* Chapter 16
* Issues of the Gilded Age
* 1877-1900
* Section 1-Segregation and Social Tensions
* Federal troops were removed totally from the South by 1876 and this allowed southern states to reassert control over African Americans without concern about federal intervention. They soon began passing **Jim Crow laws** to keep blacks and whites segregated.
* Soon southern governments were enacting various measures aimed at disenfranchising (taking away the voting rights) of African Americans. How do they do this?
* Southern states’ government pass a number of restrictive voting measures:
  + **Poll tax**-required voters to pay a tax to vote (later outlawed by 24th amendment)
  + **Literacy tests**-because African Americans had been denied an education, these restrictions disqualified many of them as voters.
  + **Grandfather clauses**-allowed a person to vote as long as his ancestors had voted prior to 1866.
* As a result of these actions, black participation in politics in the South fell dramatically.
* Another big part of the Jim Crow South was segregation. This kept blacks separate from whites in where they could live and work, and eventually where they could go in public.
* In *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionalism of Jim Crow laws and states that as long as states maintained “separate but equal” facilities, then they did not violate the 14th amendment. (In reality, facilities were rarely equal. Ex: In 1915, South Carolina schools spent $14 for every white student but less than $3 for every black student.)
* Even though segregation was widespread, most blacks refused to accept the status of a second-class citizen. They organized Black newspapers, women’s clubs, schools and colleges and political organizations, with the goal of securing blacks equality.
* The most famous black leader of this time was **Booker T. Washington**. He taught that blacks needed to accommodate themselves to segregation, meaning they should not focus their energies on seeking to overturn Jim Crow. Instead, he called for blacks to “pull themselves up by their own bootstraps” by building up their economic resources and establishing their reputations as hardworking and honest citizens.
* Another famous leader during this time was **W.E.B. DuBois**, who earned a Ph.D. from Harvard. He disagreed with Washington and argued that blacks should demand full and immediate equality and not limit themselves to vocational education.
* A black woman named **Ida Wells**, fought against the lynching of blacks her whole life, writing pamphlets and books and touring America and Europe.
* Along with blacks, the Chinese and Mexicans in America suffered great discrimination.
* Women, during this time, also made gains and suffered setbacks.
* Following the Civil War, women began to fight for their own right to vote, to own property and to receive an education.
* Activists like **Susan B. Anthony** favored abolishing slavery, but felt betrayed when the government did not include women in the 14th and 15th amendments.
* In 1869, Anthony and **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** formed the *National Women’s Suffrage Association* to fight for a constitutional amendment that would grant women the right to vote.
* Section 2-Political and Economic Challenges
* Politics of the Gilded Age were plagued by corruption.
* Bribery was common and government jobs were bought and sold, or given away to friends.
* The **spoils system** was used, where politicians gave government jobs to loyal party workers, no matter their qualifications. Basically, the people who helped with a certain politicians campaign would be awarded a government job.
* This system led to corruption and inefficiency which led many to call for change in the **civil service system**, which is a system that includes federal jobs in the executive branch.
* Change did cause controversy. Politicians felt they wouldn’t be able to attract enough people to help with their campaigns so change did not happen right away.
* It took the assassination of President James Garfield to make civil service reform a reality. President Garfield was assassinated by Charles Guiteau because Garfield had promised him a government job and then didn’t deliver.
* The **Pendleton Civil Service Act** was passed in 1883. It established a Civil Service Commission, which wrote an exam for potential government employees that they must pass to get a job.
* There were also economic issues during the Gilded Age, mostly caused by the tariff and monetary policy.
* The tariff issue was sharply divided between Democrats and Republicans.
  + Tariffs are taxes on items imported into America. It was created to protect newly developed industries.
  + There was much debate over whether to decrease or increase tariffs. Republicans favored a high tariff, arguing it would allow American industries to grow and promote jobs in manufacturing. Democrats argued that high tariffs increased the costs of goods to consumers and made it harder for American farmers to sell their goods abroad.
* Conflicts developed over monetary policy for 2 reasons:
  + During the Civil War, the government issued paper money, called greenbacks. After the war, because they had contributed to inflation, the government retired the greenbacks.
  + Around the same time, Congress passed the Coinage Act of 1873, which reversed the government policy of making both silver and gold coins (gold standard). (Should gold or silver be considered money?)
* Section 3-Farmers and Populism
* Remember, following the Civil War millions of men and women migrated west in search of the American Dream. However, by the late 1880s and early 1890s, their dream began to turn into a nightmare, which lead to a social and political revolt known as **populism**, which displayed the dissatisfaction of millions of ordinary Americans and produced one of the largest third-party movements in American history.
* Farmers during this time faced many challenges:
  + Falling prices and rising debt-between 1870 and 1895, farm prices plummeted. At the same time, the cost of doing business rose. To pay for new machinery, seed, livestock and other needs, farmers went into debt.
  + Big business practices-farmers blamed big businesses, especially the railroads and banks, for their difficulties. Farmers protested that railroads, as monopolies charged whatever rates they wanted and they also complained that banks set whatever interest rates at ridiculously high levels.
  + Farmers also grew angry because they felt the nation had turned its back on them. The U.S. had a long history of electing leaders from farm states with agricultural backgrounds (like Thomas Jefferson). Yet, now it appeared that most of the nation’s leaders were coming from urban industrial states. At the same time, farmers felt they did honest work and produced necessary goods, while bankers and businessmen were the ones getting rich.
* Farmers decided to take action. They created a network of organizations across the country:
  + 1. **The Granger Movement**-organized in 1867 by Oliver H. Kelley, this organization was called the “**Grange**” and it attracted a million members.
    - Its goals included providing education on new farming techniques and calling for the regulation of the railroad and grain elevator rates.
    - Several states adopted “Granger Laws,” which were upheld by the SC. These laws set maximum rates for shipping freight and for grain storage.
  + 2. **Farmers’ Alliances** were formed by farmers to collectively sell their crops. They also called on the federal government to establish “**sub-treasuries**,” or postal banks to provide farmers with low-interest loans.
* The spread of the Farmers’ Alliances led to the formation of the **Populist Party**, or People’s Party, in 1892.
* The platform of the Populists included:
  + Warned of political corruption, an inadequate monetary supply, and an unresponsive government
  + They proposed specific solutions to these problems:
    - To fight low prices, they called for the coinage of silver (“free silver”)
    - To combat high costs, they demanded the government ownership of railroads
    - Mary Elizabeth Lease, a Populist Party spokeswoman, also advanced the cause of women’s suffrage
* The Populists nominated James B. Weaver of Iowa as their presidential candidate and James Field of Virginia as his running-mate. Both had risen to the rank of general in the U.S. and Confederate armies. Their nominations represented the Populists’ attempt to overcome the regional divisions that had kept farmers apart since the Civil War.
* For a new political party, the Populists did quite well in 1892. Weaver received about 1 million votes for president and the party also elected governors, Senators and congressmen.
* In 1893, a four-year-long depression began that not only worsened conditions for already-suffering farmers but for other Americans as well. Labor unrest and violence swept the nation. The major political parties failed to adequately find a solution.
* The Populist Party grew during this time.
* For the election of 1896, Democrats nominated **William Jennings Bryan**. Bryan was a brilliant mind and speaker. The Populists decided to endorse Bryan in the election of 1896. Bryan was the first presidential candidate to tour the nation making speeches and meeting people.
* **William McKinley** was the Republican candidate and he accumulated three times as much money as Bryan and allowed party regulars to do the campaigning for him. McKinley’s campaigners cast Bryan, and his Populist Party supporters, as a potential dictator and a threat to the republic.
* McKinley won the election of 1896 and went on to win reelection over Bryan in 1900.
* By the early 1900s, the Populist Party had disappeared and most of the Populist supporters returned to the Democrats.
* Even thought the party died out, Populism left an important legacy:
  + The specific reforms it advocated became a reality in the early decades of the 20th century (regulation of the railroad, more flexible monetary system)
  + It had an effect on the style of politics in the U.S.
  + Candidates began to campaign directly to the people and, like Bryan, emphasize their association with ordinary Americans