

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN THE AGE OF THE CITY

Objectives

A thorough study of Chapter Eighteen should enable the student to understand:

1. The patterns and processes of urbanization in late-nineteenth-century America.
2. The changes in the pattern of immigration in the late nineteenth century.
3. The new economic and social problems created by urbanization.
4. The relationships of both urbanization and immigration to the rise of boss rule.
5. The early rise of mass consumption and its impact on American life, especially for women.
6. The changes in leisure and entertainment and the growth of mass-culture opportunities including organized sports, vaudeville, movies, and other activities.
7. The main trends in literature and art during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
8. The impact of the Darwinian theory of evolution on the intellectual life of America.
9. The profound new developments in American educational opportunities.

Main Themes

1. How the social and economic lure of the city attracted foreign and domestic migrants, and how these newcomers adjusted to urban life.
2. How rapid urban growth forced adaptations to severe problems of government mismanagement, poverty, crime, inadequate housing, and precarious health and safety conditions.
3. How the urban environment served as the locus for new philosophical ideas: expanded leisure opportunities, fresh approaches to education, rapid expansion in journalism, and a new consumerism.
4. How the new order of "high" urban culture inspired both serious writers and artists to render realistic portrayals of the seamy side of city life, while many middle- and upper-class Americans were engaging in expanded forms of leisure and entertainment.

Glossary

1. **suburb:** A residential area adjacent to, and dependent on, a city. In some cases, suburbs are absorbed (annexed) into the city as it grows; in other instances, suburbs form their own municipal governments or draw services from county governments.
2. **urban:** Unless otherwise specified, a Census Bureau term referring to any city or town with a population exceeding 2,500. The term must be used with care because this definition includes many places normally thought of as small towns. The "urban" developments described in this chapter occur mostly in big cities with populations exceeding 100,000.

Pertinent Questions

THE URBANIZATION OF AMERICA (500-506)

1. What were the attractions of the city that led to population expansion? What were the main sources of urban growth?

2. What were the factors that inspired the exodus of southern African Americans into cities, especially northern cities, that began in the late nineteenth century?
3. How did the foreign immigrants of the 1890s and later differ from most of the earlier immigrants? What attracted them to the United States? (See Chapter Seventeen also.)
4. What social institutions and community actions helped facilitate immigrant adjustment to urban life in America? What were the barriers? Which groups seemed to adapt better than most others? Describe the desire for assimilation and the strains it often caused. In general, how did native-born Americans regard assimilation?
6. What efforts were made to restrict immigration in the late nineteenth century? What ethnic group and other types of immigrants were specifically restricted?

THE URBAN LANDSCAPE (506-511)

7. What inspired the move toward the creation of expanded public spaces and public buildings in large American cities? What were the lasting legacies of this impulse?
8. What led to the development of residential suburbs around big cities?
9. Contrast the residential pattern of the working class and the poor with that of the wealthy and moderately well-to-do. What was big city life like for the poor?
10. How did urban mass transit technology evolve from the Civil War era to the turn of the century?
11. What technological innovations made the development of the skyscraper possible and desirable?

STRAINS OF URBAN LIFE (511-515)

12. How did big cities cope with the urban hazards of fire, disease, and sanitation? What were the environmental implications of dense urban development?
13. What was the typical middle-class attitude toward the problem of widespread urban poverty?
14. How prevalent was violent crime in turn-of-the-century America? How did cities respond?
15. Explain the factors that contributed to the rise of political machines and their bosses, and describe the typical operation of a political machine. What were the positive as well as the negative aspects of boss rule in large cities?

THE RISE OF MASS CONSUMPTION (515-517)

16. Describe the changes in income and purchasing power of the urban middle and working classes. Who made the greater gains?
17. How did the emergence of mass-market products along with chair stores, mail-order outlets, and large department stores impact the lives of American families, especially women?

LEISURE IN THE CONSUMER SOCIETY (517-524)

18. How did Americans begin to change their attitudes toward leisure and consumption? What factors contributed to this new view? How did the approaches to leisure vary by class?
19. Compare and contrast the rise of baseball with that of football. What other spectator sports became popular as Americans came to enjoy more leisure time?
20. What changes were beginning to emerge in women's sports?
21. What were the main sorts of popular entertainment activities available to urban dwellers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? How did class considerations shape the types of activities enjoyed?
22. Why was the Fourth of July such an important holiday? How was it different in the South?
23. What important changes occurred in journalism and publishing in the decades after the Civil War?

HIGH CULTURE IN THE AGE OF THE CITY (524-528)

24. What issues did the realist novelists explore, and how did they approach them?
25. By the early 1900s what movements in American visual art were becoming evident? How did these movements reflect the contrast between the genteel and modern approaches?
26. How did Darwinism challenge traditional American faith and contribute to the growing schism between cosmopolitan, mostly urban, and traditional, mainly rural, values? (See also Chapter Seventeen on Social Darwinism.)
27. How did the new social science disciplines of economics, sociology, and anthropology impact the intellectual view of contemporary and historic America?
28. Describe the evolution of free public schooling in the United States. What parts of the nation lagged in education?
29. What government and private actions combined to lead to the establishment or significant expansion of universities and colleges after the Civil War?
30. What opportunities for higher education were available to women in this era? What were the distinctive characteristics of the women's colleges?
31. AMERICA IN THE WORLD: GLOBAL MIGRATIONS (503)
What is meant by "push" and "pull" factors in population migrations?
32. How did 19th and early 20th century immigration to the United States fit in the context of worldwide, especially European, migration?

PATTERNS OF POPULAR CULTURE: CONEY ISLAND (518-519)

33. What impulses among urban Americans explain the attraction that Coney Island had to so many people? What classes were most attracted to its charms? Why did its relative popularity begin to wane after World War I?

Identification

Identify each of the following, and explain why it is important within the context of the chapter.

1. immigrant ghettos
2. Reform Judaism
3. American Protective Association/Immigration Restriction League
4. Frederick Law Olmstead
5. Columbian Exposition
6. "streetcar suburbs"
7. tenement
8. Jacob Riis
9. Brooklyn Bridge
10. Louis Sullivan
11. Public Health Service
12. Salvation Army
13. William M. Tweed
14. Sears Roebuck
15. National Consumers League
16. World Series

17. National College Athletic Association (NCAA)
18. James A. Naismith
19. George M. Cohan
20. Irving Berlin
21. vaudeville
22. D. W. Griffith
23. Scott Joplin
24. William Randolph Hearst
25. "yellow journalism"
26. Theodore Dreiser
27. "pragmatism"
28. Carlisle School
29. "land-grant" college

Document 1

Read the section of the text under the heading "The Urban Landscape," and then read the excerpt below, taken from *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), the famous book by Jacob Riis. Consider the following questions: How does Riis's account compare with the "melting pot" thesis? What ethnic/racial group that would later occupy the slums of northern cities is absent from this mixed crowd? What comparisons could be made between the poor neighborhoods of the late nineteenth century and those of today?

When once I asked the agent of a notorious Fourth Ward alley how many people might be living in it I was told: one hundred and forty families, one hundred Irish, thirty-eight Italian, and two that spoke the German tongue. Barring the agent herself, there was not a native-born individual in the court. The answer was characteristic of the cosmopolitan character of lower New York, very nearly so for the whole of it, wherever it runs to alleys and courts. One may find for the asking an Italian, a German, a French, African, Spanish, Bohemian, Russian, Scandinavian, Jewish, and Chinese colony. Even the Arab, who peddles "holy earth" from the Battery as a direct importation from Jerusalem, has his exclusive preserves at the lower end of Washington Street. The one thing you shall vainly ask for in the chief city of America is a distinctively American community. There is none; certainly not among the tenements. . . .

The once unwelcome Irishman has been followed in his turn by the Italian, the Russian Jew, and the Chinaman, and has himself taken a hand of opposition, quite as bitter and quite as ineffectual, against these later hordes. Wherever these have gone they have crowded him out, possessing the block, the street, the ward with their denser swarms. . . .

A map of the city, colored to designate nationalities, would show more stripes than the skin of a zebra, and more colors than any rainbow.

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890). Reprint, "The Mixed Crowd," in F. Cordasco, ed., *Jacob Riis Revisited* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., 1968), pp. 18-19.

Document 2

Read the section of the text describing the rise of mass-circulation magazines, and then read the following editorial, which is from one of the first issues of the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Consider the following questions: Why was the low price of the magazine so important? (A yearly subscription was fifty cents, and single

copies cost a nickel.) In the age of realism, why did the publishers believe that the readers wanted "a pure and high-toned family paper?" How did popular magazines such as the *Ladies' Home Journal* differ from established literary journals?

We want 50,000 subscribers on our books by February 1st, 1884, and we ask as a favor that you will help us get them. Will you not show this copy to your friends and neighbors and ask them to subscribe?

The price is very low, and they can afford it, no matter how many other papers they may take. We aim to publish a pure and high-toned family paper, and think we deserve your support. We have no lottery scheme on hand, no one-cent chromos, no prizes or premiums of any kind except to club-raisers. We have no frauds to distribute, no lies to tell. Then how are we to marshal that army of recruits, fifty thousand strong, from Maine and Oregon, from Minnesota and Florida, from the hills of Pennsylvania and the prairies of Illinois?

First, The Ladies Home Journal shall be made without a peer. We propose to make it a household necessity—so good, so pure, so true, so brave, so full, so complete, that a young couple will no more think of going to housekeeping without it than without a cook-stove. The best pens that money can put in motion shall fill its editorial pages and various departments with many facts in few words.

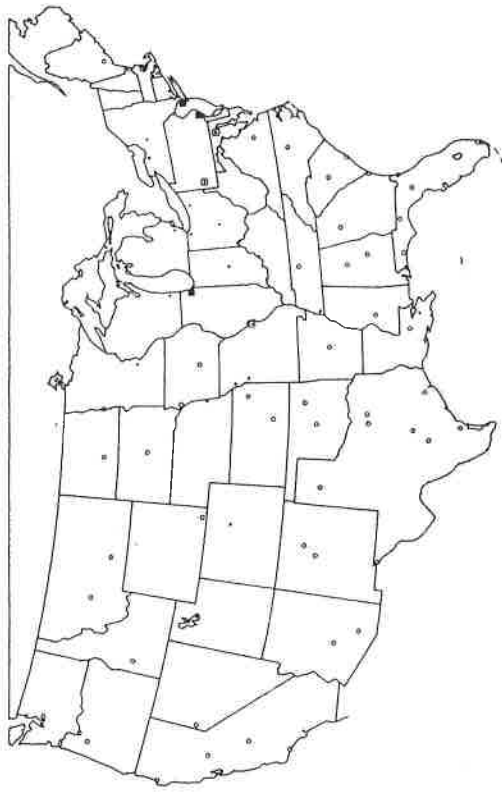
Such a paper will take. The people will want it, children will cry for it; and we shall get the 50,000 subscribers.

Ladies' Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper, January 1884, p. 4.

Map Exercise

Fill in or identify the following on the blank map provided. Use the map in the text as your source.

1. Urban population centers of over a half-million (500,000) in 1900.
2. Smaller but important regional cities: Buffalo; Cleveland; Detroit; Washington, D.C.; Atlanta; New Orleans; Memphis; Minneapolis; Cincinnati; Louisville; Kansas City; Dallas; Houston; Denver; Seattle; San Francisco; and Los Angeles.
3. The area of heaviest industrial concentration.



Interpretative Questions

Based on what you have filled in, answer the following. On some of the questions you will need to consult the narrative in your text for information or explanation.

1. Using this map and the railroad map in Chapter Seventeen, explain the relationship between railroads, industry, and large cities.
2. In what part of the nation, and specifically in what large cities, did the bulk of the post-1880 foreign immigrants settle?
3. Within the area indicated by the map as settled, which well-populated region of the country was most lacking in large cities of 100,000 or more? Why?
4. Note that all of the major urban areas of the late twentieth century were already established by 1900. What does this indicate about the maturity of the national economic and transportation system by the turn of the century?

Summary

In the years after the Civil War, America's cities boomed as people left the rural areas of Europe and the United States to seek the jobs and other attractions offered by American cities. The cities' rapid growth caused many problems in housing, transportation, and health. Technological attacks on these problems barely kept pace, and city governments often resorted to boss rule to cope. The booming cities were places of intellectual ferment and cultural change. Urban dwellers found many ways to enjoy increased leisure time. Many Americans wanted to prove to skeptical Europeans that the nation had cultural as well as economic accomplishments to admire. American culture became more uniform through free public education, mass-market journalism, and standardized sports. Higher education, especially new state universities, reached out to a wider market. More and more women attended college in coeducational and single sex institutions.

4. The large-scale movement of African Americans from the rural South to industrial cities began during the later nineteenth century mainly because of the:
 - a. poverty and oppression of the South.
 - b. prospective professional opportunities in the cities.
 - c. abundance of factory jobs there for African Americans.
 - d. absence of racial discrimination in the North.
5. The new immigrants of the later nineteenth century settled primarily in eastern industrial cities because they:
 - a. lacked the capital to buy land and begin farming in the West.
 - b. found immediate employment as unskilled factory workers.
 - c. found refuge and camaraderie among fellow nationals there.
 - d. did all of the above.
6. The formation of ethnic neighborhoods by immigrants in American cities:
 - a. tended to reinforce the cultural values of their previous societies.
 - b. resulted primarily from discriminatory zoning restrictions.
 - c. prevented their identification with, and advancement in, American society.
 - d. intensified a sense of not belonging to a coherent community.
7. Nativist reaction against European immigrants of the later nineteenth century resulted from all of the following factors *except* the:
 - a. arrival of such vast numbers of immigrants.
 - b. refusal of most immigrants and their children to attempt to assimilate themselves into American culture.
 - c. generalized fears of, and prejudices against, foreigners.
 - d. economic concern that immigrant workers would threaten the wages and positions of American workers.
8. The Immigration Restriction League:
 - a. blamed foreigners for all the disorder and corruption of the urban world.
 - b. advocated the screening of immigrants through literacy tests.
 - c. adopted crude theories of conspiracy and a stance of rabid xenophobia.
 - d. enlisted the support of President Grover Cleveland for their proposals.
9. Which of the following groups were excluded or severely restricted from immigration to the United States by laws passed in the 1880s and 1890s? (Mark one or more letters.)
 - a. Chinese
 - b. convicts, paupers, and mental incompetents
 - c. illiterates
 - d. Irish
10. The majority of big-city residents in later-nineteenth-century America:
 - a. could afford their own houses, thanks to the availability of cheap labor and low building costs.
 - b. took advantage of less expensive lands on the edges of the city and settled in suburbs.
 - c. stayed in the city centers and rented living space.
 - d. exacted high standards from urban landlords.
11. By the 1890s, a million New Yorkers lived in tenements, which were:
 - a. slum dwellings with inadequate light, plumbing, and heat.
 - b. helping relieve and disperse population growth.
 - c. rental buildings designed for single-family residences.
 - d. transformed by state laws into model housing units for the poor.
12. What late-nineteenth-century technological developments made "skyscrapers" practical? (Mark two letters.)
 - a. electric elevators
 - b. air conditioning
 - c. concrete
 - d. steel girder construction
13. The most famous and notorious city "boss" of the late nineteenth century was:
 - a. Louis Sullivan.
 - b. Theodore Dreiser.
 - c. John A. Roebling.
 - d. William M. Tweed.
14. The political machines of the bosses were able to retain power for all of the following reasons *except*:
 - a. immigrant voters were more concerned with receiving services than with middle-class standards of political morality.
 - b. some wealthy and influential citizens profited from dealings with the bosses.
 - c. city government structure often had structural weaknesses that kept it from meeting citizen needs.
 - d. the absence of reform groups to mobilize public outrage against boss rule.
15. Which of the following was *not* a trend contributing to the rise of mass consumption in the latter nineteenth century?
 - a. The emergence of ready-made clothing as a basis of the American wardrobe.
 - b. The breakup of marketing monopolies held by national chain stores.
 - c. The development of canned food and refrigerated railroad cars.
 - d. The emergence of large department stores and mail-order houses.

16. Vaudeville shows were composed of:
- traveling dramatists who performed Shakespeare and other classic plays in small towns and cities.
 - a variety of acts including musicians, singers, comedians, magicians, jugglers, dancers, and the like.
 - a mixture of primitive motion pictures with music by a small live orchestra.
 - gypsies and other unsavory characters who used the shows to attract crowds to sell patent medicines and other fraudulent products.
17. The emergence of national press services in the latter nineteenth century contributed most significantly to:
- increased salaries for reporters.
 - standardization of the news.
 - separation of news from opinions.
 - a professional identity for American journalists.
18. The theory of evolution:
- supported traditional American beliefs about the nature of man and history.
 - met uniform resistance from middle-class Protestant religious leaders.
 - gained greater acceptance in rural areas than in urban areas.
 - influenced new ways of thinking in the social sciences.
19. According to the philosophy of pragmatism, modern society, for guidance, should primarily rely on:
- inherited ideals.
 - scientific inquiry.
 - moral principles.
 - religious beliefs.
20. Which of the following trends in American education did *not* take place in the latter nineteenth century?
- The spread of universal free public education.
 - Passage by states of compulsory attendance laws.
 - Rapid proliferation of colleges across the nation.
 - Increased emphasis on the classical curriculum at the university level.

TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements "T" and false statements "F."

- The 1920 census was the first one in which a majority of the American population lived in "urban" areas of 2,500 or more residents.
- Most of the European immigrants who came to American cities from 1860 to 1910 came from rural backgrounds.
- Urban African Americans males in the late nineteenth century usually held skilled industrial jobs.
- The "streetcar suburbs" of Boston and other northeastern cities mainly provided cheap housing for low-paid factory workers and domestics.

- Jacob Riis was a newspaper reporter and photographer who exposed the wretched conditions in the slums of New York.
- In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, large-scale popular baseball was professionalized, whereas big-time football remained a college and university activity.
- The political bosses and the machines they operated were usually popular with the people in the poor and working-class neighborhoods of the large cities.
- Realist novelists tended to explore and write about the seamy side of urban life.
- "Yellow journalism" referred to breezy magazines that printed family-oriented fare and avoided reminding their readers of poverty, scandal, or political controversy.
- The "Armory Show" was a major exposition of the development of the nation's modern scientific technology.
- Darwin's theories were opposed by all organized Christian religious groups.
- Because of the lack of private schools available, the South led the nation in the establishment of tax-supported public schools for all children.
- By granting large amounts of land to state governments, the federal government encouraged states to establish universities and colleges that would emphasize practical learning, especially in agriculture and mechanics.
- The neighborhood saloon was most popular in middle class areas since the men had more time to frequent such establishments.
- Minstrel shows were local classical groups that laid the groundwork for the emergence of serious symphony orchestras in the early twentieth century.
- D. W. Griffith was a pioneer in the production of motion pictures.
- William Randolph Hearst was the founder of the "reform" movement within Judaism.
- John Dewey stressed reforming education to place less emphasis on rote learning of traditional knowledge and more on a flexible approach that would prepare students to be effective citizens who could deal with the realities of society.
- The Carlisle School was one of the first post-secondary institutions to admit African Americans.
- The rise of "coeducation" in public colleges and universities in the late nineteenth century led to a marked decline in the number and influence of women's colleges in the period.

TERMS, CONCEPTS, NAMES

New Immigrants	Public cultures	Patronage
"Immigrant ghettos"	"Yellow Journalism"	"Honest graft"
Assimilation	"High culture"	William M. Tweed
American Protective Association	"Armory Show"	"White collar"
Xenophobia	Charles Darwin	"Chain stores"
Philanthropy	Louis Sullivan	"Five and ten cent store"
1893 Colombian Exposition	"Great fires"	Catalogs
Suburbs	"Deserving poor"	Department stores
"Tenement"	Salvation Army	National Consumer's League
Jacob Riis	"Street arabs"	Frederick Jackson Turner
Brooklyn Bridge	Urban Machine	"Land Grant Institutions"
"Skyscraper"	Political boss	Coney Island