**How Progressive Were the Progressives?**

**Round-table Discussion & Essay Assignment**

**Due Date:**

**The Question:** While the Progressives may appear to be motivated by a genuine desire to help those who are less fortunate, one might question their motivations. Some would argue that Progressives were self-serving paternalists who sought instead to manipulate the lower classes. Now that you have had a chance to familiarize yourself with the Progressives and their efforts at reform, assess the intentions of these reformers and the larger movement as a whole. Was the Progressive Movement trying to make changes to create a newer, more modern America, or was it really a traditional conservative attempt to preserve key aspects of American society?

**General Requirements:**

- The essay needs to follow the guidelines for an analytical, five-paragraph essay. It should have at least five paragraphs, an argumentative thesis statement, specific historical examples, and quotations.

- The length requirement is 2–3 pages, double-spaced, typed, 1-inch margins, font size 12. Please use TIMES NEW ROMAN. Please number your pages.

- Title: Center the title on the first page of your essay. A title should give the reader the essay topic. If you decide to use a catchy title, make sure that you include the topic of the essay.

- You should have at least one DIRECT quotation in each developing paragraph. You will be given sources from which to draw your evidence, and you can also use your textbook. **DO NOT USE THE INTERNET.**

- Please use Chicago Manual Style (footnotes) for your citations. See below for information on how to cite each one of the sources you use.

- A note on plagiarism: Copying and pasting—either parts or whole essay—from the internet is also cheating. Don’t do it. I am asking you not to use the internet for a reason. The reasoning behind this policy is multifaceted: (1) Not all information on the internet is reliable; and, more importantly, (2) Someday, when you are in college, you will have to use actual books—lots of them—to do your research. Consider this to be good practice. See your student handbook if you need a review for the consequences of cheating.
• Don’t forget to SPELL CHECK your essay and check your grammar! I recommend reading your essay aloud to proofread.

HOW YOU WILL BE GRADED:

1. CONTENT: Do you include historical content in your essay? Do you use the sources that were made available to you? Do you have a solid thesis statement? Do you back up your points with specific evidence? Do you make a clear and coherent argument?

2. WRITING MECHANICS: Proofread for technical errors, which include proper use of commas and semicolons, apostrophes and capitalization. Please carefully proofread your essay. You should also focus on how to make your writing “flow.” Pay attention to sentence-to-sentence transitions, and make sure to vary your sentence structure.

3. ORGANIZATION: The thesis statement and topic sentences are the skeleton of the essay. Without a solid skeletal frame, the examples have nothing to hold onto! So be sure that your essay has very clear topic sentences that support the thesis statement. Topic sentences should be analytical and argumentative—not descriptive. See me if you need help on this.

MORE INFORMATION ON WRITING A DBQ:

The essay question you have been given is a document-based question. This means that you will read and analyze a series of documents, and use these documents to answer the essay question. This section of the essay handout is meant to help you learn how to approach and use the documents effectively.

We will read the documents together in class and do brainstorming work that will help you answer the question.

Step 1: Reading and Analyzing the Documents

• Carefully read the question and think about what you already know about this topic. Write down any notes or ideas that will be useful in your essay.

• Examine each document and underline key phrases or quotes that you will later use as evidence in your essay. Basically you want to find quotes that will support the argument you are making. Be prepared to explain what the significance of your underlined passages is.

• Prepare a detailed outline for your essay. (optional)

Step 2: Writing the Essay
1. **Introduction:** Give some background information about your topic (set the historical stage). Make sure you give your reader enough information so that he or she knows what you are talking about. End your introduction with your thesis statement. I repeat: The last sentence in your introduction should be your thesis. Make sure your thesis addresses the fundamental question of the essay (see page 1); if you choose, you can elaborate and/or put it in your own words, but your thesis should definitely address the above question.

2. **Body Paragraphs:** Each body paragraph (AT LEAST THREE) needs to start with an analytical topic sentence. Your topic sentence needs to make an argument that supports your thesis. Use quotations and references to support the argument. ALWAYS remember to analyze, or explain, how the quotations and evidence you use support your thesis. At the end of each paragraph, you should explain how the evidence you presented in that paragraph AS A WHOLE connects back to your argument.

   NOTE: When using evidence from the documents, do not refer to them as “documents.” Rather, refer to them by their title (if available) or the author.

   Always make sure to properly “introduce” the document before you quote from it. For example:

   - Ida B. Wells argued that “Blah blah blah.”
   - Despite evidence to the contrary, Lincoln Steffens maintained his argument that “blah blah blah.”
   - According to Margaret Sanger, “Blah blah blah.”

   Remember to use AT LEAST ONE quotation in each paragraph. All told, you should make use of AT LEAST FIVE separate documents (at least 3 direct quotes and at least 2 specific references).

3. **Conclusion:** Here is where you spend one paragraph summarizing your findings without being blatantly repetitive. You will need to re-emphasize your thesis as well as your main pieces of evidence without writing them exactly the same way over again. After you do this, you need to give your reader some additional insight into the topic. For example, explain why these issues are important in the long run, or elaborate on the historical significance of these particular issues.

**THE DOCUMENTS:**

**DOCUMENT ONE:**

*Citation:* Richard McCormick (A Historian)

Many progressives blamed social ills on the habits and practices of the southern and eastern European immigrants who were crowding into the United States; reform thus meant restricting immigration, prohibiting the use of alcoholic beverages, and encouraging the Anglo-Saxon way of life ... Numerous social reforms of the early
twentieth century expressed the progressives’ desire to impose uniform living habits on a culturally diverse population whose behavior seemed to threaten the morality and health of the community …

The essence of progressivism lay in the hopefulness and optimism the reformers brought to the tasks of applying science and administration to the high moral purposes in which they believed. The historical records of their aims and achievements leaves no doubt that in the United States in the early 1900s there lived people who were not afraid to confront the problems of a modern industrial society with vigor and imagination.

DOCUMENT TWO:

Citation: Congressman Frank Clark (1908)

If God Almighty had intended to create these two races to be equal, He would have so created them. He made the Caucasian of handsome figure, straight hair, regular features, high brow, and superior intellect. He created the negro, giving him a black skin, kinky hair, thick lips, flat nose, low brow, low order f intelligence, and repulsive features … This is our country, as it was the country of our fathers. The country of the white man, not the home of the mongrel. It will always be the white man’s country.

DOCUMENT THREE:

Citation: Jane Addams (1892)

It is always easy to make all philosophy point one particular moral and all history adorn one particular tale; but I may be forgiven the reminder that the best speculative philosophy sets forth the solidarity of the human race; that the highest moralists have taught that without the advancement and improvement of the whole, no man can hope for any lasting improvement in his own moral or material individual condition…

DOCUMENT FOUR:

Citation: Madison Grant (1918)

The result of unlimited immigration is showing plainly in the rapid decline in the birth rate of native Americans because the poorer classes of Colonial stock, where they still exist, will not bring children into the world to compete in the labor market with the Slovak, the Italian, the Syrian, and the Jew … These immigrants adopt the language of the native American, they wear his clothes, they steal his name and they are beginning to take his women, but they seldom adopt his religion or understand his ideals and while he is being elbowed out of his own home the American looks calmly abroad and urges on others the suicidal ethics which are exterminating his own race.

DOCUMENT FIVE:

Citation: Mueller v. Oregon (1908)
That woman’s physical structure and the performance of maternal functions place her at a disadvantage in the struggle for subsistence is obvious. This is especially true when the burdens of motherhood are upon her. Even when they are not, by abundant testimony of the medical fraternity continuance for a long time on her feet at work, repeating this from day to day, tends to injurious effects upon the body, and as healthy mothers are essential to vigorous offspring, the physical well-bring of woman becomes an object of public interest and care in order to preserve the strength and vigor of the race ... Differentiated by these matters from the other sex, she is properly placed in a class by herself, and legislation designed for her protection may be sustained.

**DOCUMENT SIX:**

Citation: Margaret Sanger

“Did you know that three hundred thousand babies under one year of age die in the United States every year from poverty and neglect, while six hundred thousand patients remain in ignorance of how to prevent three hundred thousand more babies from coming into the world the next year to die of poverty and neglect? I found from records concerning women of the under-world that eighty-five percent of them come from parents averaging nine living children. And that fifty percent of these are mentally defective. We know, too, that among mentally defective parents the birth rate is four times as great as that of the normal parent. Is that not cause for alarm? ...

Is woman’s health not to be considered? Is she to remain a producing machine? Is she to have time to think, to study, to care for herself? Man cannot travel to his goal alone. And until woman has knowledge to control birth she cannot get the time to think and develop. Until she has the time to think, neither the suffrage question nor the labor question will interest her, and she will remain the drudge that she is and her husband the slave that he is just as long as they continue to supply the market with cheap labor.”

**DOCUMENT SEVEN:**

Citation: Jacob Riis

The moral turpitude of Thompson Street has been notorious for years, and the mingling of the three elements does not seem to have wrought any changes for the better. The border-land where the white and black races meet in common debauch, the aptly named black-and-tan saloon, has never been debatable ground from a moral standpoint. It has always been the worst of the desperately bad. Than this commingling of the utterly depraved of both white and black, on such ground, there can be no greater abomination ... When a fight breaks out during the dance a dozen razors are handy in as many boot-legs, and there is always a job for the surgeon and the ambulance. The black “tough” is as handy with the razor in a fight as his peaceably inclined brother is with it in pursuit of his honest trade.
As the Chinaman hides his knife in his sleeve and the Italian his stiletto in the bosom, so the negro goes to the ball with a razor in his boot-leg, and on occasion does as much execution with it as both of the others together.

DOCUMENT EIGHT:

Citation: Upton Sinclair

There was never the least attention paid to what was cut up for sausage; there would come all the way back from Europe old sausage that had been rejected, and that was moldy and white—it would be dosed with borax and glycerine, and dumped into the hoppers, and made over again for home consumption. There would be meat that had tumbled out on the floor, in the dirt and sawdust, where the workers had tramped and spit uncounted billions of consumption germs. There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. It was too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweet off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then the rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together."

DOCUMENT NINE:

Citation: Florence Kelley (1905)

We have, in this country, two million children under the age of sixteen years who are earning their bread. They vary in age from six and seven years (in the cotton mills of Georgia) and eight, nine and ten years (in the coal-breakers of Pennsylvania), to fourteen, fifteen and sixteen years in more enlightened states.

No other portion of the wage earning class increased so rapidly from decade to decade as the young girls from fourteen to twenty years. Men increase, women increase, youth increase, boys increase in the ranks of the breadwinners; but no contingent so doubles from census period to census period (both by percent and by count of heads), as does the contingent of girls between twelve and twenty years of age. They are in commerce, in offices, in manufacturing.

Tonight while we sleep, several thousand little girls will be working in textile mills, all the night through, in the deafening noise of the spindles and the looms spinning and weaving cotton and wool, silks and ribbons for us to buy.

DOCUMENT TEN:

Citation: William Thayer Smith

When men take a little liquor, it makes them feel comfortable or gay. The brain and nerves are stimulated. If they take enough to get slightly intoxicated, they become talkative and boastful, or cross and silly. If they drink more, they lose their judgment. Their passions become violent. They are ready to be excited by small things, and to
quarrel. Many of the murders and other crimes, of which we read every day in the papers, are done under the influence of alcohol. Men who when sober are quiet and kind, are changed by it into wild beasts. After the drunken fury is past, they are filled with remorse for what they have done. The brain ought to be the master of the whole body. In such men it becomes a slave. When the appetite sends in through the nerves a demand for liquor, it can not refuse.”

**DOCUMENT ELEVEN:**

*Citation: Socialist Party Platform (1912)*

The Socialist party declares that the capitalist system has outgrown its historical function, and has become utterly incapable of meeting the problems now confronting society. We denounce this outgrown system as incompetent and corrupt and the source of unspeakable misery and suffering to the whole working class. Under this system the industrial equipment of the nation has passed into the absolute control of a plutocracy which exacts an annual tribute of hundreds of millions of dollars from the producers. Unafraid of any organized resistance, it stretches out its greedy hands over the still undeveloped resources of the nation—the land, the mines, the forests, and the water powers of every State of the Union. In spite of the multiplication of labor-saving machines and improved methods in industry which cheapen the cost of production, the share of the producers grows ever less, and the prices of all the necessities of life steadily increase. The boasted prosperity of this nation is for the owning class alone. To the rest it means only greater hardship and misery.

**DOCUMENT TWELVE:**

*Citation: Plessy v. Ferguson (1892)*

**Background information:** On June 7, 1892, a 30-year-old colored shoemaker named Homer Plessy was jailed for sitting in the “White” car of the East Louisiana Railroad. Plessy was only one-eighths black and seven-eighths white, but under Louisiana law, he was considered black and therefore required to sit in the "Colored" car. Plessy went to court and argued, in *Homer Adolph Plessy v. The State of Louisiana*, that the Separate Car Act violated the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution. The judge at the trial was John Howard Ferguson, a lawyer from Massachusetts who had previously declared the Separate Car Act “unconstitutional on trains that traveled through several states.” In Plessy's case, however, he decided that the state could choose to regulate railroad companies that operated only within Louisiana. He found Plessy guilty of refusing to leave the white car. Plessy appealed to the Supreme Court of Louisiana, which upheld Ferguson's decision. In 1896, the Supreme Court of the United States heard Plessy's case and found him guilty once again. Speaking for a seven-person majority, Justice Henry Brown wrote:

That [the Separate Car Act] does not conflict with the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery...is too clear for argument...A statute which implies merely a legal distinction between the white and colored races -- a distinction which is founded in the color of the two races, and which must always exist so long as white men are
distinguished from the other race by color -- has no tendency to destroy the legal equality of the two races... The object of the [Fourteenth Amendment] was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but in the nature of things it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either.

More Background: The Plessy decision set the precedent that "separate" facilities for blacks and whites were constitutional as long as they were "equal." The "separate but equal" doctrine was quickly extended to cover many areas of public life, such as restaurants, theaters, restrooms, and public schools. Not until 1954, in the equally important Brown v. Board of Education decision, would the "separate but equal" doctrine be struck down.

PRE-WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

In class on _____________, we will be having a round-table discussion. Attached you will find a list of questions to think about. Please use the documents to inform your thinking on these issues. During our in-class discussion, you will be expected to use concrete evidence in order to make arguments. The evidence should come from the attached documents, your book reading from chapters 19 and 21, as well as your notes on the progressive reformers (make sure to re-read primary sources thoroughly!).

You will have approximately 15 minutes at the beginning of class to bounce ideas off of each other in small groups before the larger discussion takes place. However, it is expected that you will have completed the assigned readings and pondered the questions on your own BEFORE this time.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT FOR THE PRE-WRITING DISCUSSION & IN YOUR ESSAY: (Use the following space to jot down preliminary thoughts to the questions.)

1. [BIG QUESTION] How progressive were the progressives? What does “progressive” even mean?

2. What motivated the progressive reformers to attempt to implement change in American society? Were they motivated by a sincere desire to do good or were they motivated by their own self-interest?
3. Did progressive reformers have any prejudices that impacted their quests to implement change?

4. What sorts of people were progressive reformers and what sorts of people were they trying to help? Did the reformers see themselves on the same plane of equality as they people they were trying to help, or did they see themselves as superior?

5. Were there any groups of people that were excluded from the benefits of progressive reform? If so, which ones?

6. What role did morality play in the progressive reformers’ quest to implement change? Did they want to impose certain standards of morality or allow people to interpret morality for themselves?

7. Were progressives trying to make society more democratic or less democratic? What shows this?

8. Was progressivism more a movement that attempted to get society moving in a forward direction, or were there any strands of the progressive movement that were backward looking and sought to maintain or return to traditional aspects of society?

9. Did progressive seek to reform capitalism or replace capitalism? Which one of those choices would be considered more progressive?
10. Were progressives more interested in social reform or social control?

11. How progressive were the so-called progressive presidents? Did the government become more or less progressive during this time? Were there any factors that compromised the overall “progressiveness” of these individuals?

12. What is the legacy of the progressive movement? What impact did it have?