

**UNIT 4 Unification and Growth**  
**Expanding Frontiers 1865–1910**

A STEIN SCHOOL  
**FROEBEL**  
BILINGUAL SCHOOL  
Home of the Space Generation

A historical painting depicting a frontier scene. In the foreground, a man in a brown hat and vest stands next to a woman in a white bonnet and long dress. They appear to be in conversation. In the background, a large crowd of people is gathered, some holding tools, suggesting a settlement or a busy frontier town. The scene is set against a backdrop of a bright, hazy sky and a large, glowing light source, possibly a fire or a bright sun, creating a dramatic atmosphere.

**Historical Introduction**  
**Expanding Frontiers 1865–1910**

with **Jim Soto**

# SPEAK YOUR MIND

Progress is something we talk about all the time.

What does progress mean to you?

Is progress unequivocally and unconditionally good, or does it have a dark side?

Take a minute to consider and answer the question.



# REALISM & NATURALISM...



After the country had been shocked by the grim realities of the Civil War, Realism and Naturalism became the new and dominant modes in American literature of the late nineteenth century. Realism and Naturalism are two separate but closely linked literary movements.

The Realists drew portraits from life, often bleak depictions of realities after the war. **Realism** depicts characters and settings as they would actually have existed.

**Naturalism** concentrates on the biological, social and economic aspects. Both seek to represent real life.



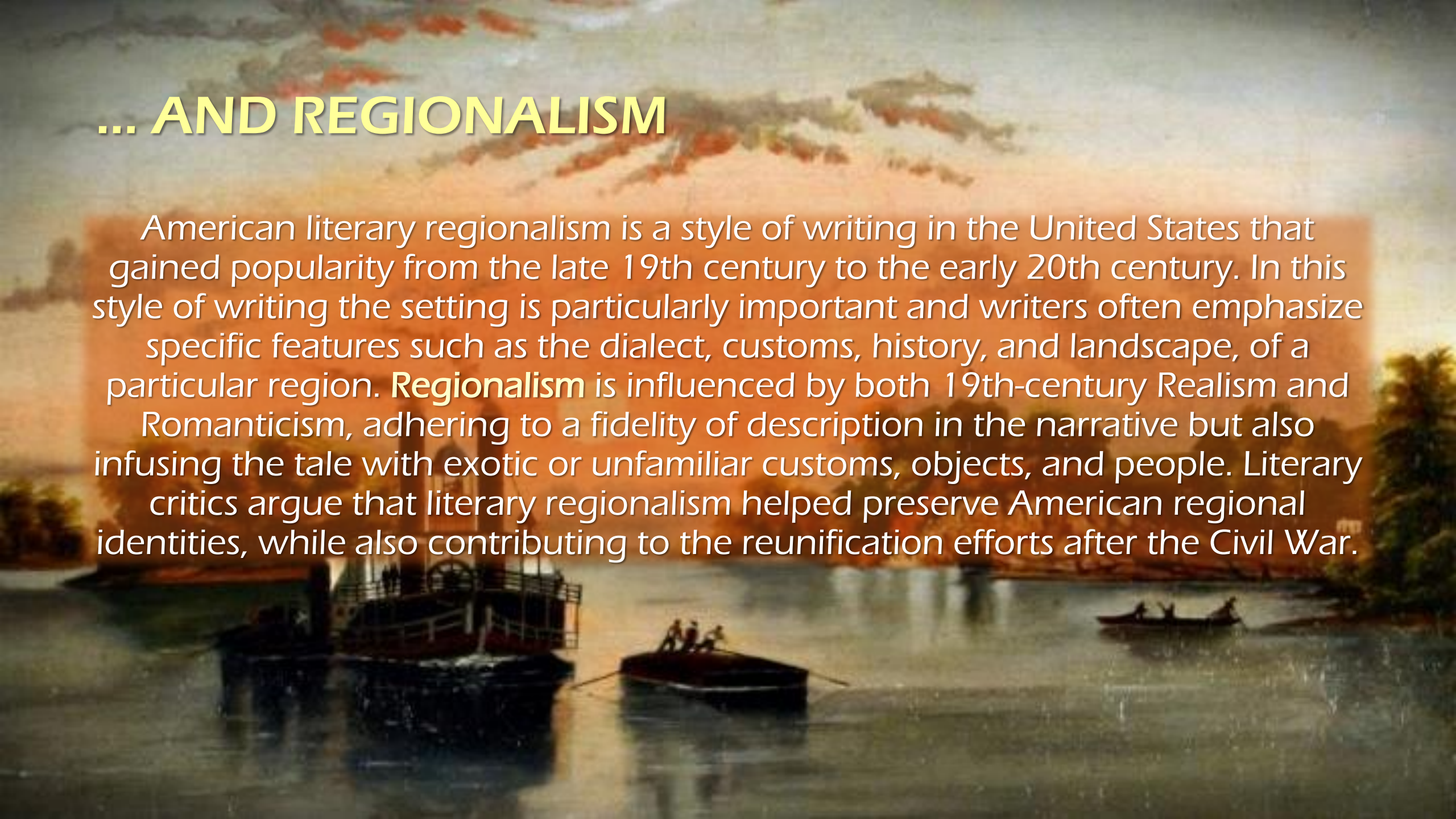
The struggle for equality persevered as Native Americans, African Americans, women, and immigrants found their voices through oral and written literature. How can expressing the need for unification bring about growth?





## ... AND REGIONALISM

American literary regionalism is a style of writing in the United States that gained popularity from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. In this style of writing the setting is particularly important and writers often emphasize specific features such as the dialect, customs, history, and landscape, of a particular region. **Regionalism** is influenced by both 19th-century Realism and Romanticism, adhering to a fidelity of description in the narrative but also infusing the tale with exotic or unfamiliar customs, objects, and people. Literary critics argue that literary regionalism helped preserve American regional identities, while also contributing to the reunification efforts after the Civil War.



# THE MODERNISM'S CONTEXT

To have a better understanding of the post–Civil War period, AKA the beginning of the **Modernist Era**, it is necessary to consider the important domestic and international milestones marking the second half of the nineteenth century.

Included are:

- Reuniting the Nation
- The Westward Expansion
- Population Growth and the Distribution of Wealth
  - The Populist Gains
- American Imperial Expansion

# 1. REUNITING THE NATION

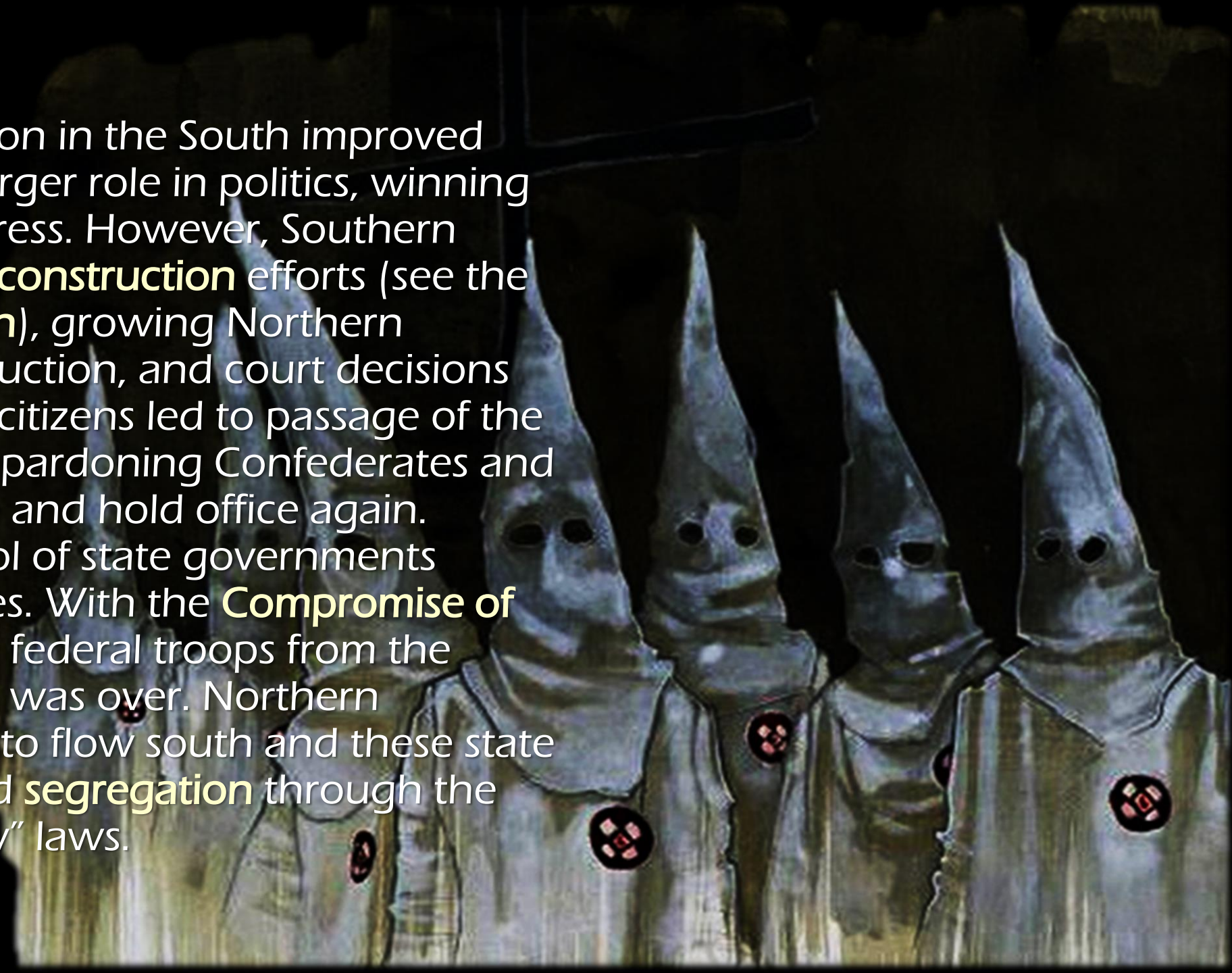
The most difficult task confronting many Southerners during Reconstruction was devising a new system of labor to replace the shattered world of slavery.

The lives of planters, former slaves, and nonslaveholding whites, were transformed after the Civil War.

While governmental actions helped encourage reconciliation among Northerners and Southerners, it generally failed to occur amongst African Americans and white people. Ultimately, racial reconciliation failed to occur following the Civil War. Even in spite of the passage by Congress of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the ostensibly guaranteeing the newly freed slaves freedmen the same civil rights as those of whites.



After the war, education in the South improved and Blacks played a larger role in politics, winning seats in the U.S. Congress. However, Southern white resistance to **Reconstruction** efforts (see the rise of the **Ku Klux Klan**), growing Northern disinterest in Reconstruction, and court decisions limiting rights of new citizens led to passage of the **Amnesty Act in 1872**, pardoning Confederates and allowing them to vote and hold office again. Predictably, the control of state governments returned to white elites. With the **Compromise of 1877**, which removed federal troops from the South, Reconstruction was over. Northern industrial capital now to flow south and these state governments legalized **segregation** through the adoption of “Jim Crow” laws.





## 2. THE WESTWARD EXPANSION

The westward expansion of the United States took place during the 19th century, starting in 1803 with the Louisiana Purchase and ending in 1890 when the U.S. Census superintendent formally announced that the country's frontier had been settled. Veterans of the Civil War, being away from home for so long, developed a taste for adventure. Some took advantage of the **Homestead Act of 1862**, which offered 160 acres for ten dollars to anyone who would live on the land for five years. The U.S. also purchased Alaska from Russia, and the transcontinental railroad, completed in 1869, made travel easier. Veterans were joined in their westward trek by many immigrants seeking a better life.

Westward expansion was further fueled by dreams of discovering gold and silver, and the mining towns that sprung up gave rise to legends of the "Wild West." Native American resentment grew as the new rail lines hastened the demise of the buffalo, the mainstay of native societies. Adding to the tension, the government broke treaty after treaty, moving, (and sometimes murdering,) native peoples to smaller and less desirable reservations of land so that settlers, railroads, and prospectors could take the better land. Hundreds of thousands of acres of land were then sold at bargain prices to land-hungry whites.





### 3. POPULATION GROWTH AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH

A new wave of immigration starting in 1860 brought people from southern and eastern Europe (Italy, Poland, and Russia) and Asia to the United States, greatly diversifying the population. However, by the 1880s, anti-immigrant groups had formed, and they became successful in pushing through the legislature bills that required those seeking entry to have a minimum sum of money and that excluded the Chinese entirely. A new trend during this period was the growth of cities, which attracted recent immigrants, freed African Americans from the South, and farmers seeking jobs in industry. Young women became increasingly important in the workforce, filling jobs in textile factories and so-called sweatshops. Cities began to build upward, and with the invention of the electric elevator and skyscrapers.

Benefiting from technological advances, a new class of millionaire industrialists emerged, controlling meatpacking, railroads, and oil and steel production. By 1877, the greatest economic expansion in history was underway.

The government had no experience with large corporations, and consequently, shrewd businessmen, AKA "robber barons", were able to build empires by negotiating government subsidies, choking off competition, and keeping wages low and work hours long, while getting richer.





## 4. THE POPULIST GAINS



After the Civil War, farmers in the South and laborers in the North were experiencing poverty, making them hostile toward new immigrants, who often would work for lower wages than native workers.

Corrupt business owners and politicians were exposed for their devious practices by citizens calling for reform and “muckraker” journalists in the newspapers of major cities.

Various new groups tried to create an independent culture for themselves in opposition to powerful industrial and political interests. Nascent charitable enterprises attempted to help the poor by offering social services and education.

## 5. AMERICAN IMPERIAL EXPANSION

By 1890, the Bureau of the Census officially declared the United States' internal frontier closed. With the depression of 1893 and an enlarged industrial capacity, financial leaders began looking for overseas markets. An opportunity arose in 1895 when Cuba rebelled against Spain. America's imperial dreams found fertile ground to bear fruit with the Spanish-American War. The United States acquired Puerto Rico, the Hawaiian Islands, and Guam.

Acquiring these territories meant that huge new markets were opened for American enterprise. However, prominent voices were raised in moral outrage against these American forays, among them the members of the Anti-Imperialist League. Said Mark Twain, "*We have pacified some thousands of the islanders and buried them, . . . and so by these Providences of God—and the phrase is the government's, not mine—we are a World Power.*"



# THE MODERNIST ERA ARRIVES



**Modernity**, a global movement in society and culture from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, sought a new alignment with the experience and values of modern industrial life.

Modernity is often seen as closely associated with **progress**. Advocates suggest that modern societies are normatively superior to other societies because they have embarked on a progressive historical trajectory.

It can be said that the impact of technological innovations, the First World War, psychological and philosophical theories of the time influenced the movement.

# ASSESSMENT

After reading pages 240-246 in your book, complete the following activities.

Examine the time line on pages 242–243 of your textbook. For what three general topics does the time line provide dates?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

The time line has four time frames. Identify the time span of each time frame.

4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_



8. Find the following dates on the time line. Complete the chart by telling what happened in those years. Then answer the questions below the chart.

Date	American Literature	American History	World History
1868 CE			
1875–1876			
1893–1894			
1903–1904			

9. How do the events of American literature and American & World History in 1868 reflect a changing world?

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10. How would events of 1875 and 1876 affect America's future?

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11. What irony can you see in the juxtaposition of events in 1903 and 1904?

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