

Read the information below and answer the questions that follow in the spaces provided.

On January 1, 1900, the United States had reason for optimism. Cities were bustling. Industry was booming. One factory owner, Andrew Carnegie, was about to sell his steel company and become the richest man in the world. Not bad for a weaver's son from Scotland. And if Carnegie could make it, why not anyone! With victory in the Spanish-American War [Ch. 10] just behind, and a fresh new century lying before, it was a good time to be an American.

However, if you peeled back the excitement and looked carefully, there was an **underside**. Not everyone in America was making it. In fact, in the absence of clear rules, not everyone in America had a chance of making it. Consider this:

1. Average earnings for American workers were less than \$500 a year. In the South, the average for unskilled workers was closer to \$300. And this was at a time when the poverty line for a family of six was \$600.
2. Hours were long. In 1900, the average work week was 60 hours. In the garment industry of New York City it was 70 hours.
3. Child labor was widespread. In 1900, 26% of boys between ten and fifteen years old were in the work force. For young girls the figure was 10%.

Added to this, more than half of adult Americans were denied the right to vote. Women had never had the right, and most black men had lost the vote in the years after Reconstruction. Clearly, America had some work to do.

Fortunately, some people spoke out. A group of writers known as **muckrakers** looked into the problems and voiced their concerns.

Ministers, professors, social workers, and many elected officials listened and joined in. A movement developed around 1900 called **Progressivism**. The reform effort included both major political parties. It lasted until 1920 and influenced the thinking of three presidents - Teddy Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson.

To be sure, Progressivism had its limits. For example, almost nothing was done to rid the nation of racial segregation, and labor unions were given little encouragement. However, there were other areas where important reforms were made.

1. When was the Progressive Era?
2. What three Presidents served during the Progressive Era?
3. What were two areas where Progressivism made little or no change?
4. What is the definition of "underside," in your own words?
5. What was the poverty level in dollars for a family of six in 1900?
6. What was the average earnings of an American worker in 1900?

