

The gilded age: part of our history



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The Gilded Age, 1868-1899, was a difficult time for lower classes in America. Thousands of people were working eight hour days with only little pay, whereas wealthy entrepreneurs ran the United States. Major businessmen such as Andrew Carnegie, Cornelius Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller, and J. P Morgan did everything in their power to grow in wealth as the rest of the country fell into debt. With it also being a time for rapid growth in industrialization, this topic could easily be argumentative. In this paper, these issues will be discussed to show why change needed to happen in America.

During the Gilded Age, industrialization progressed faster than people could handle, causing many problems we faced throughout the period. Many new ideas were forming such as tariffs, economies of scale, and pools. Money was going into bigger businesses instead of paying workers, causing millions of people to become poor. Children as young as nine and women were working just so they could pay the bills and buy groceries. Deadly strikes began to spread along America, killing thousands of people only looking for better working conditions and higher pay.

The lower Class, the Working Class, the Middle Class, and the Upper Class were the four main social classes during the Gilded Age. Wealth and income, jobs, education, and achievements ranked people in the class they would remain in. Horizontal mobility was a way for someone to improve their job but they would stay in their class they began with while vertical mobility was a way for someone to move up or down in social classes. These classes were extremely unfair; for example a working class sometimes could make more than a middle class but since people did not see this class as more than it

was, they were never able to live the life they deserved. Lower classes could barely survive on the salary they would have but were never able to do anything about it and they suffered until someone finally did something about it, which would only be years later.

Every problem during this time period caused Teddy Roosevelt to take matters into his own hands. Once William McKinley was assassinated in office, the Vice President, Theodore Roosevelt was sworn into office. Already putting his term to good use, Teddy helped resolve many conflicts during the strikes such as forcing men like Andrew Carnegie to pay workers a fair amount. Theodore Roosevelt believed all men should be paid a fair, consistent amount and he put his belief into action. Teddy switched the roles of the monopolies to the point where poor people were making more money.

In conclusion, America was struggling with money and many other problems, leading to the idea of change. Reformation was in need and it may have not been the best idea, but it was one that worked. Another side to this argument might have been Weren't these men helping America grow- so why were they getting hate? Yes this may have been true but the power was getting to the business men's heads, causing many problems America was facing at that time. Overall, this is just another part of our history that we must learn from and to make sure we never make this mistake again.