Name _____ Date _____

The Progressive Era: Muckrakers, Reform Laws and Who Was Left Out

Directions: Read the passage about the Progressive Era. Then answer each question.

Problems and Reforms in the Progressive Era

Exposing Problems, Passing Reforms

By 1900, many Americans believed that industrial growth had brought serious problems along with its wealth. Cities were crowded and unhealthy, factories were dangerous, and political bosses traded jobs and favors for votes. A handful of giant companies controlled whole industries. From the 1890s to about 1920, reformers known as Progressives set out to fix these problems. Most were middle-class city dwellers, many of them women, but farmers, workers and Black Americans also joined the cause. Progressives shared a faith that facts, publicity and government action could make American life fairer and safer.

Journalists led the way by exposing wrongdoing. Ida Tarbell spent years studying Standard Oil, and her articles in *McClure's Magazine*, published from 1902 to 1904, showed how the company had crushed its rivals. Lincoln Steffens described corrupt city governments in *The Shame of the Cities* (1904). In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt called such writers muckrakers, after a character in *The Pilgrim's Progress* who kept his eyes on the muck he was raking. The name stuck.

Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* (1906) followed an immigrant family working in Chicago's meatpacking plants. Sinclair hoped readers would care about the workers, but most were more alarmed by scenes of spoiled and filthy meat. Roosevelt sent investigators to Chicago, and after they confirmed many of the conditions, Congress acted. On June 30, 1906, Roosevelt signed two laws. The Meat Inspection Act required federal inspection of meat sold across state lines. The Pure Food and Drug Act banned impure or falsely labeled foods and medicines in trade between states.

Disaster drove other reforms. On March 25, 1911, fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Company, a clothing factory in New York City. Locked doors and a weak fire escape trapped workers on the upper floors, and 146 people died, most of them young immigrant women. Public outrage led New York to create a Factory Investigating Commission. Its findings produced dozens of new state laws on fire safety, factory inspection and working hours.

Progressives also changed the Constitution. The 16th Amendment (1913) let Congress tax incomes. The 17th Amendment (1913) gave voters, rather than state legislatures, the power to elect U.S. senators. The 18th Amendment (1919) banned the making, selling and shipping of alcoholic drinks, a goal of reformers who blamed alcohol for poverty and broken families. The 19th Amendment (1920) barred the states and the national government from denying any citizen the vote because of sex.

Yet the reforms of the era did little or nothing for most Black Americans. Across the South,

poll taxes, literacy tests and whites-only primary elections kept most Black men from voting, and new laws separated Black and white people in public places. Some white Southern reformers even argued that separating the races was a modern way to prevent conflict. In 1913, President Woodrow Wilson's administration segregated Black federal workers in departments such as the Treasury and the Post Office. After the 19th Amendment took effect, the same barriers kept many Black women in the South from voting.

Ida B. Wells fought injustice with facts. Born into slavery in Mississippi in 1862, she became a journalist and part owner of a Black newspaper in Memphis. In 1892, a white mob lynched three Black men who ran a successful grocery store, among them her close friend Thomas Moss. Lynching meant the murder of a person by a mob, without any trial. Wells began investigating lynchings across the South. In pamphlets such as *Southern Horrors* (1892), she showed that the charges used to excuse many lynchings were false, and she argued that mobs used terror to keep Black Americans from getting ahead. While she was away from Memphis, a mob wrecked her newspaper's office, and she never returned. She carried on her work from the North. In 1909, she helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which fought segregation and lynching.

1. What main point does the passage develop about the Progressive Era as a whole?

A. Reformers fought industrial problems with facts, publicity and laws, but did little for most Black Americans.

B. Progressive reforms ended segregation in the South and won equal voting rights for every American by 1920.

C. Progressives mainly wanted to shrink the power of the national government over big business and the states.

D. Muckraking journalists were the only reformers of the era whose reporting led to any new laws or amendments.

2. The passage says journalists "led the way by exposing wrongdoing." Which example from the passage fits that claim?

A. Ida Tarbell's articles showed how Standard Oil had crushed its rivals.

B. Wilson's administration segregated Black federal workers.

C. The 17th Amendment gave voters, not state legislatures, the power to elect senators.

D. New York created a Factory Investigating Commission after a deadly fire.

3. These sentences use two terms the passage defines. Fill in each one from the word bank.

Word bank
muckrakers • Progressives • segregation • lynching • Prohibition

Roosevelt gave the name _____ to writers who exposed wrongdoing. The murder of a person by a mob, without any trial, is called _____.

4. According to the passage, what was one effect of Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle*?

A. Roosevelt had Sinclair arrested for criticizing the government in his novel.

B. Alarm over unsafe meat helped push Congress to pass two laws in 1906.

C. Readers demanded an amendment that would let Congress tax incomes.

D. Chicago's meatpackers closed their plants and moved to New York.

5. What led New York to create its Factory Investigating Commission, according to the passage?

A. Public outrage over the Triangle fire, in which 146 people died

B. The ratification of the 19th Amendment by the states in 1920

C. A long strike by meatpacking workers in the city of Chicago in 1906

D. Ida Tarbell's magazine articles about the Standard Oil Company

6. Match each amendment to the change the passage says it made.

Write the letter of the matching answer on each line.

1. _____ 16th Amendment (1913)
2. _____ 17th Amendment (1913)
3. _____ 18th Amendment (1919)
4. _____ 19th Amendment (1920)

A. Barred denying the vote because of sex

B. Let Congress tax incomes

C. Banned poll taxes in national elections

D. Let voters elect U.S. senators

E. Banned the making and selling of alcoholic drinks

7. Why does the passage include the detail about President Wilson's administration in 1913?

A. To explain why Congress passed the Pure Food and Drug Act

B. To show that Wilson led the campaign for the 17th Amendment

C. To show that federal departments hired more Black workers than at any time before

D. To show that segregation reached the national government in an age of reform

8. Which two details from the passage show that the reforms of the era left many Black Americans out?

☐ A. The 17th Amendment gave voters the power to elect U.S. senators.

☐ B. Poll taxes, literacy tests and whites-only primaries kept most Black men in the South from voting.

☐ C. Investigators confirmed many of the conditions in Chicago's meatpacking plants.

☐ D. Tarbell's articles about Standard Oil appeared from 1902 to 1904.

☐ E. Some white Southern reformers argued that separating the races was a modern way to prevent conflict.

9. How does the passage limit its account of what the 19th Amendment achieved?

A. It reports that most states refused to accept the amendment.

B. It says the amendment was repealed a few years after it passed.

C. It notes that other barriers still kept many Black women in the South from voting.

D. It explains that the amendment applied only to elections for U.S. senators and not to others.

10. Which summary of the passage's account of Ida B. Wells is most accurate?

A. She won a federal law against lynching in 1892, then left journalism and ran her friend's grocery store in Memphis for the rest of the 1890s while others ran her paper.

B. After a mob lynched her friend and two other grocers, she investigated lynchings, exposed the false charges behind many, and kept working from the North.

C. She began writing about lynching only after helping found the NAACP in 1909, and she stayed in Memphis to edit her newspaper.

D. She wrote the novel about Chicago's meatpacking plants and was sent to prison for it under a law against disloyal writing.