The Gilded Age: 1865-1900"Gilded" means something that looks good on the surface, but the appearance is deceptive (usually gritty underneath). Mark Twain coined the phrase, "The Gilded Age."

The Gilded Age in America: Successes:

1. Displays of wealth and excess among upper class

2. 2nd industrial revolution

3. Labor union movements

But underneath, there were problems:

1. xenophobia (nativism)

2. Indians killed and moved to reservations and ex-slaves heavily discriminated.

Inventions: Edison's light bulb, telephone (1876), early motorcar thing, steel industry, barbed wire (Joseph Glidden).

Political: Corruption

1. The Congress of the Gilded Age was known for being inefficient.

2. Too many members were drunk or otherwise preoccupied with extra-governmental affairs.

3. The Senate, whose seats were often auctioned off to the highest bidder, was known as a “rich man's club,” where political favors were traded like horses

4. The needs of the people of the working classes lay far below the vision of those exalted legislators.

American Politics 1875-1900

1. The dominant fact concerning the American political parties between 1875 and 1900 was that the parties were quite evenly divided.

2. Political corruption seemed to be the norm, and practices that today would be viewed as scandalous were accepted as a matter of routine.

3. Businessmen bribed public officials at the local, state and national level, and political machines turned elections into exercises in fraud and manipulation.

4. Because of the narrow division between Republicans and Democrats, both parties were hesitant to take strong stands on any issue for fear of alienating blocs of voters. The result was that little got done.

5. During this period very little serious legislation was passed. All the same, there was wide voter participation, about an 80% turnout. Yet unprecedented dilemmas being created by industrialization, urbanization, and the huge influx of immigrants were met with passivity and confusion.

6. Presidents had little power and didn't do much. "Lilliputians" - Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland, Harrison, Cleveland, McKinley.

During the Gilded Age, the US was isolated and indifferent to the outside world.

* In 1900, with McKinley and TR, foreign policy changed, America became imperialistic, "the age of empire."
* The 1900 Democratic platform clinged to the past, "We assert that no nation can long endure half republic and half empire, and we warn the American people that imperialism abroad will lead quickkly and inevitably to despotism at home."
* Also, TR brought something America hadn't seen in a while - strong leadership by the president. The federal government actually started doing stuff!!

Economic:

* [Robber Barons/Captains of Industry](http://cashionsclan.blogspot.com/2009/11/gilded-age-robber-barons.html)
* [Populist Movement](http://cashionsclan.blogspot.com/2009/11/populists-lecture-notes-from-112-and.html)
* [Labor Unions](http://cashionsclan.blogspot.com/2009/11/labor-unions-113-lecture-notes.html)
* During the Gilded Age, there were all those trusts, Senate was "millionaire's club." After Gilded Age, TR and Taft did a bunch of anti-trust lawsuits. More government regulation of the economy, raised tariff.

Social:

* [Black Civil Rights](http://cashionsclan.blogspot.com/2009/11/african-american-civil-rights-114.html)
* Nativist reactions to immigration, Darwin's evolution theory introduces a new plague to society, schools and colleges founded, prohibition movement, literature (Mark Twain and such), women.
* Dawes Severalty Act 1887 - forced Indians to assimilate! Dissolved tribes, set up individual families w/ 160 acres, said they could become citizens if they behaved themselves.
* People settled West, the frontier faded =>"The Significance of the Frontier in American History" - Frederick Jackson Turner. (This would lead to imperialism).
* Social **change**: Progressive movement - muckraking - against the corruption in government and social evils. Conservation movement, Meat Inspection Act, settled coal strike (took side of workers and not business).