

Interpreting the Progressive Movement in American History **Written By: Nicholas Baker**

Lesson Description (Abstract):

Students will attempt to develop their own conclusions about the Progressive Movement in American History. In order to achieve this, students will first participate in a mini-introductory lesson designed to get students thinking about how different sources often lead to different conclusions about a historical event. For a larger extension activity, students examine historical accounts written by historians about the Progressive Movement. Students will use these resources to discover how different sources come to very different conclusions about the same event. Students will participate in a jigsaw activity to share their findings and analysis, and then participate in a mini-panel discussion in order to promote their assigned historian's interpretation. Finally, students prepare their own conclusions about the progressive movement where they directly support their own conclusion using the readings.

Goal(s):

Students will be able to:

1. analyze historical documents
2. defend a position and support it with relevant historical information
3. argue a position and defend it with supporting information
4. interpret scholarly articles to discover how choice in sources leads to different conclusions about the Progressive Movement
5. analyze and interpret the factors that authors consider when creating a historical conclusion
6. examine why historians come to different conclusions about a historical event

Grade: 9-12

Time Required: 3-4 days, 50-minute class periods

Materials:

1. Index Cards: for introductory activity on Day 1
2. File Folders for a Case Materials File for each small learning group
3. Chart paper, markers for introductory activity on Day 1
3. Handout 1: Victorian Family Photo, Industrial Age
4. Handout 2: Child Labor Picture, Industrial Age
5. Handout 3: Richard Hofstadter, "The Status Revolution" 1955 (excerpts)
6. Handout 4: Maureen Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Political Reform", 1990 (excerpts)
7. Handout 5: Robert Wiebe, "Progressivism Arrives", 1967 (excerpts)
8. Handout 6: Glenda Gilmore, "Diplomatic Women", 1996 (excerpts)
9. Handout 7: Examining our Source
10. Handout 8: Historian Roundtable Discussion: Group Record Sheet

Benchmark[s] Addressed:

History Standard 3: Students will compare competing historical narratives, by contrasting different historians' choice of questions, use and choice of sources, perspectives, beliefs, and points of view, in order to demonstrate how these factors contribute to different interpretations.

Essential Question Addressed: How might ones' choice of sources explain different historical interpretations?

Lesson Content and Prerequisites:

- For the purposes of assessment, it is assumed that students have some prior knowledge about the general timeframe of the Progressive Movement, Women's Suffrage, and its relationship to World War I.
- Students should have experience analyzing documents.
- Students should have experience examining scholarly work from historians.
- Students should be familiar with interpretation of documents (definition, distinguishing between fact and interpretation, and how interpretations are formed).
- Students should be familiar with the Progressive Movement. Specifically, teachers should have focused on progressive reforms of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the women's suffrage movement, and the role and impact of industrialization.

Assessment:

1. Completion of Think-Pair-Share Activity on Day 1 and 2; chart.
2. Handout 7 and 8: Demonstrates student understanding of how to interpret the historian's articles, as well as keep a record of the other readings during the roundtable discussion.
3. Completion of a student-created interpretation of the Progressive Era using Handouts 7 and 8, as well as background material. Ideally, this is completed at the end of the unit.
4. Exit Ticket: Day 3 (response to Essential Question)
5. Administer the Assessment Questions

Procedures:

Day 1:

1. Introductory Activity/Introductory Lesson:
 1. The teacher posts the following question on the chalkboard: "What was life like for children during the late 19th and early 20th century?"
 2. The teacher distributes an index card to each student, as well as a copy of Handout 1 or Handout 2 (evenly distributed).
 3. Using the picture on the handout, students must prepare a response to the question on the chalkboard. Students should write their response on an index card. They must only use their handout in order to answer the questions.
 4. After approximately five minutes completing the introductory activity, the teacher collects the index card. Students who used Handout 1 must send their conclusion to students with Handout 2, and vice versa.
 5. Students take two minutes to briefly record their reactions to the interpretation. In particular, students should address:
 1. How does this interpretation compare and contrast with my interpretation?

2. What factors might have the author considered when making their interpretation?
3. How might your Handout support the interpretation on the card? How might it not? Cite examples.
6. The teacher redirects students by asking to discuss the different interpretations. The teacher should record on the chalkboard the main ideas from each of the different conclusions that students prepared. The teacher should ask for general observations about the different conclusions.
7. The teacher then assigns students into pairs for a Think-Pair-Share activity. Each pair is assigned a Possible Discussion Question(s). The teacher might choose to assign particular questions, place them on an overhead, or divide up questions among groups.
8. For the Think-Pair-Share, students should:
 - a. **Think** about their personal response to the question, jot down any ideas.
 - b. **Pair up**, prepare a response using an exchange of ideas among partners.
 - c. **Share** your findings with the class at large.
9. Each pair receives a piece of chart paper. Each piece of chart paper should have the assigned question(s) and a complete, detailed, and well-supported response.
10. Possible Discussion Questions for the Think-Pair-Share:
 - What is the “true story” about the life of children in the late 19th/early 20th century?
 - How do these two sources provide us with very different points of view?
 - How might both of these sources be used to formulate a conclusion? Would that be more reliable? Why or why not?
 - How might a historian’s choice of sources affect their interpretation of a historical event?
 - How do the conclusions you wrote differ? Why specifically are the conclusions different? Cite examples.
 - If we have to rely on the work of historians in order to better understand a historical event, then how might that affect our understanding of an event?
 - What are the potential dangers in relying on just one source to understand an event?
 - What are the strengths in using these sources independently?
What other type of sources and perspectives do we need to see in order to provide a better response to the introductory question?
2. The teacher allows each pair to share their responses and present their findings to their assigned questions. Allow for student deliberation.
3. For the next activity, the teacher randomly assigns students into small learning groups with approximately four students in each group. It is likely that the activity will begin on Day 2.

Day 2:

1. Students are told that they will examine different historian accounts about the Progressive Movement. Each of the learning groups will receive a Case Materials Folder. In each folder, the teacher should have already prepared:

- One of the student copies of Handout 3, 4, 5, or 6
 - Student copies of Handout 7
 - Student copies of Handout 8
2. Students are asked to read the historian's article located in their Case Materials Folder. Students are encouraged to write reactions to the material they read by placing this information in the margin, or on a separate reading log.
 3. Groups should then meet to discuss the article and complete Handout 7. Each group member needs to complete the Handout. Topics that students will analyze:
 - the author's conclusion about Progressivism
 - the factual information that the author uses in order to support their interpretation
 - what potential sources the author might have consulted to support their conclusion
 - anything interesting, strange, or odd about the source or information presented
 - the main components of the author's argument and how he/she addresses it.
 - reasons for the author's point of view
 4. *Jigsaw Activity:* The teacher will create groups so that a representative from each source is in a group. The teacher might also assign a timekeeper and moderator to keep the activity moving. Students are going to assume the role of the historian that wrote the article. You will participate in a "Historian's Roundtable Discussion" designed to discuss the issue of Progressivism and how students and future historians should interpret this movement in American History. As a historian, you are also expected to (in a five minute block):
 - Present your interpretation based on the reading.
 - Identify the reasons for your argument and where they might have originated.
 - How you came to your conclusion (and the factual material you reference).
 - Areas/points you MIGHT fluctuate on (or, not!)
 - Debate the issue and your interpretation about the Progressive Era
 - Determine ONE conclusion to follow (or, a combination).
 5. It is suggested that the teacher allow group members a short amount of time to prepare their defense.
 6. During each presentation, other "historians" must complete Handout 8 in order to have a record about the different interpretations about the Progressive Era. Handout 8 will be used in order to develop their own interpretation.
 7. The teacher should assign each student to come up with a "debatable" question during the roundtable discussion to encourage debate. The moderator might select a student to ask the question.
 8. As a wrap up, groups must explain which interpretation they support as a group.

Day 3 (This might move into a fourth day depending on the class):

1. Depending on time, the teacher might need to allow students to finish their presentations for the “Historians Roundtable Discussion”.

- a. Using Handout 7 and 8, students are then instructed to develop their own interpretation of the Progressive Era in the form of an article for the *Journal of American History*. Students have accessed the work of other historians, as well as a knowledge base about the Progressive Era. Each editorial must include the following components (the teacher might wish to place this on an overhead)
 - A clearly defined thesis statement
 - Supporting historical information
 - Reference to the work of other historians
 - Rationale behind the different interpretation
 - Address issues found in the work of the historians: suffrage, child labor, industrialization, reform movements

Debrief:

- a. After students finish their interpretations, they meet back in their “Historian Roundtable” group in order to discuss their findings.
- b. Groups should discuss the Essential Question: “How might ones’ choice of sources explain different historical interpretations?” Other follow-up questions from the Social Studies Clarification Document:
 - i. Does the way research is conducted matter?
 - ii. Is it necessary to include an investigation of the writer in regard to what we read?
 - iii. Is there such a thing as completely unbiased history?
- c. Exit Ticket: Students should prepare their own response to this question following the group meeting. Student responses are placed on an index card and given to the teacher on the way out.

Teacher Tips

1. Field testing indicates that students need previous experience with interpreting documents. This allows students to be familiar with the jargon of the benchmark statement, as well as responding to the questions that guide student interpretations.
2. Field testing indicates that the students might need more than the time allotted in this lesson to complete the activity, especially depending on the ability level of the students. Some might need more time for the discussion of the material, while others might spend more time during the roundtable discussion.
3. Field testing indicates that this activity is best suited at the end of a unit on progressives. Students can recall information from the unit in the development of their own historical interpretations.
4. Field testing indicates that some students might have difficulty with some of the vocabulary in the historian’s article. Depending on student difficulty with the article, it’s encouraged that the teacher incorporate vocabulary instruction (ex: word wall, context clues, highlighting vocabulary lists, etc.).

5. Field testing indicates that the final writing piece for the *Journal of American History* might be a good interdisciplinary activity with a Language Arts class.
6. Field testing indicates the teacher should place a time limit of approximately five minutes for each “historian” to present their article and findings. This encourages timely completion of the roundtable, as well as provides guidance for the discussion.

Bibliography:

The following websites were selected because they include illustrations that show child labor and upper class family life during the industrial age of the United States, leading into the Progressive Era. Both extremes are necessary in order to complete the Day 1 activity.

1. Caption: “Photograph of Victorian family sitting down to afternoon tea.” Courtesy of “The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Victorian Age”. © 2003-2006 W.W. Norton and Company. Accessed at: http://www.wnorton.com/nto/victorian/topic_2/illustrations/imtea.htm
2. Caption: “1908-1912, Bibb Mill No.1. Macon, GA. Children working to mend broken thread on a spinning machine”. Courtesy of “The History Place: Child Labor in America 1908-1912. Photographs of Lewis W. Hine”. Accessed at: <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/index.html>

The following articles are selected because they demonstrate different scholarly views of the Progressive Era across different time periods. Each author presents a unique view of the Progressives, and focuses on certain aspects of the Progressive Movement. For the purposes of the activity, excerpts have been selected from the original works.

3. Richard Hofstadter, “The Status Revolution,” from *The Age of Reform* (1955)
4. Robert H. Wiebe, “Progressivism Arrives,” from *The Search for Order* (1967)
5. Maureen A. Flanagan, “Gender and Urban Political Reform,” from *The American Historical Review* (1990).
6. Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, “Diplomatic Women,” from *Gender and Jim Crow* (1996).

Extended Response Item

Lesson Title: Interpreting the Progressive Movement in American History

Benchmark Statement: This assessment should give evidence of the student's ability to: compare historical narratives, by contrasting different historians' choice of questions, use and choice of sources, perspectives, beliefs and points of view, in order to demonstrate how these factors contribute to different interpretation.

Industrializing During the Progressive Era

Narrative 1:

Much of the success in the United States during the Industrial Revolution is due, in part, to captains of industry of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. People like John D. Rockefeller and J.P. Morgan used ethical methods that might be questioned by some historians, but in reality the control they exerted on industry was due to the intense competition of the period. By examining the same trend for industrial nations such as Britain and Germany, one notices similar practices. While one might criticize Rockefeller and his contemporaries for their actions, as well as their monopolistic control over industry, they deserve credit for the entrepreneurship that many would later try to replicate. Their method was efficient, effective, and supportive of American ingenuity. Without these pioneers, the United States very well might have been at a disadvantage during World War II.

-Historian A, 1963

Narrative 2:

To understand the effects of Industrialization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, one must blame the "robber barons" that dominated in the United States. The actions of men such as John D. Rockefeller demonstrates how predatory and materialistically these men sought to abuse their power, wealth, and control in order to gain a profit. The "robber barons" turned the United States from an ethical and democratic model, to that of a culture based on machines, industry, and exploitation. What would Jefferson, Washington, and Lincoln think? How would they respond to the harsh conditions of workers, great disparity among rich and poor, and the profits gained by a select few? These business tycoons were not ingenious and innovative, but instead ruthless, predatory, and consistently selfish.

-Historian B, 1928

Prompt: Why might the two historians featured above have arrived at different conclusions about industrialization in the late 19th and early 20th century? Support your answer with an example.

Response

The two historians might have arrived at different conclusions about industrialization during the late 19th and early 20th centuries because Historian A might have looked at different resources while they researched this topic. For example, Historian A had resources about World War II that Historian B obviously did not have since he wrote his article in 1928. Therefore, Historian A made conclusions about industrialization and war that Historian B would not be able to make. Historian A had access to war data, product charts, and results of war to make his assumption. Historian A assumed there was a positive relationship between their advances in industry and the US industrial build-up during the World Wars.

Rubric

- 2 – this response gives a valid reason with an accurate and relevant example.
- 1 – this response gives a valid reason with an inaccurate, irrelevant, or no example.
- 0 – inaccurate or no response.

Selected Response Item

Lesson Title: Interpreting the Progressive Movement in American History

Benchmark Statement: This assessment should give evidence of the student’s ability to: compare historical narratives, by contrasting different historians’ choice of questions, use and choice of sources, perspectives, beliefs and points of view, in order to demonstrate how these factors contribute to different interpretation.

The 19th Amendment, passed in 1920, guarantees that, “The right of citizens in the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”

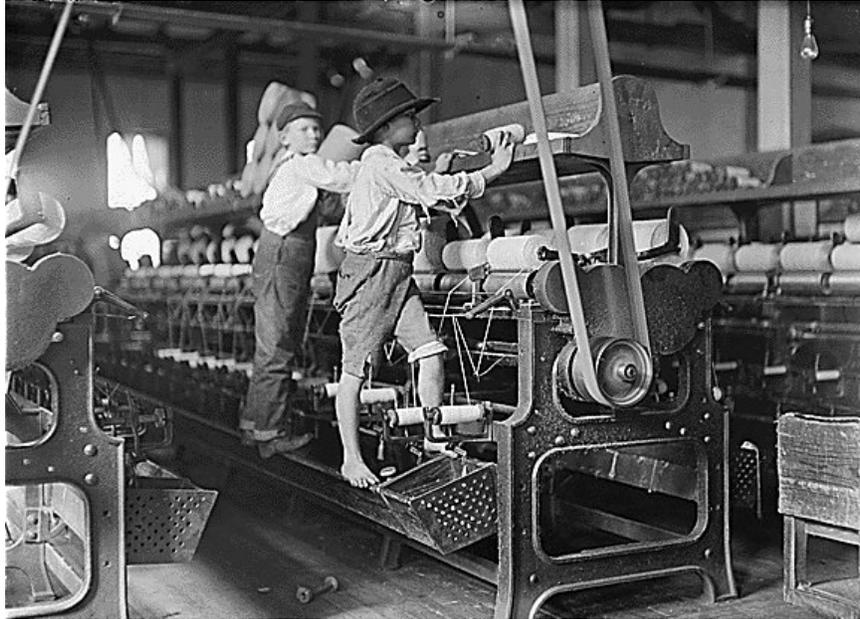
Selected Response Prompt: Which historical source might be used to support the creation of the 19th Amendment?

- b. data showing that 47% of American women supported the Suffrage Movement
- c. employment records that indicate 1,600,000 women joined the workforce during World War I
- d. testimonials from supporters of the Chemical Weapons Ban Treaty passed in 1912
- e. state and county election returns from the 1916 Presidential Election

Correct Response: B

Introductory Activity: Picture 1

Question: “What was life like for children in the late 19th and early 20th century?”



Caption: 1908-1912, Bibb Mill No.1. Macon, GA. Children working to mend broken thread on a spinning machine

Source Information: Courtesy of “The History Place: Child Labor in America 1908-1912. Photographs of Lewis W. Hine”

Accessed at: <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/index.html>

Handout 2

Introductory Activity: Picture 2

Question: “What was life like for children in the late 19th and early 20th century?”



Caption: Photograph of Victorian family sitting down to afternoon tea.

Source Information: Courtesy of “The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Victorian Age”. © 2003-2006 W.W. Norton and Company

Accessed at: http://www.wnorton.com/nto/victorian/topic_2/illustrations/imtea.htm

Progressive Article 1:

Source Information: The following excerpts are from: Richard Hofstadter, "The Status Revolution and Progressive Leaders". The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR (New York: Knoph, 1955), 131-48.

"Curiously, the Progressive revolt...took place almost entirely during a period of sustained and general prosperity. The middle class, most of which had been content to accept the conservative leadership of McKinley during the period of crisis in the mid-nineties, rallied to support the Progressive leaders in both parties during the period of well-being that followed. This fact is a challenge to the historian. Why did the middle classes undergo this remarkable awakening at all, and why during this period of general prosperity in which most of them seem to have shared? What was the place of economic discontents in the Progressive movement?"

"I am concerned here with a large and strategic section of Progressive leadership, upon whose contributions the movement was politically and intellectually as well as financially dependent, and whose members did much to formulate its ideals. It is my thesis that men of this sort...were Progressives not because of economic deprivations but primarily because they were victims of an upheaval in status that took place in the United States during the closing decades of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century. Progressivism, in short, was to a very considerable extent led by men who suffered from the events of their time not through a shrinkage in their means but through the changed pattern in the distribution of deference and power."

"Up to about 1870 the United States was a nation with a rather broad diffusion of wealth, status, and power, in which the man of moderate means...could command much deference and exert much influence. The small merchant or manufacturer, the distinguished lawyer, editor, or preacher, was a person of local eminence in an age in which local eminence mattered a great deal. The pillars of the local communities were men of great importance in their own right."

"In the post-Civil war period all this was changed. The rapid development of the big cities, the building of a great industrial plant, the construction of the railroads, the emergence of the corporation...transformed the old society and revolutionized the distribution of power and prestige."

"The newly rich...or corruptly rich, the masters of great corporations, were bypassing the men...the old gentry, the merchants of long standing, the small manufacturers, the established professional men, the civil leaders of an earlier era. ...The old-family, college-educated class that had deep ancestral roots in the local communities and often owned family businesses, that had traditions of political leadership, belonged to the patriotic societies and the best clubs...were being overshadowed and edged aside in the making of basic political and economic decisions."

"To be sure, the America they knew did not lack opportunities, but it did seem to lack opportunities for men of the highest standards. In a strictly economic sense these men were not growing poorer as a class, but their wealth and power were being dwarfed by comparison with the new eminences of wealth and power. They were less important, and they knew it."

Progressive Article 2:

Source Information: The following excerpts are from: Maureen Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era". The American Historical Review, 95, no.4 (October 1990), 1032-50.

"Most works on Progressive Era politics and reform concentrate on men, ignoring women's roles, viewing them only as partners with their husbands or assigning them to...charity and church work. The idea that women were actively concerned with politics is ignored in favor of seeing them as interested in social, not political, causes and reforms. By ignoring women as political reformers, historians assume that women have little or no political history. As a result, the processes that led women to pursue political activity in the first place, and the reasons why their political goals differed from men..have not been examined."

"It's been the prevailing idea of Progressive Era historiography that middle-class business and professional men, such as the members of the City Club, became municipal reformers because they developed a citywide vision. This vision resulted from their realization that...they needed to reform the entire urban structure in order to protect these affairs. In Chicago, the men...viewed the city...as an arena in which to do business, and they advocated municipal reforms intended to protect and further the aims of business. If businessmen prospered, they argued, the city and the rest of its inhabitants would ultimately prosper."

"The vision pursued by the members of the Women's City Club has not been studied, in large part because of the tendency in Progressive Era political history to study men. That the women...had a citywide vision is apparent in their arguments...for garbage disposal, public education, and the uses of police power. For them, municipal problems required solutions that guaranteed the well-being of everyone within the city, regardless of their immediate implications for business....One must, however, ask why the members of the Woman's City Club took strikingly different positions on municipal issues from the men of the City Club."

"The majority of men in the City Club were businessmen who drew on their professional experiences to design urban reform agendas. They were accustomed to thinking in terms of profitability, of assessing a problem through the slow but steady accumulation of facts, and of seeking solutions that were best for themselves and their businesses."

"The primary daily experience for most middle-class women, on the other hand, was the home. Women were used to organizing a home environment that ensured the well-being of everyone in the family. When they entered the political arena, they sought to achieve the same objective. The Bulletin decreed that women '...must form a citywide organization. We must unite forces for the common good and act together.' Thus, women applied their experience of how the home worked to what a city government should try to achieve."

"As businessmen, the members of the City club were accustomed to experiencing firsthand only parts of the problem they were investigating. Employees often gathered facts and figures for the employer...In contrast, the women focused on grass-roots activities out in the city itself. The Women's City Club leaders directed members to organize according to their city ward. They also instructed them to go out to

investigate street, alley, and sidewalk conditions; housing, schools, and churches; infant mortality rates, numbers of children, and juvenile delinquency; parks...

“The women of the Women’s City Club were not just attempting to keep the city clean, as they did their homes. They had tried that approach years earlier, for example, in 1894-95 when Jane Addams had organized women to go out and clean the streets themselves when the city was doing little about the problem. Rather, from their recognition of what it took to keep a home running, and running for the benefit of all its members, they developed ideas about how a good city should be run for the benefit of all its members.”

Handout 5

Progressive Article 3:

Source Information: *The following excerpts are from:* Robert H. Wiebe, "Progressivism Arrives," from *The Search for Order: 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 164-95.

In the town, or even in restricted areas of the city, power was personal. Almost any interested citizen could separate the leader from the follower and the partisan from the apathetic. If he cared, he could also discover the men who combined to make the important decisions; and among these, who controlled wealth or votes, who held the strategic posts, and who simply had a reputation for offering wise counsel. With a little more effort, he could probably uncover the men who financed campaigns and something of the privileges were reaped. Never simple, often fluctuating, it was still a manageable pattern, an eminently human network of relations.

When they moved into a broader arena, however, they soon found that they could neither see, know, nor even know about the people upon whom they had to depend. The legal framework changed; new groups, some abiding by quite different values, complicated the pattern; and relationships often followed an alien logic. The system was so impersonal, so vast, seemingly without beginning or end.

Some sallied forth and returned, licking their wounds, to stay. But the urge to fight again and again infected ever increasing numbers, particularly those from the new middle class. They demanded the right to pursue their ambitions outward rather than simply to be left alone at home, and that in turn required far-reaching social changes. To improve public health, for example, doctors might insist upon the renovation of an entire city. Some social workers quite literally called for a new American society. Expansionists in business, labor, agriculture, and the professions, in other words, formulated their interests in terms of continuous policies that necessitated regularity and predictability from unseen thousands.

These men and women stood in the forefront of the reforms that had spread across the land by the beginning of the twentieth century. In contrast to the grim defenses of the community only a decade before, these movements were founded in stability. If frustration also drove the new reformers, it was a frustration born of confidence, and impatience with the inertia that slowed their irresistible march to victory. Most of them lived and worked in the midst of modern society and accepting its major thrust drew both their inspiration and their programs from its peculiar traits. Where their predecessors would have destroyed many of urban-industrial America's outstanding characteristics, the new reformers wanted to adapt an existing order to their own ends. They prized their organizations not merely as reflections of an ideal but as sources of everyday strength, and generally they also accepted the organizations that were multiplying about them. Theirs was an unusually open, expansive scheme of reform that took them farther and farther into modern society's hitherto unexamined corners. The challenges of the late nineteenth century had, in almost all instances, sought a single objective—the autonomous community—through sweeping, redundant programs. Their successors sought a

great variety of objectives through a technique of reform which they came to believe could resolve each of these problems, and tomorrow's as well. The heart of progressivism was the ambition of the new middle class to fulfill its destiny through bureaucratic means.

Handout 6

Progressive Article 4:

Source Information: *The following excerpts are taken from:* Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, “Diplomatic Women,” from *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 147-75.

From the debris of disfranchisement, black women discovered fresh approaches to serving their communities and crafted new tactics designed to dull the blade of white supremacy. The result was a greater role for black women in the interracial public sphere. As long as they could vote, it was black men who had most often brokered official state power and made interracial political contacts. After disfranchisement, however, the political culture black women had created through thirty years of work in temperance organizations, Republican Party aid societies, and churches furnished both an ideological basis and an organizational structure from which black women could take on those tasks. After black men’s banishment from politics, North Carolina’s black women added a network of women’s groups that crossed denominational—and later party—lines and took a multi-issue approach to civic action. In a nonpolitical guise, black women became the black community’s diplomats to the white community.

Southerners at the time called themselves “progressives,” but historians have been loath to allow that name to stick. For those who championed a static history of the region, the “Progressive Era” ran counter to their continuity arguments. Moreover, those who found the roots of northern progressivism twining amid urban growth and rapid immigration saw only a stunted transplant on southern soil that remained comparatively rural and isolated. Finally, southern progressive solutions seemed a pale imitation of those in the North. If southerners reformed at all, historians judged their programs to be too little, too late.

But even if southern progressivism included women, was it reserved for whites? The answer is that whites intended for it to be, and it would have been even more racist, more exclusive, and more oppressive if there had been no black women progressives. Black women fought back after disfranchisement by adapting progressive programs to their own purposes, even while they chose tactics that left them invisible in the political process. As southern African American women began this task, they were further away from southern white women than ever before. Since black men could not vote, white women dropped appeals to black women to influence their male family members. Many white women had chosen race over gender in the white supremacy campaigns and had gained their first electoral experience under a racist banner.

In comparing black women’s progressivism to white women’s progressivism, one must be cautious at every turn because black and white women had vastly different relationships to power. To cite just one example, white middle-class women lobbied to obtain services from their husbands, brothers, and sons.

Black women's task was to try to force those white women who plunged into welfare efforts to recognize class and gender similarities across racial lines. To that end, they surveyed progressive white women's welfare initiatives and political style and found that both afforded black women a chance to enter the political arena. They had two purposes in mind. First, they would try to hold a place for African Americans in the ever-lengthening queue forming to garner state services. Second, they would begin to clear a path for the return of African Americans to the ballot box.

The league's projects read like a checklist for Progress Era reform. Its work to establish playgrounds, for example, reflected two concerns: to provide supervision for children's play and move it from the "neighbor's backyard" to venues where sanitation and activities could be controlled. Both goals meshed with the "play movement" that swept the nation at the turn of the century. Likewise, the women participated in "maternalist politics" sponsored by "baby day," when mothers could bring their babies to a meeting from doctor's advice. Civic League women centered much of their effort around the public schools. They held fairs and paper drives to raise money for their industrial department of the graded schools, and a teacher who was a member of the league organized a Junior Civic League at her school. The women visited the city jail regularly, ministered to a chain gang, and began an outreach program.

As much as southern whites plotted to reserve progressivism for themselves, and as much as they schemed to alter the ill-fitting northern version accordingly, they failed. African American women embraced southern white progressivism, reshaped it, and sent back a new model that included black power brokers and grass roots activists. Evidence of southern African American progressivism is not to be found in public laws, electoral politics, or the establishment of mothers' aid programs at the state level. It rarely appears in documents that white progressives, male or female left behind. Since black men could not speak out in politics and black women did not want to be seen, it has remained invisible in virtually every discussion of southern progressivism. Nonetheless, southern black women initiated every progressive reform that southern white women initiated, a feat they accomplished without financial resources, without the civic protection of their husbands, and without publicity.

Examining our Source

Instructions: With your group, record your observations and thoughts for the following:

Source Title: _____

Source Author: _____

Source Date: _____

What is the author concluding about Progressivism?	What are the main components of the author's argument? How does he/she address it?	What factual information does the author use to support their interpretation?

What potential sources might the author have consulted to support their conclusion?	What reasons might be given for the author's point of view expressed in the source?	What questions and interesting, odd, or strange items do you get from the reading?

Historian’s Roundtable Discussion: Record Sheet

Instructions: For each presentation, maintain the following record. This record will be used in the final assessment where you develop your own interpretation of the Progressive Era.

Historian: _____

Year: _____

Summary of this interpretation:

Supporting Historical Information:

Possible Sources the historian consulted:

Questions that this leaves you with about the author, the interpretation, or process for developing the interpretation.

Historian: _____

Year: _____

Summary of this interpretation:

Supporting Historical Information:

Possible Sources the historian consulted:

Questions that this leaves you with about the author, the interpretation, or process for developing the interpretation.