

apush period 6 1865 1898 ap us history unit 5 review

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APUSH Period 6: 1865-1898 – Unit 5 Review

When you sit down to prepare for the AP U.S. History exam, the sheer volume of material can feel overwhelming. One of the most challenging periods for many students is **Period 6 (1865 1898)** often referred to as the Reconstruction era through the Gilded Age. This unit covers a vast array of political, social, economic, and cultural transformations that shaped the modern United States. In this comprehensive review, we'll walk through the key themes, pivotal events, and essential primary sources that you need to master. By the end, you'll have a clear roadmap for tackling the APUSH Period 6 section of the exam.

1. Thematic Overview of Period 6

Period 6 is defined by a set of interconnected themes that recur throughout the era:

- Reconstruction and the Rebuilding of the South
- Industrialization and Economic Expansion
- Westward Expansion and Native American Policy
- Social Movements and Reform
- Foreign Policy and Imperialism

Understanding how these themes interact will help you answer essay prompts that often require you to analyze cause and effect, compare and contrast different regions or groups, and evaluate the impact of policies on various populations.

2. Reconstruction (1865 1877)

2.1 Political Landscape

Reconstruction began immediately after the Civil War, with the Union's victory reshaping the political map of the nation. The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments abolished slavery, granted citizenship to all persons born in the U.S., and protected voting rights for white male citizens. However, these amendments were met with resistance in the former Confederate states.

Key political milestones include:

- President Lincoln's 10 Year Plan – A lenient approach to reintegrate Southern states.
- President Johnson's Reconstruction Policies – Granting amnesty to many former Confederates, leading to the rise of "Black Codes."
- Radical Reconstruction (1867 1877) – Congress passed the Reconstruction Acts, divided the South into military districts, and required new state constitutions guaranteeing African American voting rights.
- The Compromise of 1877 – The end of Reconstruction, with federal troops withdrawn from the South and the rise of "Jim Crow" laws.

2.2 Social and Economic Consequences

Reconstruction brought both progress and setbacks for African Americans. While the Freedmen's Bureau provided education and legal assistance, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups violently

undermined gains in civil rights. Economically, the South struggled to transition from a slave based agrarian economy to a diversified one, leading to sharecropping and tenant farming systems that kept many Black and poor white farmers in poverty.

3. Industrialization and the Gilded Age (1870 1900)

3.1 The Rise of Big Business

The latter half of the 19th century saw an unprecedented surge in industrial production. Railroads, steel, oil, and banking grew into powerful corporations that reshaped the American economy.

- Railroads – The transcontinental railroad and the expansion of the rail network connected markets and facilitated migration.
- Steel – Andrew Carnegie's steel mills became the backbone of infrastructure projects.
- Oil – John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil dominated the petroleum market.
- Banking – J.P. /Morgan's consolidation of finance created a national banking system.

3.2 Labor Movements and Working Conditions

Rapid industrial growth brought harsh working conditions, low wages, and long hours. Workers organized to demand better treatment, leading to the formation of unions and the rise of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Significant labor events include:

1. The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 – A nationwide protest over wage cuts.
2. The Haymarket Affair (1886) – A labor rally turned violent, leading to a crackdown on anarchists and labor leaders.
3. The Pullman Strike (1894) – A nationwide strike that highlighted the tension between workers and corporate power.

3.3 Social Darwinism and the “American Dream”

Social Darwinism applied evolutionary theory to justify economic inequality. The belief that “survival of the fittest” justified the wealth of industrialists and the poverty of laborers. This ideology coexisted with a growing belief in the “American Dream” – the idea that anyone could succeed through hard work, regardless of background.

4. Westward Expansion and Native American Policy

4.1 Manifest Destiny and Settlement

Manifest Destiny was the belief that the United States was destined to expand across North America. The federal government facilitated settlement through policies such as the Homestead Act of 1862, which granted 160 acres of land to settlers who improved it.

4.2 Indian Removal and the Trail of Tears

Despite the Civil War's end, federal policies continued to displace Native American tribes. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 and subsequent treaties forced tribes onto reservations, often under brutal conditions. The Trail of Tears remains one of the most tragic episodes of forced relocation.

4.3 The Dawes Act and Assimilation

The Dawes Act of 1887 aimed to assimilate Native Americans by dividing communal tribal land into individual plots. This policy destroyed tribal cohesion and led to significant loss of Native land.

5. Social Movements and Reform

5.1 Women's Suffrage

Women's suffrage activism gained momentum during Period 6. The formation of the National Woman's Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Woman's Suffrage Association (AWSA) laid the groundwork for future progress. Key events:

- Susan B. /Anthony's "March on Washington" (1872)
- The National Woman's Party's "White House Sit In" (1913)

5.2 Temperance and the 18th Amendment

The temperance movement advocated for the prohibition of alcohol. The National Prohibition Party, led by figures like Carrie Nation, eventually succeeded in passing the 18th Amendment in 1919, which would not be repealed until 1933.

5.3 The Labor Reform Movement

Beyond strikes, reformers pushed for child labor laws, factory safety regulations, and the eight hour workday. The passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938 would later codify many of these reforms.

6. Foreign Policy and Imperialism

6.1 The Monroe Doctrine and Its Legacy

The Monroe Doctrine, originally declared in 1823, asserted U.S. opposition to European colonization in the Western Hemisphere. By Period 6, it had evolved into a tool for asserting American influence in Latin America.

6.2 The Spanish–American War (1898)

Fought over Cuban independence, the Spanish–American War marked the United States' emergence as a global imperial power. Key outcomes:

- Treaty of Paris (1898) – Spain ceded Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to the U.S.
- The Philippine–American War (1899–1902) – A brutal conflict over U.S. control of the Philippines.

6.3 The Open Door Policy in China

In 1899, the U.S. advocated for equal trade opportunities in China, aiming to counter European colonial influence and secure American commercial interests.

7. Primary Sources for the APUSH Period 6 Review

Studying primary sources is essential for the APUSH exam. Here are some recommended documents:

- Reconstruction Amendments (13th, 14th, 15th)
- Freedmen's Bureau Records
- Harriet Tubman's Narrative
- Andrew Carnegie's "The Gospel of Wealth"
- John D. /Rockefeller's letters on Standard Oil
- William Jennings Bryan's "Cross Texas" Speech
- Senator Benjamin Wade's "The Negro Question"
- Senator Henry Clay's "American System" Speech

Reviewing these documents helps you practice analyzing author bias, context, and purpose – skills that are critical for the essay and multiple choice sections.

8. Exam Strategies for APUSH Period 6

8.1 Master the Timeline

Build a comprehensive timeline that includes:

- Key legislation (e.g., Reconstruction Acts, Civil Rights Act of 1866)
- Major wars (Spanish–American War, Indian Wars)
- Significant economic events (e.g., Panic of 1873, Panic of 1893)
- Social movements (e.g., women's suffrage, labor strikes)

Having a mental map of these events will help you place causes and effects in the right order.

8.2 Practice the APUSH Essay Prompt Types

APUSH essays often fall into three categories:

1. Short Essay (2–3 sentence answer) – Focus on a single event or policy.
2. Document Based Question (DBQ) – Analyze a set of documents to build an argument.
3. Long Essay (5–6 paragraph) – Provide a comprehensive analysis of a theme or period.

Use the “Point–Evidence–Analysis” (PEA) structure for DBQs and long essays. For each point, provide evidence from the documents and explain its significance.

8.3 Multiple Choice Mastery

Multiple choice questions test your knowledge of dates,

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