Populism and Progressivism

Historical Background

**POPULISM**
- During the 1880’s, farmers believed that industrialists and bankers controlled both the republicans and the democrats within the government
- Western farmers formed the Populist Party
- Initiated a program in 1882 in Omaha, Nebraska
  - Sought free and limited coinage of silver and graduated income tax so the wealthy pay more than the poor
  - Sought government ownership of railroad, telephone and telegraph systems
  - Wanted the government to get more involved in the economy and wanted to stop laissez faire
  - Aimed for a secret ballot and direct election

**PROGRESSIVISM**
- Progressivism- a movement to improve American life by taking advantage of democracy
  - Progressives were:
    - Optimistic and forward-looking
    - Against restoring rule of America, more for accepting industrialization and urbanization
    - Wanted to correct evils of industrialization but were pro-machinery
- “The remedy for the evils of democracy, progressives believed, is more democracy” –American History, Second Edition
- Wanted to set up political procedures to help the people have more control over their lives by way of the government
- Shocked by poverty afflicting Americans
- Plan to eliminate practices harming farmers, workers, tenement dwellers, and consumers by expanding government regulation over the economy

Significant Events
- 1800-1900- Muckrakers- Journalists, novelists, critics, that investigated political and social corruption
  - Conditions in slums, prisons, factories, sweat shops, mines, child labor, unsanitary conditions and food processing
  - Upton St. Clair – “The Jungle”
- 1880- Western Farmers begin thinking as “populists”
- 1883- Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act: established US Civil Service Commission, put most federal employees on the merit system instead of the spoils system (corrupted)
- 1890- First National Populist Convention, held in Columbus, Nebraska.
• 1892- Populist Party chose James B. Weaver as a presidential candidate, but he lost.
• 1896- The Populist Party supported William Jennings Bryan but after his loss, disappeared as a party. Their ideas popped up later in the progressive era.
• 1913- 17th Amendment was ratified, allowing direct election of senators.
• 1920- 19th Amendment: “The right of the citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.
  o Extended women’s suffrage.

Sources
• “Was the Progressive movement really Progressive?” –Glen Gendzel.
  o Gendzel evaluates the nature of Progressivism. He explores progressives and their ideas, and its effect on the entire nation. Gendzel reflects on the type of society in which Progressivism exists, and personally believed it gave balance. Progressives were honest reformers, Gendzel understood, and they sought to prevent Americans from hurting themselves.
  o Allison believed Progressivism was the middle class’s attempt to make the entire nation the same state that they resided. He saw their motives as selfish and their outcome as unproductive.
• “The Jungle” –Upton St. Clair.
  o Graphically depicts the dangers of industrialization, specifically in the meat packing industry.

Study Tips (for IB topics)
• Both Progressive and Populist movements are given in a general outline in the blue and white American History books.
• People of a Nation is not really helpful, so don’t waste your time.
• The Sources given by Mrs. Lee in the Industrialization Unit are very insightful and should be studied for specific examples.
• DO YOUR JOURNALS!

Paper 2/Paper 3 Questions that can be used to study for this topic
• No relative questions in Paper 2.
• Paper 3:
  o 82. Using specific examples from two countries, explain the factors that influenced the growth of cities in the second half of the nineteenth century.
  o 83. Describe the role of industrialization in any two countries of the region in the first half of the nineteenth century.
  o 87. What were the major goals of the Progressives in the US and to what extent were they achieved by 1920?
88. In what ways, and for what reasons, did the aims of the progressives appeal to people in the Americas from the late 1890s to 1914? Support your answer with specific evidence from one or more countries in the region.