customers.

Neither Democrats nor Republicans moved quickly at the federal level to address these problems.




Analyzing Political Cartoons

Difficult Passage In Greek mythology, Scylla and Charybdis were sea monsters who threatened the hero Odysseus from opposite sides of a narrow strait. **Why do you think the artist chose this image for Grover Cleveland in 1886?**



Picturing History

Changing of the Guard Grover Cleveland delivers his inaugural speech in March 1885. His predecessor, Chester Arthur, is seen at left. [What were the major issues of this election?](#)

Both parties believed that government should not interfere with corporations' property rights, which courts had held to be the same as those of individuals. Many states had recently passed laws regulating railroad freight rates. In 1886, however, the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Wabash v. Illinois* that the state of Illinois could not restrict the rates that the Wabash Railroad charged for traffic between states because only the federal government could regulate interstate commerce.  (See page 1083 for a summary of *Wabash v. Illinois*.)

Public pressure forced Congress to respond to the *Wabash* ruling. In 1887 Cleveland signed a bill creating the **Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC)**, the first federal law designed to regulate interstate commerce. The legislation limited railroad rates to what was "reasonable and just," forbade rebates to high-volume users, and made it illegal to charge higher rates for shorter hauls. The commission was not very effective in regulating the industry, however, because it had to rely on the courts to enforce its rulings.

Debating Tariffs Another important economic issue concerned tariffs. Although tariffs had been lowered slightly in the 1870s, they were still much higher than in the years before the Civil War. Many Democrats thought that Congress should cut tariffs

because these taxes had the effect of raising the prices of manufactured goods. While protecting weak domestic manufacturing after the Civil War may have made sense, many questioned the necessity of maintaining high tariffs in the 1880s, when large American companies were fully capable of competing internationally. High tariffs also forced other nations to respond in kind, making it difficult for farmers to export their surpluses.

In December 1887, President Cleveland proposed lowering tariffs. The House, with a Democratic majority, passed moderate tariff reductions, but the Republican-controlled Senate rejected the bill. With Congress deadlocked, tariff reduction became a major issue in the election of 1888.

 **Reading Check** **Examining** Why was the Interstate Commerce Commission unable to carry out its goals effectively?

Republicans Regain Power

The Republicans and their presidential candidate, Benjamin Harrison, received large contributions for the 1888 campaign from industrialists who benefited from tariff protection. Cleveland and the Democrats campaigned against unnecessarily high tariff rates. In one of the closest races in American history,

Harrison lost the popular vote but won the electoral vote with narrow victories in New York and Indiana.

The McKinley Tariff The election of 1888 gave the Republicans control of both houses of Congress as well as the White House. Using this power, the party passed legislation to address points of national concern. One major piece of legislation was McKinley’s tariff bill. Representative William McKinley of Ohio pushed through a tariff bill that cut tobacco taxes and tariff rates on raw sugar but greatly increased rates on other goods, such as textiles, to discourage people from buying those imports.

The **McKinley Tariff** lowered federal revenue and transformed the nation’s budget surplus into a budget deficit. In 1890, furthermore, Congress passed a new pension law increasing payments to veterans and the number of veterans eligible to receive them. While securing more votes for the Republicans, the new pension plan greatly worsened the federal deficit.



Harrison paper lantern

commerce among the several States.” The courts were responsible for enforcement, however, and judges saw nothing in this vaguely worded legislation that required them to make big companies change the way they did business. In 1895, for example, the Supreme Court agreed that the American Sugar Refining Company was a trust, enjoying a nearly complete monopoly of sugar manufacturing. Nevertheless, the Court ruled that the company’s actions did not violate the Sherman Antitrust Act because manufacturing was not interstate commerce. In the years following passage of the act, businesses formed trusts and combinations at a great rate. In 1899 alone there were over 1,200 recorded mergers in manufacturing and mining firms. Like the ICC, the Sherman Antitrust Act was more important for establishing a precedent than for its immediate impact.

As the midterm congressional election of 1890 approached, some Americans concluded that the two-party system was incapable of solving the nation’s problems. That conviction was strongest among farmers, who felt exploited by banks and railroads and neglected by the government. They doubted that either the Democrats or the Republicans would respond to their concerns.

Reading Check **Summarizing** What were the results of the McKinley Tariff?

The Sherman Antitrust Act The Republican-controlled Congress also responded to popular pressure to do something about the power of trusts, large combinations of companies that dominated certain markets. Senator John Sherman of Ohio introduced the **Sherman Antitrust Act** of 1890, which declared illegal any “combination in the form of trust . . . or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or

SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

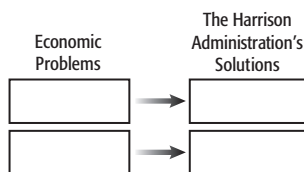
- Define:** *patronage, rebate.*
- Identify:** Stalwart, Halfbreed, Interstate Commerce Commission.
- Explain** how the Pendleton Act created civil service reform.
- Describe** the events leading to the establishment of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Reviewing Themes

- Continuity and Change** What groups and regions were strongholds for Republicans and Democrats in the 1880s? Where is their support today?

Critical Thinking

- Interpreting** Why was the Sherman Antitrust Act ineffective?
- Organizing** Use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list the era’s economic problems and the Harrison administration’s solutions.



Analyzing Visuals

- Examining Photographs** Study the photograph on page 496. What similarities do you see between Cleveland’s inauguration ceremony and the ones we have today? Do you see any differences between the ceremonies then and now?

Writing About History

- Persuasive Writing** Imagine that you are seeking a federal job in the early 1880s. Write a letter to your congressional representatives urging them to support or oppose the Pendleton Act.



Eyewitness

BROWN BROTHERS

In his exposé of urban poverty, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), **JACOB RIIS** documented the living conditions in New York City tenements:

“The statement once made a sensation that between seventy and eighty children had been found in one tenement. It no longer excites even passing attention, when the sanitary police report counting 101 adults and 91 children in a Crosby Street house, one of twins, built together. The children in the others, if I am not mistaken, numbered 89, a total of 180 for two tenements! Or when midnight inspection in Mulberry Street unearths a hundred and fifty “lodgers” sleeping on filthy floors in two buildings. In spite of brown-stone fittings, plate-glass and mosaic vestibule floors, the water does not rise in summer to the second story, while the beer flows unchecked to the all-night picnics on the roof. The saloon with the side-door and the landlord divide the prosperity of the place between them, and the tenant, in sullen submission, foots the bill.”

VERBATIM

“Tell ’em quick, and tell ’em often.”

WILLIAM WRIGLEY,
soap salesman and promoter of chewing gum,
on his marketing philosophy

“A pushing, energetic, ingenious person, always awake and trying to get ahead of his neighbors.”

HENRY ADAMS,
historian, describing the average New Yorker or Chicagoan

“We cannot all live in cities, yet nearly all seem determined to do so.”

HORACE GREELEY,
newspaper editor

INDICATORS:

Livin’ in the City

Moving off the farm for a factory job? Sharpen your pencil. You’ll need to budget carefully to buy all you will need.

Here are the numbers for a Georgia family of four in 1890. The husband is a textile worker, and the wife works at home. There is one child, age 4, and a boarder. They share a two-room, wood-heated, oil-lighted apartment.

INCOME: (annual)

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| husband’s income | \$312.00 |
| boarder’s rent | 10.00 |
| TOTAL INCOME | \$322.00 |

EXPENSES: (annual)

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| medical | \$65.00 |
| furniture | 46.90 |
| clothing | 46.00 |
| rent | 21.00 |
| flour/meal | 25.00 |
| hog products | 17.00 |
| other meat | 13.00 |
| vegetables | 13.00 |
| lard | 6.50 |
| potatoes | 6.40 |
| butter | 5.00 |
| sugar | 4.00 |
| charitable donations | 6.10 |
| vacation | 3.25 |
| alcohol | 3.25 |
| tobacco | 3.00 |
| molasses | 2.00 |
| other food | 27.80 |
| miscellaneous | 68.20 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | \$382.40 |

Milestones

ON THE RUN, 1881. THE JESSE JAMES GANG, after robbing a Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific train near Winston, Missouri, and killing the conductor and a passenger.

OVERTURNED, 1878. By the Supreme Court, a Louisiana court decision that awarded damages to an African American woman who had been refused admission to a steamship stateroom reserved for whites.

PLAGUED BY GRASSHOPPERS, 1874. THE AMERICAN GREAT PLAINS. Insect swarms a mile wide blot out the midday sun. Two inches deep on the ground, they leave “nothing but the mortgage,” as one farmer put it.

CELEBRATED IN EUROPE, 1887. ANNIE OAKLEY, star of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show. Oakley shot a cigarette from the lips of Crown Prince Wilhelm of Germany. Years later, when the U.S. goes to war against Kaiser Wilhelm, Oakley will quip: “I wish I’d missed that day!”



Susan B. Anthony

BROWN BROTHERS



Jesse James

BROWN BROTHERS

REMOVED, 1884. IDA B. WELLS, journalist and former slave, from a ladies coach on a train. Wells refused to move to the smoking car where African Americans were to be seated.

ESTABLISHED, 1883. STANDARD TIME. To accommodate the railroad system, noon will no longer be the moment in a given locality when the sun stands highest in the sky but, instead will be standard across four time zones. Set your watches!

ARRESTED, 1872. SUSAN B. ANTHONY, for casting a ballot in Rochester, New York. Anthony argued that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments applied to women.

NUMBERS

1 in 12 Americans living in cities of 100,000 or more in 1865



BROWN BROTHERS

A crowded New York City street

1 in 5 Americans living in cities in 1896

522 Inhabitants in a one-acre area in the Bowery, New York City

\$2 Daily wage for a farm laborer, New York, 1869

\$4 Daily wage for a plumber, New York City, 1869

50¢ Price of a pair of boy’s knee pants, a parasol, button boots, or a necktie (1870s)

\$8 Price of a “Fine All-Wool Suit,” 1875

\$3 Box seat for four at Gilmore’s Concert Garden in New York City

4¢ Price for one pound of fancy white rice, 1896

25¢ Admission to “Barnum’s American Museum” (featuring the smallest pair of human beings ever seen!), 1896

SECTION 2 Populism

Guide to Reading

Main Idea

In the 1890s an independent political movement called populism emerged to challenge the two major parties.

Key Terms and Names

populism, greenback, inflation, deflation, Grange, cooperative, People's Party, graduated income tax, goldbug, silverite, William Jennings Bryan

Reading Strategy

Taking Notes As you read about the emergence of populism in the 1890s, use the major headings of the section to create an outline similar to the one below.

Populism
I. Unrest in Rural America
A.
B.
II.
A.
B.

Reading Objectives

- **Explain** why farmers wanted a greenback currency and why the adoption of the gold standard led to the Farmers' Alliance.
- **Describe** who joined the Populist Party and what the party's goals were.

Section Theme

Economic Factors Currency and credit problems led to the rise of the Populist movement.

Preview of Events



★ An American Story ★



Populist farmers gather in Dickinson County, Kansas

On July 4, 1890, Leonidas L. Polk took a political gamble. He stepped up to make a speech to a crowd of 6,000 in a small town in Kansas. Polk was a Southerner, a lifelong Democrat, and a former Confederate soldier. He was not in friendly territory.

Polk had come to Kansas because he was now involved in a different kind of battle, one that cut across the lines dividing Northerners from Southerners and Democrats from Republicans. He was calling on farmers from both parties and both regions to unite for their common good. Polk urged the crowd to reject the two-party system and join the emerging movement that became known as populism:

“I tell you this afternoon that from New York to the Golden Gate, the farmers have risen up and have inaugurated a movement such as the world has never seen. It is a revolution of thought. . . . The farmer of North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, South Carolina is your brother. . . . Some people have stirred up sectional feelings and have kept us apart for twenty-five years. . . . They know that if we get together and shake hands . . . their doom is sealed. . . . Congress could give us a bill in forty-eight hours that would relieve us, but Wall Street says nay. . . . I believe that both of the parties are afraid of Wall Street.”

—quoted in *Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America*

Unrest in Rural America

Populism was the movement to increase farmers' political power and to work for legislation in their interest. The economic crisis that drove farmers to embrace this movement had its origins in the years immediately following the Civil War. A major

problem was that farm prices had dropped due to new technology. Farmers were producing more crops, and greater supply tended to lower prices. At the same time, high tariffs increased the cost of manufactured goods farmers needed and made it harder for farmers to sell their goods overseas. Farmers also felt they were victimized by large and faraway entities: the banks from which they obtained loans and the railroads that set their shipping rates. The world that farmers now dealt with was more and more one of big business, and they felt they were losing power and influence.

The Money Supply One specific problem that greatly concerned farmers was the nation's money supply. To help finance the Union war effort, the United States Treasury had greatly expanded the money supply by issuing millions of dollars in **greenbacks**—paper currency that could not be exchanged for gold or silver coins. This rapid increase in the money supply without an accompanying increase in goods for sale caused **inflation**, or a decline in the value of money. As the paper money lost value, the prices of goods soared.

After the Civil War ended, the United States had three types of currency in circulation—greenbacks, gold and silver coins, and national bank notes backed by government bonds. To get inflation under control,

the federal government stopped printing greenbacks and began paying off its bonds. In 1873 Congress also decided to stop making silver into coins.

These decisions meant that the United States did not have a large enough money supply to meet the needs of the country's growing economy. In 1865, for example, there was about \$30 in circulation for each American, but by 1895 it had sunk to about \$23. As the economy expanded, **deflation**—or an increase in the value of money and a decrease in the general level of prices—began. As money increased in value, prices began to fall.

Deflation Hurts Farmers Deflation hit farmers especially hard. Most farmers had to borrow money for seed and other supplies to plant their crops. Because money was in short supply, interest rates began to rise, which increased the amount farmers owed. For those who wanted to expand their farms, rising interest rates also made mortgages more expensive. The falling prices of the period of deflation meant the farmers sold their crops for less. Nevertheless, they still had to make the same mortgage payments to the banks.

Realizing that their problems were due to a shortage of currency, many farmers concluded that Eastern bankers had pressured Congress into reducing the money supply. Some farmers called for the

Picturing History

Populist Territory This farm family in Nebraska represents the kind of people who typically supported populism. [Why did farmers dislike Eastern bankers?](#)



printing of more greenbacks to expand the money supply. Others, particularly those living in the West where new silver mines had been found, wanted the government to begin minting silver coins. They referred to the decision to stop minting silver as “**The Crime of ’73.**” Increasingly, farmers realized that if they were going to convince the government to meet their demands, they needed to organize.


The Grange Takes Action In 1866 the United States Department of Agriculture sent Oliver H. Kelley to tour the rural South and report on the condition of the region’s farmers. Realizing how isolated the farmers were from each other, the following year, Kelley founded the nation’s first national farm organization, the Patrons of Husbandry, better known as the **Grange**.

At first Grangers got together largely for social and educational purposes. Then, in 1873, the nation plunged into a severe recession, and farm income fell sharply. Farmers looking for help joined the Grange in large numbers. By 1874 the Grange had between 800,000 and 1.5 million members.

Grangers responded to the crisis in three ways. Some pressured state legislatures to regulate railroad and warehouse rates, which they believed were too high. Others joined the Independent National Party. This new political party, nicknamed the Greenback Party, wanted the government to print more greenbacks to increase the money supply. Grangers also pooled their resources and tried to create **cooperatives**—marketing organizations that worked for the benefit of their members.

One of the reasons farmers could not charge higher prices for their crops was that there were so many farmers in competition. If a farmer raised prices, a buyer could always go elsewhere and pay

less. Cooperatives pooled farmers’ crops and held them off the market in order to force up prices. Because a cooperative controlled a large quantity of farm products, it could also negotiate better shipping rates with the railroads.

The Grange Fails None of the strategies the Grangers employed improved farmers’ economic condition. Several western states passed “Granger laws” setting maximum rates and prohibiting railroads from charging more for short hauls than for long ones. The railroads fought back by cutting services and refusing to lay new track until the laws were repealed. The 1886 Supreme Court ruling in *Wabash v. Illinois* then greatly limited the states’ ability to regulate railroads by ruling that states could not regulate commerce that crossed state lines.  (See pages 496 and 1083 for more information on *Wabash v. Illinois*.)

Meanwhile the Greenback Party failed to gain much public support. Many Americans were very suspicious of paper money. They did not believe it would hold its value, and they considered the Greenback Party’s proposal to print more paper money dangerous for the economy. The Grange’s cooperatives also failed, partly because they were too small to have any effect on prices, and partly because Eastern businesses and railroads considered them to be similar to unions—illegitimate conspiracies in restraint of trade—and refused to do business with them. By the late 1870s, membership in the Grange had begun to fall, as farmers moved to other organizations that they hoped would better address their problems.

The Farmers’ Alliance

Even as the Grange began to fall apart, a new organization, known as the **Farmers’ Alliance**, began to form. The Farmers’ Alliance began in Lampasas County, Texas, in 1877. By 1885 it had built a substantial following throughout the state. The following year, Charles W. Macune became the leader of the Alliance. Macune called for the organization to begin recruiting farmers outside of Texas.

The Alliance Grows During the late 1880s, Alliance members traveled across the South and West speaking to farmers and organizing local chapters. By 1890 the Alliance had between 1.5 and 3 million members. Its support was very strong in the South and on the Great Plains, particularly in Kansas, Nebraska, and North and South Dakota.

When Macune became the leader of the Alliance, he also announced a plan to organize very large cooperatives that the Alliance called exchanges.

Farmers’ Alliance This small band of farmers met in a cabin in Lampasas County, Texas, to form the Farmers’ Alliance.





Picturing History

Hard Labor Southern farmers spent long hours working in their fields. Harvesting cotton (left) and husking corn (right) were family activities that were done by hand with no expensive mechanical equipment. **What do you notice about the ages of the group husking corn?**

Macune hoped these exchanges would be big enough to force farm prices up and to make loans to farmers at low interest rates. The exchanges had some success. The Texas Exchange successfully marketed cotton at prices slightly higher than those paid to individual farmers, while the Illinois Exchange negotiated slightly better railroad rates for wheat farmers.

The People's Party Despite their temporary success, the large cooperatives failed for several reasons. Many overextended themselves by loaning too much money at low interest rates that was never repaid. In many cases, wholesalers, manufacturers, railroads, and bankers discriminated against them, making it difficult for them to stay in business. The exchanges also failed because they still were too small to dramatically affect world prices for farm products.

By 1890 the failure of the Alliance to fix farmers' problems had started a power struggle within the organization. Some Alliance leaders, particularly in the Western states, wanted to form a new party and push for political reforms. Members of the Kansas Alliance formed the **People's Party**, also known as the Populists, and nominated candidates to run for Congress and the state legislature. Alliances in Nebraska, South Dakota, and Minnesota quickly followed Kansas's example.

The Subtreasury Plan Most Southern leaders of the Alliance, including Charles Macune, opposed the idea of a third party. They did not want to undermine the Democrats' control of the South. Instead, Macune suggested that the Alliance produce a list of demands and promise to vote for candidates who supported those demands. He hoped this strategy would force the Democrats to adopt the Alliance program.

As part of this strategy, Macune introduced the subtreasury plan, which called for the government to set up warehouses called subtreasuries. Farmers would store the crops in the warehouses, and the government would provide low-interest loans to the farmers. Macune believed that the plan would allow farmers to hold their crops off the market in large enough quantities to force prices up. He hoped that the Democrats would adopt the subtreasury plan and thereby win farmers' votes.

✓ Reading Check Explaining How did the Farmers' Alliance try to help farmers?

The Rise of Populism

In 1890 members of the Farmers' Alliance met in Ocala, Florida, and issued what came to be known as the Ocala Demands. These demands were intended

to guide farmers in choosing whom to vote for in 1890. The demands called for the adoption of the sub-treasury plan, the free coinage of silver, an end to protective tariffs and national banks, tighter regulation of the railroads, and direct election of senators by voters instead of by state legislatures.

To prevent farmers from voting for Populists, the Republicans in Congress, led by Senator John Sherman, pushed through the **Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890**. This act authorized the United States Treasury to purchase 4.5 million ounces of silver per month. It put more money into circulation and may have reduced the deflation slightly, but it did little to help the farmers.

The midterm elections of 1890 seemed to suggest that both the Southern and Western strategies had worked for the farmers. In the South, four governors, all Democrats, were elected after promising to support the Alliance program. Several Southern legislatures now had pro-Alliance majorities, and over 40 Democrats who supported the Alliance program were elected to Congress. Meanwhile, the new People's Party did equally well in the West. Populists took control of the Kansas and Nebraska legislatures. Populists also held the balance of power in Minnesota and South Dakota. Eight Populists were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and two to the Senate.

The South Turns to Populism At first Southern members were excited over their success in electing so many pro-Alliance Democrats to Congress and Southern state legislatures, but over the next two years, their excitement turned into frustration.

Despite their promises, few Democrats followed through by supporting the Alliance program, either at the state or the federal level.

In May 1891, Western populists met with some labor and reform groups in Cincinnati. The meeting endorsed the creation of a new national People's Party to run candidates for president. Only a few Southerners attended the convention. By the following year, however, it had become obvious to many Southern members of the Alliance that the Democrats were not going to keep their promises to the Alliance. By early 1892 many Southern farmers had reached the point where they were willing to break with the Democratic Party and join the People's Party.

A Populist for President In July 1892, the People's Party held its first national convention in Omaha, Nebraska. There, members officially organized their party and nominated **James B. Weaver** to run for president. Weaver was a former Union Army General who had run for president before as the candidate of the Greenback Party. The Omaha convention also endorsed a platform, or program, that spelled out the party's positions in strong terms. First of all, the Omaha platform denounced the government's refusal to coin silver as a "vast conspiracy against mankind." To increase the money supply, it called for a return to unlimited coinage of silver at a ratio that gave 16 ounces of silver the same value as 1 ounce of gold. Other platform planks called for federal ownership of railroads and a **graduated income tax**, one that taxed higher earnings more heavily.

Above all, the Populists wanted to strengthen the hand of government so that it could defend the public against what they saw as greedy and irresponsible private interests. "We believe that the powers of government—in other words, of the people—should be expanded," the platform stated, "as rapidly and as far as the good sense of an intelligent people and the teachings of experience shall justify."

Although the Populists also adopted proposals designed to appeal to organized labor, workers found it hard to identify with the rural Populists. The Populists did have close ties to the Knights of Labor, but that organization was in decline, while the fast-growing American Federation of Labor steered clear of an alliance with them. The Omaha

Profiles IN HISTORY

Mary Ellen Lease 1853–1933

Mary Ellen Lease, a former school-teacher and daughter of an Irish political refugee, earned a law degree while raising four children on the Kansas frontier. She was one of the most passionate speakers for the People's Party in Kansas during the 1890 election campaign. Political opponents nicknamed her "Mary Yellin" and criticized the tall and forceful Lease for acting in an "unfeminine" manner by speaking in public.

Lease's blunt style, however, appealed to Kansas farmers. "Wall Street owns the country," she declared. "It is no longer a government of the people, for the people, by the people, but a government of Wall Street, for Wall Street, and by Wall Street." Lease urged farmers to spend less time raising crops and more time campaigning against the banks and railroads.



**MOMENT
in HISTORY**

**HARD LIFE ON
THE PLAINS**

English-born immigrant farmer David Hilton and his family proudly pose beside their pump organ on their homestead in Nebraska. The organ, their prized possession, had been rescued from the Hiltons' sod-built dugout after the roof collapsed. Farm families on the sparsely-settled, treeless plains had to cope with isolation as well as a variety of natural hazards, including dust storms, tornadoes, erratic rainfall, and the occasional plague of destructive insects that could strip entire fields of crops in a matter of hours.



platform took positions popular with labor, including calling for an eight-hour workday, restricting immigration, and denouncing strikebreaking, but most urban workers still preferred to remain within the Democratic Party.

Democrats retained support in Northern cities by nominating the popular New Yorker, Grover Cleveland, who was seeking to return to the White House after his close defeat in 1888. The South also remained solidly Democratic, despite determined efforts by Populists. When the votes were counted, Cleveland had won a resounding victory in the Electoral College, with 277 votes to 145 for Harrison. The Populist candidate, James Weaver, had done remarkably well, winning four states and splitting two others for a total of 22 electoral votes.

The Panic of 1893 Not long after Cleveland's inauguration in 1893, the nation plunged into the worst economic crisis it had ever experienced. The panic began in March when the Philadelphia and Reading Railroads declared bankruptcy. Many railroads had expanded too rapidly in the period before the panic and now found it hard to repay their loans. The stock

market on Wall Street crashed, and banks closed their doors. By 1894 the economy was deep in a depression. About 690,000 workers went on strike that year, and more than 4.6 million more were unemployed, approximately 18 percent of the workforce.

Goldbugs and Silverites The Panic of 1893 also created a crisis for the United States Treasury. Many American and European investors owned U.S. government bonds, but as the economy worsened, they began cashing in their bonds for gold. This caused gold to drain out of the U.S. Treasury and left the federal government's gold reserves at a dangerously low level.

Although President Cleveland could not stop the flow of gold to redeem bonds, he could protect the government's reserves in another way. Gold was also being lost every time people exchanged silver for gold under the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. Unlike many Democrats, Cleveland believed the United States should use gold as the basis for its currency, not silver or paper money. In June 1893, he summoned Congress into a special session and pushed through the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act.



Picturing History

Campaigns in Contrast In 1896 Democrat William Jennings Bryan (left) ran an energetic campaign for president, traveling far and wide. Republican William McKinley (right) campaigned from the front porch of his Canton, Ohio, home. [How did their campaign styles work out?](#)

Cleveland's actions split the Democratic Party into two factions, nicknamed "goldbugs" and "silverites." The **goldbugs** believed the American currency should be based only on gold, while **silverites** believed coining silver in unlimited quantities would solve the nation's economic crisis.

 **Reading Check** **Summarizing** What was the main outcome of the Populist campaign in the elections of 1892?

The Election of 1896

As the election of 1896 approached, leaders of the People's Party decided to make the silver issue the focus of their campaign. They also decided to hold their convention after the Republican and Democratic conventions. They believed the Republicans would endorse a gold standard, which they did. They also expected the Democrats to nominate Cleveland again and hoped that when the People's Party strongly endorsed silver, pro-silver Democrats would abandon their party and vote for the Populists in large numbers.

Unfortunately for the Populists, their political strategy failed. The Democrats did not waffle on the silver issue. Instead, they nominated **William Jennings Bryan**, a strong supporter of silver. When the Populists gathered in St. Louis for their own convention, they faced a difficult choice: endorse Bryan and risk undermining their identity as a separate party, or nominate their own candidate and risk splitting the silver vote. They eventually decided to support Bryan.

Bryan's Campaign William Jennings Bryan, a former member of Congress from Nebraska, was only 36 years old when the Democrats and Populists nominated him for president. Bryan had served in Congress for two terms as a representative from Nebraska. He was a powerful speaker, and he won the nomination by delivering an electrifying address in defense of silver, one of the most famous in American political history. He began by telling delegates that he had come to speak "in defense of a cause as holy as the cause of liberty—the cause of humanity." With a few well-chosen words, Bryan transformed the campaign for silver into a crusade:

“Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them: You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.”

—quoted in *America in the Gilded Age*

Bryan waged an unusually energetic campaign for the presidency, traveling thousands of miles and making 600 speeches in 14 weeks. Some found his relentless campaigning undignified, however, and his crusade in favor of silver alienated others. Catholic immigrants and other city-dwellers cared little for the silver issue. They did not like Bryan's speaking style either. It reminded them of rural Protestant preachers, who were sometimes anti-Catholic.

Republicans knew that Bryan would be hard to beat in the South and the West. To regain the White House, they would have to sweep the Northeast and



Student Web Activity Visit the *American Vision* Web site at tav.glencoe.com and click on **Student Web Activities—Chapter 16** for an activity on political changes in the late 1800s.

the Midwest. They thought that **William McKinley** of Ohio, a former governor and member of Congress, was the candidate who could do it.

The Front Porch Campaign In sharp contrast to the hectic travels of Bryan, McKinley stayed at his home in Canton, Ohio. He conducted what the newspapers called his “Front-Porch Campaign” by meeting with various delegations that came to visit him. Meanwhile, across the Midwest and Northeast, the Republican Party launched an intensive campaign on McKinley’s behalf.

The Republicans campaigned against the Democrats by blaming Cleveland’s administration for the depression and promising workers that McKinley would provide a “full dinner pail.” This meant a lot more to most urban workers than the issue of silver money. At the same time, most business leaders supported the Republicans, convinced that unlimited silver coinage would ruin the country. They donated huge sums of money to the Republican campaign. Many employers warned their workers that if Bryan won, businesses would fail, unemployment would rise, and wages would be cut.

McKinley’s reputation for moderation on labor issues and tolerance toward different ethnic groups helped improve the Republican Party’s image with urban workers and immigrants. When the votes were counted, McKinley had won a decisive victory. He captured 51 percent of the popular vote and had a winning margin of 95 electoral votes—hefty numbers in an era of tight elections. As expected, Bryan won the South and most of the West, but few of the

states he carried had large populations or delivered many electoral votes. By embracing populism and its rural base, Bryan and the Democrats lost the Northern industrial areas where votes were concentrated.

Populism Declines Opposition to the gold-based currency dwindled during McKinley’s time in office. The depression was over, and prospectors found gold in Canada in 1896 and in Alaska in 1898. That wealth, combined with new gold strikes in South Africa and other parts of the world, increased the money supply without turning to silver. This meant that credit was easier to obtain and farmers were less distressed. In 1900 the United States officially adopted a gold-based currency when Congress passed the Gold Standard Act.

When the silver crusade died out, the Populists lost their momentum. Their efforts to ease the economic hardships of farmers and to regulate big business had not worked. Some of the reforms they favored, however, came about in the next century, including the graduated income tax and some governmental regulation of the economy.

Reading Check Evaluating What were the results of the 1896 presidential election?

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

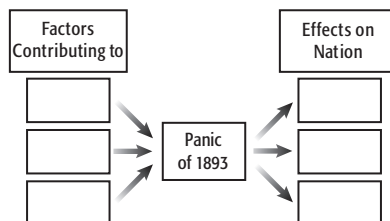
- Define:** populism, greenback, inflation, deflation, cooperative, graduated income tax, goldbug, silverite.
- Identify:** Grange, People’s Party, William Jennings Bryan.
- List** the issues that the Democrats endorsed in the 1896 presidential election.

Reviewing Themes

- Economic Factors** What economic problems caused farmers to support populism?

Critical Thinking

- Analyzing** How did the Farmers’ Alliance contribute to the rise of a new political party?
- Organizing** Use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list the factors that contributed to the Panic of 1893 and its effects on the nation.



Analyzing Visuals

- Analyzing Photographs** Examine the photograph of David Hilton and his family on page 505, showing them with an organ they rescued from a collapsed sod house. Why do you think it was so important for them to rescue the organ?

Writing About History

- Persuasive Writing** Imagine you support the Populist Party and that you have been asked to write copy to be used in a campaign poster for your party’s candidates. Include a slogan that provides reasons for people to support the Populists.

SECTION 3 The Rise of Segregation

Guide to Reading

Main Idea

In the late 1800s, Southern states passed laws that denied African Americans the right to vote and imposed segregation on them.

Key Terms and Names

sharecropper, poll tax, grandfather clause, segregation, Jim Crow laws, lynching, Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. Du Bois

Reading Strategy

Organizing As you read about the South in the 1890s, complete a web diagram like the one below by listing ways that states disfranchised African Americans and legalized discrimination.



Reading Objectives

- **Discuss** how African Americans in the South were disfranchised and how segregation was legalized.
- **Describe** three major African American leaders' responses to discrimination.

Section Theme

Individual Action African Americans stood up to fight against discrimination in the United States.

Preview of Events

◆ 1885

1886

Colored Farmers' National Alliance formed

◆ 1890

1887

Florida passes Jim Crow laws

1890

Mississippi introduces voting restrictions

◆ 1895

1895

Booker T. Washington proposes Atlanta Compromise

◆ 1900

★ An American Story ★



Tom Watson

In the fall of 1892, H.S. Doyle, a young African American preacher, defied Georgia's power structure—dominated by whites and Democrats—by giving more than 60 speeches on behalf of a white Populist, Tom Watson, who was running for Congress.

Doyle took that risk because Watson was doing something almost unbelievable for a Southern politician. He was urging poor whites and blacks to unite against the wealthy white elite. "You are kept apart that you may be separately fleeced of your earnings," Watson told a racially mixed audience at one gathering. "The accident of color can make no difference in the interests of farmers."

Shortly before the election, Doyle himself received a death threat. Watson offered the preacher refuge in his home and alerted supporters in the area. An estimated 2,000 Populists gathered there with guns in hand. The crowd then marched to the local courthouse, where Watson vowed to protect Doyle and other African American Populists.

"We are determined in this free country that the humblest white or black man that wants to talk our doctrine shall do it," he declared, "and the man doesn't live who shall touch a hair of his head, without fighting every man in the People's Party."

—adapted from *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*

Resistance and Repression

For H.S. Doyle and other African Americans, the violence of the election of 1892 was not something they could shrug off. They could see that some Southern leaders were beginning to devise ways to keep them from voting. In the end, even Watson would betray his African

American supporters. He became a political boss in Georgia, cast aside his former ideals, and used crude racist rhetoric to appeal to white voters.

After Reconstruction, many African Americans in the rural South lived in conditions that were little better than slavery. They were technically free, but few escaped from grinding poverty. Most were **sharecroppers**, landless farmers who had to hand over to the landlord a large portion of their crops to cover the cost of rent, seed, tools, and other supplies. They were always in debt. Many eventually left farming and sought jobs in Southern towns or headed west to claim homesteads.

Exodus to Kansas In 1879, 70-year-old Benjamin “Pap” Singleton, himself formerly enslaved, took action to escape the conditions of the rural South. He organized a mass migration of thousands of African Americans from the rural South to Kansas. The newspapers called it “an Exodus,” like the Hebrews’ escape from Egyptian bondage. The migrants themselves came to be known as “**Exodusters**.” One of them later explained why they went: “The whole South—every State in the South—had got into the hands of the very men that held us as slaves.” A journalist named Henry King described the scene when the first group reached Kansas:

“One morning in April, 1879, a Missouri steamboat arrived at Wyandotte, Kansas, and discharged a load of negro men, women and children, with . . . barrels, boxes, and bundles of household effects. . . . [T]heir garments were incredibly patched and tattered . . . and there was not probably a dollar in money in the pockets of the entire party. The wind was eager, and they stood upon the wharf shivering. . . . They looked like persons coming out of a dream. And, indeed, such they were . . . for this was the advance guard of the Exodus.”

—quoted in *Eyewitness:
The Negro in History*

Forming a Separate Alliance While some African Americans fled the South, others joined with poor white farmers who had created the Farmers’ Alliance.

Alliance leaders urged African Americans to form a similar organization. In 1886 African American farmers gathered in Texas at the home of a white minister named R.M. Humphrey and formed the Colored Farmers’ National Alliance. By 1890 the organization had an estimated 1.2 million members.

The **Colored Farmers’ National Alliance** worked to help its members economically by setting up cooperatives. When the Populist Party formed in 1891, many African American farmers joined the new organization. They hoped that the new People’s Party would unite poor whites and poor blacks to challenge the Democratic Party’s power in the South.

Crushing the Populist Revolt Populism posed a new challenge to the Democratic Party in the South. If enough poor whites left the party and joined with African American Populists, the coalition might become unbeatable.

To win back the poor white vote, Democratic leaders began appealing to racism, warning whites that support for Populists or joint Republican-Populist parties would return the South to “Black Republican” rule similar to Reconstruction. In addition, although many African Americans in the South were still able to vote as of 1890, election officials began using various methods to make it harder and harder for them to do so. As one Democratic leader in the South told a reporter, “Some of our people, some editors especially, deny that [African Americans] are hindered from voting; but what is the good of lying? They are interfered with, and we are obliged to do it, and we may as well tell the truth.”

Reading Check **Examining** Who were the Exodusters, and why did they migrate to Kansas in 1879?

Picturing History

A Kansas Home Many African Americans left the rural South to find a new life. They usually began with very little. **Why were they called Exodusters?**



Disfranchising African Americans

The Fifteenth Amendment prohibited states from denying citizens the right to vote on the basis of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” However, it did not bar the governments from requiring that citizens be literate or own property in order to vote. Using this loophole, Southern states began imposing restrictions that barred nearly all African Americans from voting, even though the restrictions seemed on the surface to apply to both races.

Mississippi took this step first in 1890 by requiring that all citizens registering to vote pay a **poll tax** of \$2, a sum beyond the means of most poor African Americans. Mississippi also instituted a literacy test, requiring that prospective voters be able to read or understand the state constitution. More than half of all African Americans who came of age in the South after the Civil War had no school to attend, and those who had grown up under slavery were largely illiterate. Even those who knew how to read often failed the literacy test because local officials deliberately picked complicated passages that few could understand.

Other Southern states later adopted similar restrictions, and the results were devastating. In Louisiana the number of African Americans registered to vote fell from about 130,000 in 1890 to around 5,300 in 1900. In Alabama the number fell from about 181,000 to around 3,700.

Election officials were far less strict in applying the poll tax and literacy requirements to whites, but the number of white voters also fell significantly. Local Democratic Party leaders were not sorry to see poor whites barred from voting, because they had helped fuel the Populist revolt. Some states gave whites a special break, however, by including a so-called **grandfather clause** in the restrictions. The grandfather clause in Louisiana allowed any man to vote if he had an ancestor on the voting rolls in 1867. The clause made almost all formerly enslaved Louisiana citizens ineligible to vote.

✓ Reading Check Identifying How did Southern states restrict African American voting in the 1890s?

Profiles IN HISTORY

Mary Church Terrell

1863–1954

Few African American women who grew up in the late 1800s had as many advantages in life as Mary Church Terrell. Her father, the son of a wealthy white man and an enslaved woman, had invested shrewdly in real estate in the South after the Civil War and became one of the nation’s first African American millionaires. He spared no expense for his daughter’s education. After she graduated from Oberlin College in 1884, he sent her to Europe to travel and study.

She could easily have remained in Europe where there were fewer racial barriers to overcome than in the United States, but Terrell chose to return home, she said, “to promote the welfare of my race.” She taught at an African American high school in Washington, D.C., and in 1896 became the first president of the National Association of Colored Women. The



organization offered day care and other services to the many African American women who worked to support their families while raising children.

Terrell continued to promote the welfare of African Americans until the last years of her life. In 1950, at the age of 86, she demanded service at a segregated restaurant in Washington, D.C. When the owner refused, she filed a lawsuit and won a ruling in the Supreme Court that desegregated restaurants in the nation’s capital.

Legalizing Segregation

Discrimination in the late 1800s was not confined to the South. African Americans in the North had often been barred from many public places used by whites. In the South, **segregation**, or separation of the races, was different because laws enforced and perpetuated the discrimination. The statutes enforcing segregation were known as **Jim Crow laws**. The term probably came from the name of a character popularized by a slavery-era blackface minstrel—a white musical stage performer who darkened his face with makeup and crudely imitated supposed African American behavior.


In 1883 the Supreme Court set the stage for legalized segregation by overturning the Civil Rights Act of 1875. That law had prohibited keeping people out of public places on the basis of race, and it also prohibited racial discrimination in selecting jurors. White authorities



Segregation sign from the turn of the century

challenged the law in both the North and the South. The 1883 Supreme Court decision, however, said that the Fourteenth Amendment only provided that “no state” could deny citizens equal protection under the law. Thus, only state actions were subject to challenge. Private organizations and businesses, such as hotels, theaters, and railroads, were free to practice segregation.

Encouraged by the Supreme Court’s ruling and by the decline of congressional support for civil rights, Southern states passed a series of laws that enforced segregation in virtually all public places. Southern whites and African Americans could no longer ride together in the same railroad cars, eat in the same dining halls, or even drink from the same water fountains. Restrooms, hotels, and swimming pools were all segregated.

In 1892 an African American named Homer Plessy challenged a Louisiana law that forced him to ride in a separate railroad car from whites. He was arrested for riding in a “whites-only” car and brought to trial before criminal court judge John H. Ferguson. Ferguson rejected Plessy’s argument that the law was unconstitutional. In 1896 the Supreme Court, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, upheld the Louisiana law and expressed a new legal doctrine endorsing “separate but equal” facilities for African Americans.  (See page 1082 for more information on *Plessy v. Ferguson*.)

The ruling established the legal basis for discrimination in the South for more than 50 years to come. While public facilities for African Americans in the South were always separate, they were far from equal. In many cases, they were inferior.

Racial Violence Even worse than the Jim Crow laws was the brutality leveled against African Americans. In the late 1800s, mob violence increased in the United States, particularly in the South. Between 1890 and 1899, there was an average of 187 **lynchings**—executions without proper court proceedings—carried out by mobs each year. Over 80 percent of the lynchings occurred in the South, and nearly 70 percent of the victims were African Americans.

 **Reading Check** **Summarizing** How did the Supreme Court help to legalize segregation?

The African American Response

In 1892 **Ida B. Wells**, a fiery young African American woman from Tennessee, launched a fearless crusade against lynching. Wells pointed out that



Picturing History

Crusading Journalist Ida B. Wells, seen here with her son, campaigned fiercely against lynching in the 1890s. [What two factors did Wells believe to be behind lynchings?](#)

greed, not just racial prejudice, was often behind these brutal acts. Writing in the *Memphis Free Speech* newspaper, she reported that three African American grocers lynched in Memphis had been guilty of nothing more than competing successfully against white grocers.

A mob destroyed the press that printed the *Memphis Free Speech* and drove Wells out of town, but she settled in Chicago and continued her campaign. In 1895 she published a book denouncing mob violence against African Americans and demanding “a fair trial by law for those accused of crime, and punishment by law after honest conviction.” Although Congress rejected an anti-lynching bill, the number of lynchings decreased significantly in the 1900s due in great part to the efforts of activists such as Wells.

A Call for Compromise Some African American leaders like Wells chose the path of protest, but others recommended different solutions to discrimination. One such person was the influential educator **Booker T. Washington**. He proposed that African Americans concentrate on achieving economic goals rather than legal or political ones. In 1895



Picturing History

African American Activist

W.E.B. Du Bois opposed the Atlanta Compromise. **What issue was of particular concern to Du Bois?**

“color discrimination is barbarism”

—W.E.B. Du Bois

he summed up his views in a speech before a mostly white audience at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta. Known as the **Atlanta Compromise**, the address came amid increasing acts of discrimination against African Americans. Washington urged his fellow African Americans to postpone the fight for civil rights and instead concentrate on preparing themselves educationally and vocationally for full equality:

“The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that the enjoyment of all the

privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. . . . It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of these privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera-house.”

—adapted from *Up From Slavery*

Voice of the Future The Atlanta Compromise speech provoked a strong challenge from **W.E.B. Du Bois**, the leader of a new generation of African American activists born after the Civil War. Du Bois pointed out in his 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folk* that white Southerners continued to strip African Americans of their civil rights. This was true in spite of the progress African Americans were making in education and vocational training. They could regain that lost ground and achieve full equality, Du Bois argued, only by demanding their rights. Du Bois was particularly concerned with protecting and exercising voting rights. “Negroes must insist continually, in season and out of season,” he wrote, “that voting is necessary to proper manhood, that color discrimination is barbarism.” In the years that followed, many African Americans worked to win the vote and end discrimination. The struggle, however, would prove to be a long one.

Reading Check Describing How did Ida B. Wells attempt to stop the lynching of African Americans?

SECTION 3 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

- Define:** sharecropper, poll tax, grandfather clause, segregation, Jim Crow laws, lynching.
- Identify:** Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. Du Bois.
- Explain** what happened to Ida B. Wells after she began campaigning against lynching.

Reviewing Themes

- Individual Action** Why did Homer Plessy challenge a Louisiana law in 1892, and what was the significance of his action?

Critical Thinking

- Examining** After Reconstruction, why did many African Americans in the South live in conditions that were little better than slavery?
- Organizing** Use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list the responses of some prominent African Americans to racial discrimination.

| African American | Response to Discrimination |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Ida B. Wells | |
| Booker T. Washington | |
| W.E.B. Du Bois | |

Analyzing Visuals

- Analyzing Photographs** Examine the photograph of an “Exoduster” family on page 509. Pose questions about the photograph to your classmates in a quiz and then have them answer the questions.

Writing About History

- Expository Writing** Imagine that you are living in the 1890s. Write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper explaining your view of the Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

Critical Thinking SKILLBUILDER

Interpreting Points of View

Why Learn This Skill?

Suppose you want to see a new movie, but your friends' opinions range from "terrific" to "boring." People often have different opinions about the same people, events, or issues because they look at them from different points of view.

Learning the Skill

A point of view results from one's own beliefs and values. Many factors affect an individual's point of view, including age, gender, racial or ethnic background, economic class, and religion. To judge the accuracy or the objectivity of an argument, you must first identify the speaker's point of view.

To interpret point of view in written material, gather background information on the author that might reveal his or her point of view. Identify aspects of the topic that the author chooses to emphasize or exclude. Look for emotionally charged words such as *charming*, *vicious*, *heartwarming*, and *drastic*. Also notice metaphors and analogies that imply an opinion, such as, "If this budget can work, then pigs can fly."

Practicing the Skill

Read the following excerpts from William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech. Then answer the questions.

The humblest citizen in all the land, when clad in the armor of a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of error. I come to speak to you in defense of a cause as holy as the cause of liberty—the cause of humanity. . . .

When you come before us and tell us that we are about to disturb your business interest, we reply that you have disturbed our business interests by your course. . . . We say not one word against those who live upon the Atlantic coast, but the hardy pioneers who have braved all the dangers of the wilderness, who have made the desert to blossom as the rose . . . it is for these that we speak. . . .

If they ask us why it is that we say more on the money question than we say upon the tariff question, I reply

that, if protection has slain its thousands, the gold standard has slain its tens of thousands. . . .

Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interest, the laboring interests, and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them: You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.



Cartoon portraying William Jennings Bryan

- 1 What subject is Bryan addressing? What group is he speaking for?
- 2 What is Bryan's point of view?
- 3 What emotionally charged words and phrases does Bryan use in his speech? How does this language help reveal his point of view?

Skills Assessment

Complete the Practicing Skills questions on page 515 and the Chapter 16 Skills Reinforcement Activity to assess your mastery of this skill.

Applying the Skill

Interpreting Points of View In a newspaper or magazine, find an editorial or letter to the editor that expresses a point of view on an issue. Write a paragraph analyzing the author's point of view. Compare it to your own and explain why you agree or disagree with the author.



Glencoe's **Skillbuilder Interactive Workbook CD-ROM, Level 2**, provides instruction and practice in key social studies skills.

Reviewing Key Terms

On a sheet of paper, use each of these terms in a sentence.

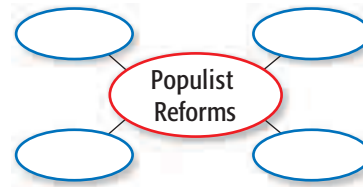
- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. patronage | 9. goldbug |
| 2. rebate | 10. silverite |
| 3. populism | 11. sharecropper |
| 4. greenback | 12. poll tax |
| 5. inflation | 13. grandfather clause |
| 6. deflation | 14. segregation |
| 7. cooperative | 15. Jim Crow laws |
| 8. graduated income tax | 16. lynching |

Reviewing Key Facts

- Identify:** Interstate Commerce Commission, Sherman Antitrust Act, Grange, People’s Party, William Jennings Bryan, Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. Du Bois
- What contributed to political deadlock at the federal level between 1876 and 1896?
- What economic problems did the United States face during the administration of President Cleveland?
- How did the Grange attempt to solve farmers’ problems in the late 1800s?
- What was the significance of the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*?

Critical Thinking

- Analyzing Themes: Economic Factors** Why was the type of currency used in the United States an important issue to farmers in the late 1800s?
- Comparing** How did Booker T. Washington’s answer to racial discrimination compare to that of W.E.B. Du Bois?
- Organizing** Use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list the major reforms sought by the Populists in the 1892 presidential election.



- Interpreting Primary Sources** Reform movements in farming led to the organization of the Populist Party in 1891. In the following excerpt from an 1890 article, Washington Gladden, a Congregational minister, discusses the problems facing farmers in the United States.

“The farmers of the United States are up in arms. . . . They produce the largest share of its wealth; but they are getting, they say, the smallest share for themselves. With the hardest work and with the sharpest economy, the average farmer is unable to make both ends meet;

Chapter Summary

Republican Party

- Popular in North and Midwest; appealed to rural and small town voters
- Party split over civil service reform
- Favored higher tariffs and the gold standard

Populist Party

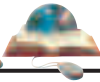
- Sought government control over business to protect farmers
- Supported national control of railroads, increased money supply, and direct election of U.S. senators
- Support declined when gold crisis was resolved
- Lost presidential elections but inspired reforms that were later adopted

Democratic Party

- Strongly supported by Southerners, immigrants, and urban workers
- Supported civil service reform
- Supported cutting tariffs and regulating interstate commerce
- Party split over silver coinage

Political Inequality for African Americans

- Supreme Court overturned the Civil Rights Act of 1875
- Unfair voting laws disfranchised Southern African Americans
- *Plessy v. Ferguson* defended separate but equal public facilities



Self-Check Quiz

Visit the *American Vision* Web site at tav.glencoe.com and click on **Self-Check Quizzes—Chapter 16** to assess your knowledge of chapter content.

every year closes with debt, . . . the average annual reward of the farm proprietor [of Connecticut] is \$181.31, while the average annual wages of the ordinary hired man is \$386.36.

. . . [T]he root of the difficulty is overproduction; that there are too many farms . . . [but] other causes . . . should not be overlooked. The enormous tribute which the farmers of the West are paying to the moneylenders of the East is one source of their poverty. . . .

[Farmers] believe that the miseries under which they are suffering are largely due to political causes and can be cured by legislation. . . . The prime object of the Farmers' Alliance is to better the condition of the farmers of America, mentally, morally, and financially; . . .”

—quoted in *Forum*

- a. According to Gladden, why were farmers up in arms?
- b. What was the main purpose of the new Farmers' Alliance?

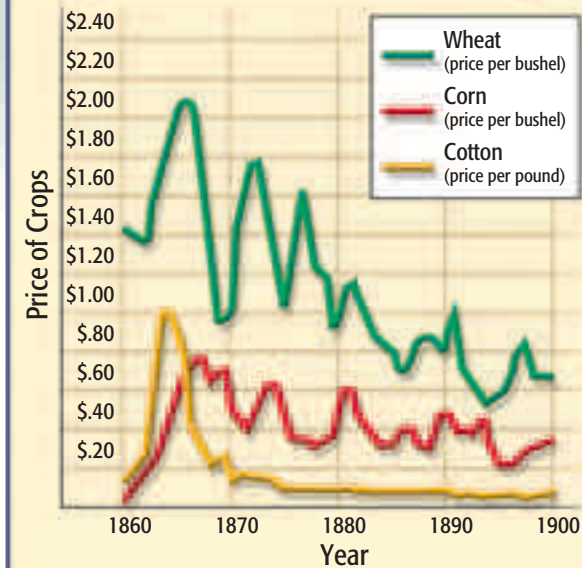
Practicing Skills

- 26. **Interpreting Points of View** Study the American Story on page 500 that gives an excerpt of Polk's speech on July 4, 1890. Then answer these questions.
 - a. How do historians analyze points of view?
 - b. What emotionally charged words and phrases does Polk use? How do they reveal his point of view?

Writing Activities

- 27. **Persuasive Writing** Imagine that you are living in 1881 and have just heard about President Garfield's assassination by a disappointed office-seeker. Write to your representatives in Congress, urging them either to pass civil service reform or to keep the current "spoils system" for appointments to federal offices. Explain why you believe your recommendation is rational.
- 28. **Chronology Quiz** Absolute chronology refers to specific dates, while relative chronology looks at when something occurred with reference to when other things occurred. Memorize the unit titles and time periods in your book, then close your book. Practice relative chronology by writing the unit titles in correct order. Then apply absolute chronology by writing the unit dates.

Farm Prices, 1860–1900



Source: *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*

Economics and History

- 29. The graph above shows farm prices in the United States between 1860 and 1900. Study the graph and answer the questions below.
 - a. **Analyzing Graphs** What happened to prices of crops between 1865 and 1895?
 - b. **Understanding Cause and Effect** What factors might have contributed to this situation?



Standardized Test Practice

Directions: Choose the best answer to the following question.

The Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 declared illegal “any combination . . . in restraint of trade or commerce.” What *combination* was it originally intended to prevent?

- A labor unions
- B business mergers
- C transcontinental railroads
- D Farmers' Alliances

Test-Taking Tip: Make sure your answer reflects the original goal of the Antitrust Act. Only one answer reflects the reason Congress passed the law.