**Progressive Era DBQ Sample**

**Prompt:** Evaluate the effectiveness of Progressive Era reformers and the federal government in bringing about change at the national level. In your answer, be sure to analyze the successes and limitations of these efforts in the period 1900-1920.

**Document Based Evidence in BOLD and Outside Knowledge Evidence in Italics**

In the late 1800’s a rise in industrialism transformed American society dramatically with progress in technology, efficiency, and transportation. With this progress there came many benefits - more goods for consumers, more low skilled jobs, and opportunity for the middle class man to rise to success. However, there were also many societal problems hidden below the surface, giving this era the name “The Gilded Age.” There was mistreatment of workers, imbalanced distribution of wealth and government corruption of political machines in urban areas. Though some called this industrial revolution “progress”, a new definition of progress emerged among reformers who wanted to help solve the problems and injustices that came with this time. Grassroots Progressive reformers and the federal government approached these issues with different priorities, and levels of success, mainly focusing on decreasing the power of monopolies, standing up for the unrepresented, and improving conditions for the poor.

Monopolies emerged with the industrial era, as some used new strategies to dominate a certain industry. Carnegie controlled the steel Industry while Rockefeller the oil. This control negatively impacted wage workers who were overworked and small businesses that could not compete. To combat these large corporations, the federal government finally stepped in during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. A progressive president, Theodore Roosevelt took measures to reign in the power of trusts as displayed in Doc 1. In this cartoon, Roosevelt is killing a “Bad Trust” bear, likely representing the cartoonist’s point of view that Roosevelt was subjective when making laws to control trust. Woodrow Wilson, another progressive president also combated monopolies with his Clayton Antitrust Act. (Doc 4). Its purpose was to not allow trusts to be discriminatory in pricing. Neither of these president's’ acts were fully successful. Louis Brandeis a reformer lawyer took on cases against trusts including the New England Railroad Company, teaming with Wilson and successfully dissolved it. Though there was some change in the power of railroads and monopolies, corporations continued to dominate the capitalist economy.

Along with trying to decrease the power of the wealthy, reformers also wanted to give more support to the struggling lower classes who lived in cities and worked for these corporations. Economically the 17th Amendment was passed which placed a graduated income tax, which taxed the rich more heavily but helped the common people with more services. The income tax was suggested in Wisconsin by then Governor Robert La Follett in (Doc 3). This autobiography explains his point of view which was to relieve the burden of the poor. This was a successful act and inspired the later federal 17th amendment. The poor were prominent in cities and there were increasing local measures to support them.改革者，Jane Addams created the Hull House to support the immigrants with more opportunity. Muckrakers such as Jacob Riis and Upton Sinclair exposed the truth behind the lower classes working and living conditions. Riis took photos tenements while Sinclair wrote about meatpacking. The Neill-Reynolds report also exposed health dangers of workers (Doc 2). Its purpose was to explain the dirtiness of the factories in order to evoke change in sanitation. Both these reformers were rather successful, with measure from the federal government addressing these issues and awareness from the public. In cities there were new housing laws passed after uproar in response to “How the Other Half Lives”, and the Food and Drug Administration were created. However, conditions for the poor; continued to be less than ideal, though there were some major changes.
Political, economic, and social reforms were pushed by progressives to help the unrepressed groups such as immigrants, children, women, and African Americans. In the South the blacks were granted full citizenship and voting rights with the 14th and 15th amendments, but they still faced much oppression. There was segregation and there were laws such as grandfather clause that kept them from voting. Progressives opposed this injustice and WEB Dubois fought back. In “The Crisis” (doc 7), he says that blacks must continue to fight because they are still treated unfairly. This book was likely directed at the federal and state governments in all attempt to get them to do more for black equality after World War I. However, there was little success and the progressive presidents including Woodrow Wilson payed no attention to reforms for blacks. Women also had little success and as displayed in (Doc 6) they are “not self-governed”. Though there were aggressive suffragists such as Alice Paul, they did not gain voting rights until after WWI.

Progressives addressed many problems in society with varying success, however overall there were not enough significant changes. Some reforms did have a major impact and still are present today. The FDA still protects public health and cities are more sanitary. There are always progressive reformers throughout history, whether it is those who are anti-slavery and wanted emancipation before the civil war, or today the achievements in rights for gay marriage. There are many problems in society in any era and progressives of different identities will stand up for change and push the federal government to fix them.

COMMENTS:

Introduction provides clearly worded context on nature of the “Gilded Age” and how this set stage for progressive reformers. First paragraph also includes a systematically focused thesis mentioning both grassroots and federal level reform. Earns A in Context/Thesis Category.

Body paragraphs are consistently structured to connect to thesis and supported with evidence from 6 of 7 documents and substantial relevant details not found directly in documents. Commentary on relevance of the evidence addresses point of view, context and audience either directly or indirectly. Commentary could be extended at times, but given time limitations, still shows strong understanding of relevance of evidence. Earns A- in Use of Documents and A in Use of Outside Knowledge.

Conclusion clearly reviews thesis and generally connects to impacts at the time and to some extent later in history. Conclusion/Synthesis earns a B.

Overall, essay earned an A 47/50.
US Overseas Expansionism DBQ Sample

Prompt: Compare and contrast views of the United States overseas expansion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Evaluate how understandings of national identity, at the time, shaped these views.

Document Based Evidence in BOLD and Outside Knowledge Evidence in Italics

Following the industrial revolution, the society of the United States began to rapidly change in response to political machines and monopolistic businesses. Groups such as the Grangers and Knights of Labor began to push towards progressivism that created ideals that would infiltrate the actions of both the Democrats and Republicans. As these changes were occurring domestically, international affairs also became highly debated topics. The newly established progressive ideals created a new national identity, making imperialism highly controversial. When it came to deciding whether or not the United States should get involved in the affairs of such places as Cuba and the Philippines, a new sense of patriotism and nationalism led some to believe that it was America’s obligation as a democratic nation to spread its ideals. Others, meanwhile, believed not only that the imperialistic motives had more to do with economic and political power and that international involvement would lead to further conflicts ultimately detrimental to American society and identity.

By the time the US faced the question of involvement in international affairs, progressives had established a strong platform of being anti-monopoly, anti-political machine, and pro-government involvement in improving the lives of civilians. This created significant fears that war and imperialism would only feed monopolies and political machines and reduce government attention to domestic issues. Social reformer Jane Addams said that, “the newspapers, the theatrical posters, the street conversations for weeks had to do with war and bloodshed. The little children on the street played at war.” Addams purpose was to convey that the imperialism that led to the war with Spain over Cuba was detrimental to society. William Graham Sumner, a professor at Yale also questioned the motives of imperialism, to try and help his audience understand that although they are told that it is beneficial to the country, the people trying to convince them of this are the same people that will gain power from imperialism. “We are told by all the imperialists that these people are not fit for liberty and self-government,” but in reality, Sumner explains involvement will not fix these problems, only create more for the United States. William Jennings Bryan was a democrat nominee for president, who possessed many progressive ideals such as “free silver.” He was also an anti-imperialist, and during his campaign he attempted to show US citizens the dangers of imperialism to the progress that society had already made. As a progressive, he wanted to improve aspects of society such as race relations, and when it came to the question of acquiring the Philippines, he believed that, “they cannot, without danger to us, share in government of our nation, and moreover, we cannot afford to add another race question to the race questions we already have.” The national identity formed by the changes in society the progressives worked to achieve, brought out major flaws in the ideals of imperialists, and led to its strong opposition by such progressives.

Despite this opposition, many people felt a sense of pride and patriotism during the progressive era and felt that it was America’s responsibility to spread its democratic ideals of liberty. Progressivism led to more rights for African Americans. Many of them such as E.E Cooper, editor for the Newspaper Colored American, believed that war such as that with Spain would create a “quickened sense of our duty to one another… and cement races into a more compact brotherhood through perfect unity of purpose and patriotic affinity.” Cooper aimed to encourage the audience of the newspaper to support imperialism for the good of US society. Others such as President William McKinley believed that US involvement in troubled places such as Cuba and the Philippines was an obligation. He believed that not getting involved would be, “cowardly and dishonorable.” by these justifications, he was able to make the decision to add the Philippines as a US territory. Theodore Roosevelt was also in favor of assisting the
Philippines. He wanted to change the minds of those who make a pretense of humanitarianism to hide and cover their timidity. Many people felt pride in America, and felt that getting was the country’s responsibility.

Involvement in Cuba and the Philippines proved to be just the beginning of the United States involvement in international affairs. Woodrow Wilson’s policy of “moral diplomacy” stemmed from past involvements in China and Hawaii and eventually in Mexico and World War I. Progressive ideals left many people feeling hesitant about imperialism, but the national identity it created, which was bolstered by efforts of George Creel and the CPI, led more Americans to support overseas expansion for the good of the economy and society. Still, as the conflicts abroad got more and more complex, so did the questions regarding the impacts of involvement and potential consequences. World War I and later World War II would both test America’s policy of involvement overseas and provide new reasons for both support and disapproval of imperialism.

**COMMENTS:**

Introduction provides clearly worded and detailed context on domestic trends in the US during the late 19th and early 20th Century that set stage for foreign affairs which is main focus of essay. Also, directly mentions the issue of national identity asked about in the prompt and provides a slightly wordy, but relevant thesis comparing & contrasting views on how overseas expansion impacted American identity. Earns A/A- in Context,Thesis Category.

Body paragraphs are consistently structured to connect to thesis and supported with direct or indirect evidence from all documents. There are various relevant details not found directly in documents mixed through essay as well. Commentary on relevance of the evidence addresses purpose, context, audience and point of view either directly or indirectly. Commentary on relevance of race is a bit confused, but effort to make connections to impact on views of American identity is consistent. Earns A in Use of Documents and A- in Use of Outside Knowledge.

Conclusion introduces the idea that this was a period that had far reaching impact on the future of US foreign policy and identity. Some, although limited, connections to later trends in history are introduced. Conclusion/Synthesis earns a B.

Overall, essay earned an A- 45.5/50.