CHAPTER 19

American Society in the Industrial Age

ANTICIPATION/REACTION

Directions: Before you begin reading this chapter, in the column entitled “Anticipation” place a check mark beside any of the following seven statements with which you now agree. When you have completed your study of this chapter, come back to this section and in the column entitled “Reaction” place a check mark beside any of the statements with which you then agree. Note any variation in the placement of check marks from anticipation to reaction and explain why you changed your mind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipation</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. _____ Post Civil War middle-class family life can be characterized as     1. _____ Post Civil War middle-class family life can be characterized as typically Victorian: stiff, pious, prudish, and oriented toward social reform.</td>
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<td>2. _____ Economist Thorstein Veblen, in Theory of the Leisure Class,        2. _____ Economist Thorstein Veblen, in Theory of the Leisure Class, celebrated America’s new “consumer society” that produced the “most materialistic and money-making people ever known.”</td>
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<td>7. _____ Until 1900, private charity without public funding showed itself  7. _____ Until 1900, private charity without public funding showed itself capable of effectively providing support for the needy in America’s cities.</td>
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 19 you should be able to:

1. Discuss the lifestyles of middle-class families and wage earners in the late nineteenth century.
2. Differentiate between “old” and “new” immigration. Assess the reception of “new” immigrants.
3. Describe urban slum life near the turn of the century.
4. Explain how and why cities grew in the late nineteenth century and relate this to late-nineteenth-century social problems.
5. Summarize the late-nineteenth-century religious criticisms of America’s urban and industrial expansion and evaluate the solutions critics proposed.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Middle-Class Life

The Civil War sapped the middle class of much of its reform zeal and moral fervor. Whereas piety had once characterized middle-class aspirations, the postwar period yielded to pretension and ostentatious living. Though their family relations have long been depicted as stiff or prudish, diaries reveal that many late-nineteenth-century couples experienced emotionally intense and sexually fulfilling relationships. Middle-class mothers had two or three children—four or five fewer than their grandmothers—either because they married later in life or practiced abstinence, or, increasingly, turned to contraceptive devices and abortions. Children were carefully supervised, particularly by their mothers, and were taught good manners and proper courtship practices.

Typical of the middle class were shopkeepers, small manufacturers, skilled craftsmen, established farmers, and such professionals as teachers, doctors, lawyers, and the clergy. Middle-class family life was often measured in terms of tangible goods: fashionable clothing and a large house crowded with furniture, books, and lamps. Thorstein Veblen, in Theory of the Leisure Class, assailed this culture of conspicuous consumption.

Skilled and Unskilled Workers

The number of industrial workers grew rapidly from 1860 through 1890 and, while they lacked much sense of solidarity, they exerted an increasing influence on society. More efficient methods of production enabled workers to increase their output, making possible a rise in the standard of living, particularly for those in skilled occupations.

Industrialization also created problems for factory workers. Mechanization contributed to monotonous working conditions and undermined artisans’ pride in their labor. Machines controlled the pace of work and increased workplace danger. Industrialization led to a decline in personal contact between employer and employee, and accentuated swings of the business cycle.
Working Women

Thousands of women left the home to take low-paying jobs in industry and department stores. Educated middle-class women dominated nursing, thought of as the “perfect female profession.” In time, women replaced men as elementary school teachers, clerks, secretaries, and operators of the new typewriters in government and business offices. Opportunities for promotion for women, however, were rare.

Farmers

The number of farmers and the volume of agricultural production increased in the late nineteenth century, but the overall status of most farmers declined. Compared to middle-class city dwellers, farmers seemed like provincial “hayseeds.” This angered and frustrated farmers and waves of radicalism swept through the farm country, giving rise to demands for social and economic experiments advocated by the Grange.

Farmers were not all affected by economic developments in the same way. Eastern farmers grew relatively prosperous serving the expanding urban markets in that region. Middle Western farmers took advantage of cheaper transportation and crop diversification to weather bad times. In the South, however, the crop-lien system kept many in economic bondage. Plains farmers struggled to overcome isolation and loneliness and a succession of mostly natural hardships: drought, storms, and insect plagues.

Working-Class Family Life

Family income varied among workers who received similar hourly wages, depending on the steadiness of employment and the number of family members holding jobs. Although some spent nearly all their income on food, others saved on incomes of little more than $500 a year. Hence the standard of living was affected by family health, intelligence of the worker, the wife’s ability as a homemaker, and the commitment to middle-class values.

Working-Class Attitudes

The political, social, and economic attitudes of workers varied according to individual perspectives. Some workers favored laws to prohibit strikes; others urged nationalization of land and transportation; some preferred a graduated income tax. Most workers did not call for radical changes in the economic system because they were steadily growing more prosperous. Nevertheless, the gap between the very rich and the ordinary citizen was widening.

Working Your Way Up

Considerable geographic mobility existed in urban areas in the late nineteenth century, mobility that in most cases was accompanied by some economic or social improvement. Economic expansion, personal ambitions, and the public education system encouraged this upward mobility. Public expenditures for education nearly quadrupled from 1870 to 1900, almost all for
elementary schools; secondary schooling was assumed to be only for the wealthy and for those with special abilities. Industrialization created demands for vocational and technical training, and with the backing of industrialists, new institutions offered courses in carpentry, sewing, and other crafts.

Although Carnegies were rare, people were nonetheless motivated by the rags-to-riches myth, and they continued to subscribe to the middle-class values of hard work and thrift no matter how hopeless their economic situation, or how unrealistic their expectations.

The “New” Immigration

Industrial expansion increased the need for labor, and this in turn stimulated immigration. Competition among the new steamship lines made the Atlantic passage faster, safer, and cheaper. Political and religious persecution and the collapse of the peasant economy in central and southern Europe caused many to emigrate.

After 1885, immigrants, most of whom entered through New York City’s Castle Gate, arrived in record numbers. The only groups excluded were criminals, incompetents, and, after 1882, the Chinese. Under the padrone system, unskilled Italian and Greek laborers were brought to the United States by various companies to work under low-wage contracts, a practice outlawed by the Foran Act in 1885.

After 1880, there was a noticeable shift in the pattern of immigration to the United States. Newer arrivals were coming from southern and eastern Europe, rather than the traditional sources in northern and western Europe.

New Immigrants Face New Nativism

The “new” immigrants from southern and eastern European had difficulty assimilating into American culture because they retained their close family and kinship ties and appeared clannish to “native” Americans. Sometimes immigrants came as “birds of passage,” not intending to remain and become part of the American community.

Social Darwinists found the flood of new immigration alarming and urged the exclusion of southern and eastern Europeans, whom they considered physiologically inferior to Anglo-Saxons. Some workers objected to the economic competition from so many immigrants. Employers eventually grew fearful of the perceived radicalism of many new foreigners, particularly after the Haymarket bombing.

Nativists formed the American Protective Association in 1887 to resist “the Catholic menace.” In 1897, anti-immigrant attitudes reached a climax when Congress passed a bill requiring a literacy test that was sponsored by the Immigration Restriction League. President Cleveland vetoed it, claiming it was contrary to the American tradition of open immigration.
The Expanding City and Its Problems

“New” immigrants lacked the resources needed to travel to the agriculturally developed regions, and they could not afford to buy land or farm equipment. So, they tended to settle where their predecessors had, in ethnically segregated neighborhoods in large industrial cities. There, immigrants retained their traditional culture and continued to speak their native language, although most became U.S. citizens. Some Americans blamed the high percentage of foreigners for a plethora of urban problems, but the rapidity of urban expansion better explains the crowded conditions, lack of sanitation, crime, and rampant poverty in late-nineteenth-century cities.

Teeming Tenements

Rapid urban growth put pressure on municipalities for improved sewer and water facilities, fire and police protection, street repair and maintenance, garbage collection, and health and zoning regulations. Immigrants were often jammed together without benefit of bathroom facilities or ventilation. Substandard living quarters and overcrowding aggravated divorce, the disintegration of family life, crime, and juvenile delinquency. Jacob Riis captured the horror of crowded “dumbbell” tenements in How the Other Half Lives. Meanwhile, the well-to-do retired to the suburbs or to wealthy districts isolated from the slums.

The Cities Modernize

Gradually, and for practical reasons, the facilities of urban living were improved. After the relationship between polluted water and disease was fully understood, communities improved their water and sewage systems. Public-spirited groups in the cities joined forces to plant trees, clean up litter, develop recreational areas, and light the cities after dark.

The electric trolley changed the character of urban living by more than doubling the radius of a city. Previously, the walking distance of its dwellers had limited a city’s size. Also, dramatic population shifts resulted as the better-off moved away from the center city, and this economic segregation speeded the growth of urban ghettos. The combined activities of trolley operators and real estate developers made home ownership possible for people of modest means and spurred suburban growth.

Advances in bridge design also aided the flow of city populations. As urban real estate became more valuable, architects began to build upwards and tall buildings appeared. Such architects as Louis Sullivan emphasized the function of skyscrapers, their simple beauty, moderate cost, and efficient use of space. The 1893 Chicago World’s Fair spawned a “city beautiful” movement and the development of city parks, notably New York’s Central Park, but efforts to relieve congestion in slum districts made little headway.

Leisure Activities: More Fun and Games

New York, with its Metropolitan Museum of Art, remained unsurpassed as a center of artistic and intellectual life, and Boston sponsored an outstanding symphony. The gradual reduction of
the work day left working men with more free time. For them, the saloon became a kind of club, a place to meet friends and consume alcohol, which was forbidden on most work premises. More attention became focused on such “healthy” activities as tennis, golf, bicycling, and spectator sports. Professional boxing gained fans from the working class when John L. Sullivan became heavyweight champion. Professional baseball teams first organized in 1869 with the Cincinnati Red Stockings. In 1891, James Naismith developed the rules of basketball. Football evolved from English rugby in the late nineteenth century and was originally played almost entirely by upper- and middle-class collegians. The modern character of football came through the work of Walter Camp, the athletic director at Yale University. Spectator sports had little appeal to women, and, because it was unfeminine, few women participated in organized athletics.

**Christianity’s Conscience and the Social Gospel**

Churches traditionally stressed the values of individual responsibility, thrift, and hard work, a view that brought meager comfort to the poorer sections of large cities. In New York, many Protestant congregations abandoned depressed areas of Lower Manhattan in order to serve suburban middle-class and upper-class worshippers. Some Protestant clergy considered immigrant poverty to be an act of God brought on by sinful individuals. As the Protestants left the inner cities, Catholic churches remained to provide basic social welfare, but they too seemed unconcerned with the social causes of urban blight; sin was personal, poverty an act of God.

Dwight L. Moody, a Protestant evangelist, sought to persuade slum residents to cast aside their sinful ways. He and other evangelists helped to establish mission schools, the Salvation Army, and the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA).

Other clergymen preached a “Social Gospel” that emphasized improving living conditions on Earth, rather than saving souls for the hereafter. Such Social Gospelers as Washington Gladden advocated civil service reform, a ban on child labor, corporate regulations, and heavy taxation on incomes and inheritance, and they defended labor’s right to organize and strike. Most Social Gospelers supported capitalism, but a few became socialists. Charles Sheldon’s *In His Steps* described how a mythical town accomplished moral regeneration when a group of leading citizens decided to live truly Christian lives, asking themselves, “What would Jesus do?” before adopting any course of action.

**The Settlement Houses**

Settlement houses helped immigrants adapt to new communities by helping them find jobs, shelter, and other necessities. In 1889, Jane Addams founded Chicago’s Hull House, the most famous of the American settlement houses. The majority of settlement house workers were well-to-do young women just out of college.

Settlement workers lived in the neighborhood and identified with it socially. They expected to benefit morally and intellectually themselves by experiencing a way of life far different from their own. They agitated for tenement house laws, improved garbage collection, regulation of the labor of children and women, better schools, playgrounds, child nutrition, and day care.
In 1898, the first Catholic-run settlement house opened in New York. Two years later the Brownson House in Los Angeles, catering to Mexican immigrants, opened its doors. But private beneficence proved totally inadequate to dealing with the problem of urban poverty, and slums spread faster than the settlement houses could clean them up. Government action seemed necessary if the needy were to be cared for.

Civilization and Its Discontents

The wealthy grew richer, the poor languished in poverty, and the aging poet Walt Whitman lamented that Americans had become the “most materialistic and money-making people ever known.” The voices of the dissatisfied were rising. As the divorce rate grew, so did the taste for luxuries. Heart disease and mental illness increased. According to the economist David Wells, these “diseases of civilization” were linked to the “continuous mental and nervous activity” that accompanied “high-tension methods of business.” Henry Cabot Lodge complained of the “lawlessness” of plutocrats, and Henry Adams lamented the moneygrubbers that industrialism and its materialistic values had made possible.

PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

Define the following:

“culture of consumption” ________________________________

“hayseeds”___________________________________________

upward mobility________________________________________

“new” immigration_____________________________________

padrone system___________________________________________

nativist ________________________________________________
Describe the following:

American Protective Association

How the Other Half Lives

Social Gospel

Hull House

Identify the following:

Thorstein Veblen

Louis Sullivan

John L. Sullivan

James Naismith
SELF-TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. For workers, industrialization meant all the following EXCEPT
   A. a rising standard of living.
   B. monotonous working conditions.
   C. sharper swings in the business cycle.
   D. more personal contact with their employers.

2. In the late nineteenth century, the “perfect female profession” was thought to be
   A. nursing.
   B. teaching.
   C. sales.
   D. typewriting.

3. “New” immigrants would NOT have come from
   A. Russia.
   B. Scotland.
   C. Turkey.
   D. Italy.

4. The “Social Gospel” accented
   A. salvation by faith in Jesus.
   B. improving living conditions in urban ghettos.
   C. vigorous revival movements to invigorate the ghettos.
   D. the perfection of life in a heavenly utopia.

5. All of the following are features of the late nineteenth century EXCEPT
   A. the rich were getting richer.
   B. more people were getting richer.
   C. the gap between the rich and the ordinary workers’ wealth was narrowing.
   D. ordinary workers’ incomes were rising.
6. The upward mobility of America’s workers in the late nineteenth century was the result of all of the following EXCEPT
   A. the energy and ambition of the workers themselves.
   B. national economic growth.
   C. heavy spending on public education.
   D. higher attendance and completion rates in high schools.

7. Which of the following pairs is a MISMATCH?
   A. Jane Addams — Hull House
   B. Jacob Riis — How the Other Half Lives
   C. Charles Sheldon — In His Steps
   D. Louis Sullivan — “White City”

8. Studies of late-nineteenth-century business leaders show that most
   A. were Jews or Catholics.
   B. grew up in well-to-do middle-class homes.
   C. had relatively little formal education.
   D. were examples of the “rags-to-riches” dream come true.

9. Ocean-going steamships made immigrants’ transatlantic passage all of the following EXCEPT
   A. safe.
   B. cheap.
   C. comfortable.
   D. fast.

10. The main motive for immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth century was
    A. political oppression.
    B. religious persecution.
    C. overcrowding.
    D. desire for economic improvement.

11. In the 1880s, the source of America’s “new” immigration shifted to
    A. northern and western Europe.
    B. Latin America.
    C. southern and eastern Europe.
    D. Asia and the Pacific.

12. Some “native” Americans complained that “new” immigrants were all of the following EXCEPT
    A. ethnically alike.
    B. racially inferior.
    C. political radicals.
    D. undermining wage rates.
13. The primary effort of the American nativists in the 1890s was to lobby Congress to enact
A. the (Chinese) Exclusion Act.
B. the Foran Act.
C. a literacy test for potential immigrants.
D. federal funding for settlement houses.

14. The chief cause of city growth in the late nineteenth century was the
A. growth of commerce.
B. establishment of a national transportation network.
C. invention of skyscrapers.
D. expansion of industry.

15. Most “new” immigrants did NOT
A. tend to settle in ethnic neighborhoods of cities.
B. move to agricultural regions and become farmers.
C. try to maintain their traditional culture.
D. become U.S. citizens.

16. The practical considerations that eventually led to city improvements included all of the
following EXCEPT
A. tax reduction opportunities.
B. public health considerations.
C. slower urban growth.
D. inter-city competition.

17. The electric trolley replacement of the horsecar resulted in all of the following EXCEPT
A. a decline in urban real estate values.
B. the growth of suburbs.
C. economic segregation of city dwellers.
D. the geographical growth of cities.

18. The “Social Gospel”
A. focused on improving living conditions rather than on saving individual souls.
B. was neutral toward political reform.
C. preached that poverty was an act of God.
D. opposed the unionization of labor.

19. It was NOT true of settlement house workers that they
A. were mostly young, middle-class women.
B. attempted to Americanize “new” immigrants.
C. agitated for better housing and labor legislation.
D. were idealistic, but too unknowledgeable to be successful.

20. Who described Americans of the late nineteenth century as “the most materialistic and money-making people ever known”?
A. Reverend Dwight L. Moody
B. reformer Jane Addams
C. Washington Gladding in the “Social Gospel”
D. poet Walt Whitman
Essay Questions

1. Explain how and why women displaced men in specific occupations in the late nineteenth century.

2. Discuss daily life among “typical” middle-class American families of the late nineteenth century, with specific reference to job, household, children, and values.

3. Contrast “old” immigration with “new” immigration.” Mention specific countries from which “new” immigrants came and discuss their problems of assimilation.

4. Explain how the “Social Gospel” contrasted with traditional Protestantism and Catholicism. What did it criticize? What solutions did it offer?

5. Discuss the burgeoning interest in sports and recreation in the late nineteenth century, with reference to team sports and such activities as tennis, golf, or bicycling.

CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISE

Each of the following statements refers to nineteen-century religion. Place a “P” beside those that reflect traditional Protestant doctrine and an “SG” beside those referring to the “Social Gospel.”

____ 1. Faith in God, thrift, and hard work will sustain the poor in transcending the material difficulties of life.

____ 2. Before people can lead pure lives, they need food, shelter, and the opportunity to develop their talents.

____ 3. Due to the excesses of capitalism, workers have the right to form unions.

____ 4. Slum conditions create the sins and crimes of cities.

____ 5. There is no substitute for personal responsibility in meeting social problems.

____ 6. The realities of life in industrial cities dictate the need for Christians to apply the teachings of Jesus to seek such reforms as factory inspection laws and utility regulations.

____ 7. Man is “bad” because the institutions of society have made him so.

____ 8. The ultimate state of human perfection will be found only in the hereafter; therefore, society is limited in controlling individual behavior.

____ 9. People must be persuaded to cast aside their sinful ways in the interest of themselves and overall society.

____10. “No man in this land suffers from poverty . . . unless it be his sin.”
11. “I am my brother’s keeper.”


13. “Ye must be born again.”

14. It has become increasingly apparent that the wealth and authority of the state must be used to check the growth of blighted areas.

15. The inherent greed of unchecked capitalism will destroy the country.