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## GILDED-AGE POLITICS AND AGRARIAN REVOLT

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### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

*After you finish reading and studying this chapter, you should be able to*

1. Discuss the major features of politics in the late nineteenth century.
2. Describe the political alignments and issues in the “third political system.”
3. Explain the major issues in the presidential elections of 1888, 1892, and 1896.
4. Account for the rise of the farmer protest movement of the 1890s.
5. Explain the impact of populism on the American scene.

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

- I. Nature of Gilded Age politics
  - A. Paradoxical characteristics
    1. Stalemate by high participation
    2. “Real” and crucial issues
  - B. Partisan politics
    1. Reasons for loyalty
      - a. Patronage
      - b. Entertainment
      - c. Religious and ethnic bases
    2. Republican party
    3. Democratic party
    4. Religious and social bases
  - C. National stalemate
    1. Even division between parties

2. Deferential president
3. Divided Congress
- D. State and local politics
  1. Active governments
  2. Regulation of corporations
  3. Judicial responses
    - a. Initial support
    - b. Opposition to state efforts
    - c. Use of Fourteenth Amendment
- II. National politics, corruption, and reform
  - A. Attitudes toward corruption
    1. Tolerance
    2. Business-politics connection
    3. “Spoils” of office
  - B. Hayes administration
    1. His background and character
    2. Republican party split between Stalwarts and Half-Breeds
    3. Need for civil service reform
      - a. Hayes’s political debts
      - b. Supporters of reform
    4. Hayes and merit appointments
    5. New York customs house
    6. Hayes’s limited government activism
  - C. Election of 1880
    1. Republican nomination
      - a. Grant candidacy
      - b. Garfield as a dark horse
    2. Democratic nomination
    3. Closest election results of the century
  - D. The Garfield-Arthur administration
    1. Garfield’s background
    2. His clash with Boss Platt over appointments
    3. His assassination
    4. Arthur’s background
    5. His strong actions as president
      - a. Prosecution of Star Route Frauds
      - b. Veto of Rivers and Harbors Bill
      - c. Veto of Chinese Exclusion Act
      - d. Support of Pendleton Civil Service Act, 1883
      - e. Support for tariff reduction
        - i. Effects of treasury surplus
        - ii. Mongrel Tariff of 1883
  6. Scurrilous campaign of 1884
    - a. Reasons Arthur was not a candidate

- b. Republican nomination of Blaine and Logan
    - i. Blaine's background
    - ii. Effect of Mulligan letters
    - iii. Emergence of Mugwumps
  - c. Democratic nomination of Cleveland
    - i. Cleveland's political background
    - ii. His illegitimate child
    - iii. "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion"
  - d. Election results
- E. Cleveland's presidency
1. Cleveland's view of the role of government
  2. Actions on civil service
  3. Stand for conservation
  4. Stand against veterans' pensions
  5. Effort to return Confederate battle flags
  6. Effort for railroad legislation
  7. Stand for tariff reform
  8. Election of 1888
    - a. Cleveland renominated
    - b. Republican nomination of Benjamin Harrison
    - c. Campaign focuses on the tariff
    - d. Personal attacks
    - e. Results
- F. Republican reform under Harrison
1. Harrison's bland personality
  2. His appointments
  3. Republican control of Congress, 1889–1891
  4. Passage of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, 1890
  5. Sherman Silver Purchase Act, 1890
  6. Effect of the McKinley Tariff, 1890
  7. Democratic congressional victories of 1890
    - a. Ostensible reaction to heavy spending of Republicans
    - b. Impact on the election of prohibition and social issues
- III. Problems of farmers
- A. Multiple farm interests
1. Regions
  2. Size of farm
  3. Owners or tenants
- B. Worsening economic and social conditions
1. Causes for declining agricultural prices
    - a. Overproduction
    - b. Worldwide competition
  2. Railroads as villains
  3. Effects of the tariff on farmers

- C. Patrons of Husbandry
1. Isolation of farmers
  2. Development of the Grange
  3. Effects of Granger political activity
- D. Rise of the Greenback party
- E. Farmers' Alliances
1. Membership
  2. Appeal of alliances
  3. Alliance programs
  4. Political activity
  5. Colorful leaders
- F. Formation of the Populist party
1. Development of the party
  2. Platform stands
  3. Presidential nominees
  4. Victory of Cleveland in 1892
- IV. The economy, silver, and politics
- A. The currency and money supply
1. Deflation
  2. Metallic currency
  3. "Crime 1873"
- B. Depression of 1893
1. Wall Street panic
  2. Unemployment and strikes
  3. Bank failures
  4. "Coxey's Army"
  5. Republican victory in 1894
- C. Currency issue
1. Repeal of Sherman Silver Purchase Act
  2. Demands for silver coinage
- D. Election of 1896
1. McKinley and gold
  2. Bryan and silver
  3. Role of Populists
  4. Results
- E. A new era
1. Dingley Tariff
  2. Global concerns

#### KEY ITEMS OF CHRONOLOGY

Patrons of Husbandry founded	1867
Greenback party started	1875

Election of Rutherford B. Hayes	1876–1877
<i>Munn v. Illinois</i>	1877
Bland-Allison Act	1878
James A. Garfield elected president	1880
Death of James A. Garfield and inauguration of Chester A. Arthur as president	September 19, 1881
Chinese Exclusion Act	1882
Pendleton Civil Service Act	1883
Mongrel Tariff	1883
Election of Grover Cleveland	1884
<i>Stone v. Farmers Loan and Trust Company</i>	1886
<i>Wabash Railroad v. Illinois</i>	1886
Interstate Commerce Commission created	1887
Benjamin Harrison elected	1888
Dependent Pension Act	1890
Sherman Anti-Trust Act	1890
Sherman Silver Purchase Act	1890
McKinley Tariff	1890
Populist party founded	1892
Grover Cleveland elected second time	1892
Depression	1893
William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech	1896
Election of William McKinley	1896
Dingley Tariff	1897

### TERMS TO MASTER

Listed below are some important people or terms with which you should be familiar after your study of this chapter. Identify each name or term.

1. *The Gilded Age*
2. *Munn v. Illinois*
3. *Stone v. Farmers Loan and Trust Company*
4. *Wabash Railroad v. Illinois*
5. Fourteenth Amendment
6. substantive due process
7. liberty of contract
8. spoils of office
9. Rutherford B. Hayes
10. Stalwarts
11. Half-Breeds
12. Roscoe Conkling
13. James G. Blaine
14. civil service
15. Bland-Allison Act
16. James A. Garfield
17. pork barrel
18. Chinese Exclusion Act
19. Pendleton Civil Service Act
20. Mongrel Tariff
21. goo-goo
22. Mugwump
23. Grover Cleveland
24. "rum, Romanism, and rebellion"
25. Interstate Commerce Commission

26. Benjamin Harrison
27. Granger movement
29. Patrons of Husbandry
29. Greenback party
30. Farmers' Alliances
31. Mary Elizabeth Lease
32. "Sockless Jerry" Simpson
33. 16:1
34. James B. Weaver
35. free and unlimited coinage
36. Crime of '73
37. Coxey's Army
38. William Jennings Bryan

### VOCABULARY BUILDING

Listed below are some words or phrases used in this chapter. Look in the dictionary for the meaning of each term you do not know.

paradoxical	plurality
inertia	scurrilous
mediocrity	consummate
partisan	festoon
camaraderie	fiasco
heterogeneous	predatory
deferential	incur
stasis	feckless
patronage	reciprocity
rudimentary	agrarian
eminently	granary
prerogative	stigma
knave	fervent
sartorial	entreat
laxity	countenance (v.)

### EXERCISES FOR UNDERSTANDING

When you have finished reading the chapter, answer each of the following questions. If you have difficulty, go back and reread the section of the chapter related to the question.

#### Multiple-Choice Questions

Select the letter of the choice that best completes the statement.

1. From the 1870s to the 1890s, the Republican Party generally
  - A. agreed with the Democrats on tariff policy.
  - B. supported a protective tariff.

- C. favored a low tariff.  
D. evaded the tariff issue altogether.
2. The Democratic party generally consisted of  
A. nativists, blacks, and Catholics.  
B. Catholics, reformers, and prohibitionists.  
C. moral reformers, Protestants, and political insiders.  
D. southern whites, immigrants, and political outsiders.
3. During the Gilded Age, one characteristic of American politics was  
A. Democratic dominance of Congress.  
B. that presidents received a minority of the popular vote.  
C. that the presidents exerted strong leadership over Congress.  
D. that the political parties clearly divided over civil service reform.
4. To prevent state regulation of business, the Supreme Court relied on  
A. the Fourteenth Amendment.  
B. precedents in *McCulloch v. Maryland* and *Marbury v. Madison*.  
C. the interstate commerce clause of the Constitution.  
D. the new theories of William Graham Sumner.
5. Passage of the Pendleton Civil Service Act was spurred in part by the  
A. assassination of James Garfield.  
B. compromise of 1877.  
C. panic of 1873.  
D. election of Grover Cleveland in 1884.
6. By the 1880s the federal government operated at a surplus because of the  
A. profits from the sale of western lands.  
B. revenues generated by the tariff.  
C. elimination of corruption and inefficiency.  
D. deflation of the currency due to the coinage of silver.
7. In the election of 1884, a politician used "rum, Romanism, and rebellion" to describe the  
A. Democratic party.  
B. Populist party.  
C. Republican party.  
D. Mugwumps.
8. As president, Cleveland did not  
A. try to add pensions for Confederate veterans.  
B. restore to the public domain exploited public lands in the West.  
C. work to reduce the tariff.  
D. create an agency to regulate railroads and other interstate commerce.
9. In the election of 1888, the central issue was  
A. civil service reform.  
B. pensions for Civil War veterans.

- C. the tariff.  
D. the free coinage of silver.
10. The Sherman Silver Purchase Act  
A. ended the issuance of money backed by gold.  
B. solved the problem of deflation by greatly increasing the money in circulation.  
C. doubled the amount of silver the government purchased.  
D. finally satisfied the demands of the Populists.
11. In the 1870s middle-sized farmers  
A. feared inflation.  
B. wanted lower commodity prices and low tariffs.  
C. advocated the free coinage of silver.  
D. all of the above
12. The basic problem of farmers in the late nineteenth century was  
A. the high rates charged by the railroads.  
B. the overproduction of agricultural products.  
C. inflation.  
D. the high prices for manufactured goods caused by high tariffs.
13. The Farmers' Alliance movement  
A. was a powerful national organization.  
B. stressed economic and political programs only.  
C. was succeeded by the Patrons of Husbandry.  
D. appealed to marginal farmers.
14. In 1893 Coxey's Army sought support for  
A. the subtreasury plan.  
B. relief for the unemployed.  
C. farmers suffering from deflation.  
D. regulation of trusts.
15. In 1896, William Jennings Bryan  
A. opposed repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act.  
B. ran for president on the Republican ticket.  
C. carried the midwestern states from Ohio to Iowa.  
D. all of the above

### True-False Questions

Indicate whether each statement is true or false.

- The Republican party clearly dominated American politics in the Gilded Age.
- Party loyalty and voter turnout in the Gilded Age were primarily motivated by intense cultural conflicts among ethnic groups.

3. During the Gilded Age the same party never controlled the presidency and Congress.
4. The first efforts to control corporations came at the federal level under President Cleveland.
5. Chester A. Arthur was assassinated after only a few months as president.
6. Roscoe Conkling and the Stalwarts supported civil service reform.
7. “Ma, ma, where’s my pa? Gone to the White House, ha, ha, ha!” referred to Grover Cleveland.
8. In 1887 the first regulatory agency, the Interstate Commerce Commission, was created.
9. Abolition of the tariff was, according to many of its critics, one way to attack large corporations.
10. The Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890 outlawed corporate actions in “restraint of trade.”
11. By the 1890s, the very high tariff generated a huge surplus for the federal treasury.
12. The high tariff hurt farmers by limiting their export markets.
13. The Populist party was an outgrowth of the Patrons of Husbandry.
14. In the 1870s the Grangers primarily sought inflation of the currency.
15. Silver coinage in the late nineteenth century caused deflation.

### Essay Questions

1. What were the major national issues during the Gilded Age, and what positions did the major parties take on them?
2. What was “paradoxical” about Gilded-Age politics?
3. How were tariff reform and the regulation of big business related? Which was handled more effectively in the Gilded Age? Why?
4. Who was the most effective and who was the least effective president between Reconstruction and the turn of the century? Justify your choices.
5. Why did some farmers join the Alliance movement? How did they expect the movement to help with their problems?
6. Explain the specific problems faced by many farmers in the late nineteenth century.

7. Describe the programs advocated by the Populist party in the 1890s. How would you judge their success?
8. In what ways was the election of 1896 significant?

### ANSWERS TO MULTIPLE-CHOICE AND TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

#### Multiple-Choice Questions

1-B, 2-D, 3-B, 4-A, 5-A, 6-B, 7-A, 8-A, 9-C, 10-C, 11-C, 12-B, 13-D, 14-B, 15-A

#### True-False Questions

1-F, 2-T, 3-F, 4-F, 5-E, 6-E, 7-F, 8-T, 9-T, 10-T, 11-F, 12-T, 13-F, 14-F, 15-F