

Gilded age essay



The Gilded Age was an age of vast transformation for the United States. This period was an era of vast economic, social, and political growth for the United States. It brought a vast number of immigrants to our shores. This era showed the true meaning of the “ American dream” and also the suffering it brought with it. Andrew Carnegie, a Scottish immigrant who came to this country penniless became the owner of the Carnegie Steel Company, which became the most profitable company at the time.

The Gilded Age was the age of the industrial tycoon where one extravagantly wealthy person had a monopoly of companies with people who worked for wages that would not be enough to get by, working in hazardous conditions, and living in shacks. The United States was transformed from a farming community with small towns to an industrial powerhouse with crammed cities and factories everywhere. The division between the lucrative few and the impoverished majority became wider and wider.

The political landscape also experienced a vast change from politicians elected because of their status with the common people to political machines which were fueled by corruption and the businesses with the most wealth. The Gilded Age was a time of vast economic growth for the United States. There was an overwhelming amount of people coming from across the pond to look for work in hope for the American dream. While in reality very few found it and the rest were living well below the poverty level.

The previous United States also welcomed immigrants but the usual immigrants were skilled workers from England, Ireland, and Germany. The economy of the United States changed from agricultural farming to industrial

and manufacturing by mass producing. The average citizen earned a wage and bought all of their necessities at the store pre-prepared. In the previous state of America an average citizen would farm and make most of their own goods. Everything in the Gilded Age was mass produced, food was canned, medicine was bottled, everything was created ready to use.

People bought goods at general stores, specialty shoppes were less abundant and everything was found in one place. The Gilded Age was an era of big business with monopolies controlling everything and basking in wealth and leaving the average citizen to squander in their waste. The Gilded Age also experienced a huge social change. Immigration brought lots of Polish, Ukrainians, and other Eastern Europeans. This new infusion of social diversity brought over a new culture and many were regretful of this migration. Immigrants that arrived before the Gilded Era were called old immigrants.

They usually consisted of skilled workers who came in relatively small numbers with some money and were willing to adopt the culture and the language. The immigrants that came during the Gilded Era were called new immigrants. They were looked down upon, they were generally unskilled and came with no money. These immigrants usually lived in tenement houses which are apartments that were usually one room and surrounded by filth. They also held on to their culture and beliefs. The Gilded Age had many new inventions that shaped the world.

The toilet was an invention which allowed people to rid themselves of outhouses and chamberpots. It was invented by Thomas Crapper and it brought about the idea of privacy. Electricity and home wiring brought about

the a whole new world of inventions tho the table and still does. The transcontinental railroad was a railroad that provided easy access to the west and fueled a new migration west. The lightbulb was many of Thomas Edison's inventions, it allowed for instant light with the press of a button it lit up a whole room much brighter than candles or an oil lamp.

The telephone, invented by Alexander Graham Bell permitted easy commutation for the common individual that the telegraph could not. The telephone and companies such as AT&T made it easy for groups such as unions and women's rights groups to assemble and be organized. Union workers could communicate and organize strikes, rallies, and other events. This new weapon of communication was a formidable opponent against big industrial enterprises political leaders. The union workers were brought about during the Gilded Era to combat monopolistic corruption and was the voice of the little guy.

Women began to have a voice in political matters and many women's rights groups came about. Women were pleading for the right to vote, to have a say in what they believe should happen. Before the Gilded Age women were meant to stay at home and to do and think what the husband tells them. This new era brought about the middle class which is a working class of the average, majority people. The Gilded Age produced an new style of politics and along with it more corruption. The Populists were a political party that sprung up in this era.

It was comprised mostly of farmers from the South and Plains States who attacked the industrial growth of the United States and wanted to keep with

the tradition of the agrarian society of the United States. They combated the low wages and they also fought for a way of farming not driven by debt. Farming in that time was not profitable because competition drove the price too far down so the farmers could not pay to plant, harvest, and ship their crop. The Populist Party died soon after it was conceived but its ideas live on to this day.

The Gilded Age government was run through corruption and political machines. Political machines are political parties who go and do something for other people in exchange for their vote and to spread the word about the deed and to tell others to vote likewise. This policy could have been used for good but it was generally very corrupt and the politician did not end up helping the people instead he did it for personal gain. They also would go to companies and ask for payoffs for allowing the factories to operate in the manner they operated in.

The working conditions of the factories were pitiful. They were cramped and the workers would work twelve to sixteen hour shifts for pennies a day. Factories often would not allow unions for their workers and some would even fence in their workers so they could not escape. All in all the Gilded Age was only gilded for a very few individuals and for the rest it was an horrendous state of living. It was an age of new ideas and innovation and also filth and slums.

It brought about a huge migration from Western Europe to the United States. It marked the era of political corruption at the expense of the lower class individuals. It was a time of the American dream turned into reality and

many who that did not happen to. New communication and easy access to remote places allowed this time period to succeed. The Gilded Age shaped the United States to what it is now, it hit a couple of snags along the way and was massively flawed but a lot of its core principals still thrive tho this day.