CHAPTER 20

Intellectual and Cultural Trends

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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<tr>
<td>1. Industrialism had a major effect on the way Americans lived and worked, but had little impact on the way they thought.</td>
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<td>2. The land-grant universities established by the Morrill Act of 1862 all began as coed schools.</td>
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<td>3. Darwinian evolutionary thought so dominated late-nineteenth-century social thought that hardly anyone conceived of an alternative way of viewing society.</td>
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<td>4. Originally, progressive education was more about good character and citizenship than teaching the three Rs.</td>
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<td>5. In most of his novels, Mark Twain intended to provide polite entertainment and pious moralizing for middle-class readers.</td>
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<td>6. Literary “naturalists” penned mostly adventure novels that stressed the beauty and delicacy of nature and the need to preserve the environment.</td>
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<td>7. To be pragmatic is to be practical—to believe that ideas and theories are worthwhile only if they have practical consequences; that is, if they actually work.</td>
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 20 you should be able to:

1. Identify the developments in the late nineteenth century that were responses to the public’s thirst for knowledge—what vehicles delivered knowledge to those who were eager to learn?
2. Compare and contrast the key changes that occurred in American education in the late nineteenth century—from public schools through graduate schools.
3. Explain how Darwin’s evolutionary theory influenced the social science disciplines in the late nineteenth century.
4. Compare and contrast the definitions of literary romanticism, realism, and naturalism. What fundamental values are embedded in each?
5. Identify the major assumptions of pragmatism and list the strengths and weaknesses of the philosophy of pragmatists.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The Knowledge Revolution

Industrialization altered the way Americans’ thought; new technologies revolutionized the communication of ideas; a pervasive materialism profoundly affected late-nineteenth-century education and literature, and Darwin’s theory of evolution influenced philosophy, law, and history. As society became more complex, the need for specialized training and higher education increased. This desire for knowledge was reflected in the rise of the Chautauqua movement. The Chautauqua featured speakers on national tour who discussed a multiplicity of subjects and provided opportunities for thousands seeking intellectual stimulation and improvement.

The proliferation of public libraries and inexpensive newspapers were even more important means of disseminating information and educating the masses. New technologies like the web press and linotype helped satisfy an ever-growing demand for the printed word. The first newspaper publisher to reach a mass audience was Joseph Pulitzer, owner of the New York World. Pulitzer provided news about crime, scandal, catastrophe, society, the theater, sports, comics, and political and financial affairs. His rival, William Randolph Hearst and the New York Journal, copied Pulitzer’s methods.

Magazine Journalism

In 1865, there were about 700 magazines in the United States; by 1900, more than 5,000. The Atlantic Monthly, Harper’s, and The Century featured current affairs, fiction, poetry, history, and biographies, all aimed for the upper middle-class market. Before 1885, Frank Leslie’s periodicals offered illustrations, cheap romantic fiction, jokes, and advice columns for the average American. After 1885, the Literary Digest and Review of Reviews provided press opinion and monthly commentary on the news. In 1889, Edward W. Bok became editor of Ladies’ Home Journal, which focused on child care, gardening, and interior decorating, and commissioned public figures to discuss important questions. Bok also printed reproductions of art masterpieces and crusaded for women’s suffrage, conservation, and other reforms. Like the newspapers, magazines utilized new printing technology to cut costs and depended heavily on advertising for revenues.

Colleges and Universities

Although less than two percent of the college-age population was enrolled in higher education at the turn of the century, new higher educational institutions were established by the states and through the federal land-grant program under the Morrill Act of 1862. Philanthropists endowed
older institutions and founded new ones. In 1869, Harvard’s new president, Charles W. Eliot, introduced the elective system, encouraged new teaching methods, and expanded offerings in laboratory science, economics, and modern languages.

Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, modeled after German universities, specialized in research and graduate education and produced such scholars as Woodrow Wilson in political science, John Dewey in philosophy, and Frederick Jackson Turner in history. The University of Chicago, established in 1892 through the Rockefeller fortune, stressed high-quality instruction, small class sizes, and academic freedom. New women’s colleges opened, but the only professions available to their graduates were nursing, teaching, and social work. Nevertheless, they provided most of the leaders of the early-twentieth-century campaign for equal rights for women.

Not all the changes in higher education were beneficial. Business philanthropists on whom colleges depended for donations, and state politicians who considered the colleges as part of their patronage system, at times threatened academic freedom and exalted practical values of education over the humanistic. On campus, social activities and organized sports sometimes claimed more of the students’ attention than their studies.

Revolution in the Social Sciences

Social scientists of the late nineteenth century studied the impact of industrialization on society, applied the theory of evolution to nearly every aspect of human relations, and utilized the scientific method to seek objective truths in fields that by nature are subjective. The classical economists were challenged by a new group of scholars led by Richard T. Ely of Johns Hopkins, who opposed laissez-faire and extolled the virtue of government aid as indispensable to human progress. To these “institutionalists,” the proper way to study economic problems was by analyzing actual conditions, not by applying abstract laws or principles.

Traditional sociologists had maintained that only the force of evolution, which moved with cosmic slowness, could change society. Late-nineteenth-century scholars such as Lester Frank Ward urged the improvement of society by “cold calculation” and triumph over the “law of competition.” People could control the social environment by government regulation and social planning for the betterment of society.

The new political scientists rejected the Founding Fathers’ emphasis on the political system as an impersonal set of institutions and abstract principles, and stressed the significance of political parties, pressure groups, and, in the case of Woodrow Wilson, the power of congressional committees. Wilson viewed politics as a dynamic process and offered no objection to the expansion of government power.

Progressive Education

The period’s dynamic social changes prompted educators to de-emphasize the three R’s, strict discipline, and rote learning. Settlement house workers found that slum children needed training in handicrafts, citizenship, and hygiene as much as academic studies. They argued for the
establishment of playgrounds, nurseries, and kindergartens. “We are impatient with the schools which lay all stress on reading and writing,” declared the socialist Jane Addams.

John Dewey gave direction to these forces of change when he outlined the theory of “progressive education,” which focuses on the unique needs of the child, rather than the specific academic discipline. In *The School and Society*, Dewey insisted that new information be related to what the child already knows and urged that the school become an active instrument of social reform. To Dewey, education ought to build character and teach good citizenship as well as transmit knowledge.

**Law and History**

Jurisprudence, by nature conservative and rooted in tradition, also felt the pressure of evolutionary thought. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., argued that judges should not limit themselves to the legal precedents, but should stress the “necessities of the times,” and institutions as they actually are. Holmes’s views were often in the minority during his years on the Supreme Court, but in the long run the Court adopted much of his thinking.

Historians had long claimed that the roots of democracy came from the ancient tribes of northern Europe. This “Teutonic origins” theory, since discredited, provided ammunition for those who wanted to suppress blacks and restrict immigration. Frederick Jackson Turner, the leading historian of the late nineteenth century, argued that the westward movement had fostered nationalism, individualism, and democracy. In fact, Turner claimed that nearly everything unique to America could be traced to the frontier experience. He exaggerated the importance of the frontier, but his work showed how important it was to investigate the evolution of institutions.

**Realism in Literature**

The romantic era of literature lost its creative force in the late nineteenth century and slowly yielded to the Age of Realism. The realist school focused upon the complexities and problems associated with industrialism and slum life. It emphasized the force of the environment on human life, and did so with dispassionate, empirical observation. Realist authors created multidimensional characters, depicted persons of every social class, and used dialect and slang to enhance their subjects.

**Mark Twain**

Mark Twain was the first great American realist author. Twain possessed a keen reportorial eye, a zest for living, a sense of humor, and the ability to love humanity yet be repelled by vanity and perversity. Twain’s novels include *The Gilded Age*, a satire of the unscrupulous Colonel Beriah Sellers; *Huckleberry Finn*, a realistic portrait of the mischievous title character and the loyal slave Jim; *The Innocents Abroad*, a look at Americans traveling in Europe; and *Life on the Mississippi*, an acclaimed account of the world of the river pilot. Twain always put much of his own experience and feeling into his work.
William Dean Howells

Howells’ novels focused on the social problems created by industrialization. *The Rise of Silas Lapham* dealt with ethical conflicts faced by businessmen in a competitive society. In *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, Howells attempted to portray realistically the whole range of metropolitan life. As the most influential literary critic of the time, Howells introduced Americans to Tolstoy, Dostoyevski, Ibsen, and Zola, and encouraged such young novelists as Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, and Hamlin Garland.

Crane embodied the Darwin-influenced school of literature known as naturalism. The naturalists believed that the human being was a helpless creature whose fate was determined by his environment. *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* described the seduction and eventual suicide of a young woman in the slums. *The Red Badge of Courage* captured the pain and humor of the Civil War. Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* is a naturalistic novel that treated sex so forthrightly that it was withdrawn after publication. In *McTeague*, Frank Norris told the story of a brutal dentist who murdered his wife with his bare fists.

Henry James

Born into wealth, Henry James spent much of his life in Europe, writing novels, short stories, and plays. His works, which never received widespread popularity during his lifetime, stressed the clash of American and European cultures. He examined wealthy, sensitive, yet often corrupt persons in high society, and investigated such social issues as feminism and the problems faced by artists in the modern world. *The American* told the story of a wealthy American in Paris in love with a French noblewoman who rejected him because of her family’s disapproval. *The Portrait of a Lady* depicts the disgust of an intelligent woman married to a charming but morally corrupt man. All of James’ works are highly refined accounts of the interactions of individuals and their environments.

Realism in Art

The romantic tradition retained its vitality among American artists even as they also turned to realism. Foremost among American realist artists was Thomas Eakins of Philadelphia, who glorified in the ordinary, never touching up a painting to please the sitter. Some of his finest paintings, such as *The Gross Clinic*, are illustrations of surgical procedures. *The Swimming Hole*, a glimpse of six men bathing, is a stark portrayal of nakedness.

Winslow Homer of Boston was a master of watercolor, who specialized in realism. He roamed America, painting scenes of southern farm life, Adirondack campers, and seascapes.

James A. McNeill Whistler, whose portrait of his mother is perhaps the most famous painting by an American, left the United States and lived abroad. An eccentric, Whistler painted both romantic and realistic works. Another expatriate artist, Mary Cassatt, a sister of the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, was a leading figure in the impressionist movement. Her work was more French than American and was little appreciated in the United States. Wealthy businessmen were often patrons of realistic art, especially portrait paintings.
The Pragmatic Approach

The theory of evolution produced key changes in American thinking about religious and philosophical issues. Evolutionary thought challenged the biblical account of creation and the idea that the human race had been formed in God’s image. Although many intellectuals embraced Darwinism, millions continued to uphold the literal truth of the Bible. Even if the Genesis account of creation could not be taken literally, the Bible remained a repository of wisdom and inspiration.

Darwin’s impact on philosophy was especially significant. If one accepted evolution, logic dictated the belief that even scientific laws were impermanent. Its founder, Charles S. Peirce, called such thinking pragmatism.

Pragmatism was explained in less technical language by William James, the brother of novelist Henry James. James’ *Principles of Psychology* established that discipline as a modern science. To James, the environment was not in itself the determining factor of human behavior; instead, free will, the desire to triumph, and the relativity of truth were more important. Progressivism inspired much of the reform spirit of the early twentieth century. Yet pragmatism also bred insecurity among average people, who were bothered by its message that there could be no reliance on eternal values in the absence of absolute truth. Pragmatism also seemed to encourage materialism and support the view that the end justified the means—that what worked was more important than what ought to be.

PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

*Define the following concepts:*

realism _____________________________

naturalism _____________________________

frontier thesis _____________________________

pragmatism _____________________________

*Describe the following:*

Chautauqua _____________________________
**Identify the following:**

Joseph Pulitzer ___________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

John Dewey _____________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

William James __________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

William Randolph Hearst ________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Charles W. Eliot _________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. ______________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Mark Twain _____________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Fredrick Jackson Turner _________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

**SELF-TEST**

**Multiple-Choice Questions**

1. The goals of the Chautauqua movement included all the following EXCEPT
   A. offer entertainment.
   B. maintain high intellectual standards.
   C. earn a profit.
   D. provide educational enrichment.
2. The first American publisher to reach a truly massive audience was
   A. Frank Leslie.
   B. William Randolph Hearst.
   C. Joseph Pulitzer.
   D. Edward W. Bok.

3. What university specialized in graduate education in the late nineteenth century?
   A. University of Michigan
   B. Harvard University
   C. University of Chicago
   D. Johns Hopkins University

4. Which one of the following pairings contains a MISMATCH?
   A. Richard Ely — institutionalist
   B. Albert Michelson — physical chemistry
   C. Frederick Jackson Turner — frontier thesis
   D. Charles W. Eliot — elective system

5. Which one of the following was NOT impressive to late-nineteenth-century reform social scientists?
   A. the development of institutions
   B. the theory of evolution
   C. abstract laws
   D. objective truths

6. According to Woodrow Wilson, which of these was the most influential in American government at the turn of the century?
   A. interest groups
   B. political parties
   C. political action committees
   D. congressional committees

7. The institutionalist school of economics argued in favor of
   A. natural laws.
   B. practical social reform.
   C. laissez-faire.
   D. abstract principles.

8. Major influences on late-nineteenth-century intellectual and cultural trends included all the following EXCEPT
   A. Darwinian evolutionary theory.
   B. the scientific method.
   C. industrial materialism.
   D. Calvinist doctrine.
9. Thorstein Veblen was critical of what phenomenon in late-nineteenth-century America?
   A. businesslike ideals, aims, and methods were exalted over the humanistic in American universities
   B. the dominance of higher education by progressive educators
   C. the failure of city government to solve the problems of education in the inner cities
   D. the attempt to apply scientific truths to human relations

10. “Progressive” educators were LEAST likely to support
   A. rote learning of the rules of grammar.
   B. reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.
   C. instruction in civic duties and responsibilities.
   D. emphasis on personal hygiene.

11. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., stressed which of these concepts of law?
   A. attention to the necessities of the time
   B. strict interpretation of the Constitution
   C. written statute
   D. reliance on precedent

12. Literary realists were noted for all the following EXCEPT their
   A. multidimensional characters.
   B. treatment of contemporary social problems.
   C. pious moralizing.
   D. attention to the conflicts inherent in human nature.

13. The most influential literary critic of the late nineteenth century was
   A. Stephen Crane.
   B. Theodore Dreiser.
   C. Henry James.
   D. William Dean Howells.

14. Mark Twain was noted for all of these EXCEPT his
   A. sense of humor.
   B. intense self-consciousness.
   C. materialism.
   D. use of his own experiences.

15. Which of these authors is MISPAIRED with his work?
   A. Frank Norris — Maggie, A Girl of the Streets
   B. Mark Twain — A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court
   C. William Dean Howells — The Rise of Silas Lapham
   D. Henry James — The Portrait of a Lady

16. In which of the following pairs is there a MISMATCH?
   A. Winslow Homer — watercolor
   B. Thomas Eakins — human anatomy
   C. Mary Cassatt — romanticism
   D. James A. McNeill Whistler — impressionism
17. The artist associated with French impressionism was
A. Thomas Eakins.
B. James Whistler.
C. Mary Cassatt.
D. Winslow Homer.

18. William James believed that truth is
A. relative.
B. found only in Scripture.
C. absolute.
D. found only in the abstract.

19. In its application, pragmatism is incompatible with
A. materialism.
B. social reform.
C. laissez-faire.
D. optimism.

20. Pragmatism seemed to suggest that
A. the end justified the means.
B. what worked was more important than what ought to be.
C. materialism was a higher value than intellect.
D. all of the above.

Essay Questions

1. Explain how newspapers and magazines contributed to the pursuit of knowledge at the turn of the century. Mention specific publications and their fields of specialization.

2. Explain the increase in the number of colleges and universities in the late nineteenth century despite the relatively few enrolled students.

3. Evaluate the realist and naturalist schools of American literature. Mention specific authors and their key works.

4. Explain how evolutionary thinking revolutionized sociology psychology, philosophy, and law. Mention specific individuals who dominated these disciplines.

5. Assess pragmatism in light of scientific developments and religion at the turn of the century. Stress William James’ role in the discipline of psychology.
CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISE

Label each of the following statements as primarily “P” for progressive education or “T” for more traditional education.

1. Education should not neglect rote learning of multiplication tables and rules of grammar.
2. Education is the cornerstone of social progress and reform.
3. Education should teach youngsters how to think as much as instruct them in specific categories of knowledge.
4. A study of American history should emphasize topics of current interest rather than obscure points from the distant past.
5. Field trips are ideal for stimulating student interest in a variety of matters.
6. Education must center on the child, and new information should be directly related to what the child already knows.
7. Education in America should concentrate on four basic subjects: (1) mathematics, (2) biological and physical sciences, (3) English and foreign languages, and (4) history and the related fields of geography, government, and economics.
8. Education should not neglect the teaching of moral values based on the Judeo-Christian ethic of western civilization.
9. Education should teach youngsters how to use their leisure time more effectively and how to serve public needs through volunteerism.
10. The value of particular topics of study need not be judged on the basis of immediate practical application.
11. Colleges of education staffed by professional educators are best suited to prepare classroom teachers.
12. Clear language and thought, not specialized professional jargon, are essential to the development of an orderly mind.