Reforming the Rules

Compare presidential agendas and judge Progressive Era reforms

SS24.US1.20 "Compare and contrast the domestic agendas and accomplishments of Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson. 20a Critique the effectiveness of national legislation passed during the Progressive Era in addressing concerns..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one business action by each president, circle one stated limit of a business law, and number the two voting reforms. Use your marks to compare what the reforms changed.

Three Presidents, Different Approaches

1. When a coal strike threatened winter heat in 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt brought mine owners and workers to the negotiating table. His Square Deal promised the public a fairer balance among business, labor, and consumers. He used the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 to challenge some powerful trusts, including Northern Securities, a railroad holding company. But the law's broad language left courts to decide which restraints on trade were illegal, and Roosevelt did not seek to break up every large company.

2. President William Howard Taft also used the Sherman Act, and his administration filed more antitrust suits than Roosevelt's. A Supreme Court decision in 1911 broke up Standard Oil, yet the Court said the law barred only "unreasonable" restraints on trade. That rule offered flexibility but left businesses uncertain about what was legal. Taft also signed the Mann-Elkins Act of 1910, which strengthened federal control over railroad rates. That measure targeted a specific industry rather than all monopolies.

3. Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom sought stronger rules for competition. The Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914 named specific practices, including certain price discrimination and mergers that could reduce competition, and protected lawful union activity from being treated as an illegal trust. The Federal Trade Commission investigated unfair business practices. These measures clarified rules, but enforcement still depended on officials and courts. Meanwhile, the Seventeenth Amendment established direct election of senators in 1913, and the Nineteenth Amendment barred denying the vote on account of sex in 1920.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Taft's use of the Sherman Act compare with Roosevelt's?

2. What did the Standard Oil decision show about both the power and the limits of the Sherman Act?

3. How did the Clayton Act address a problem with the Sherman Act, and what limit remained?

4. How did the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Amendments change political participation, unlike the business laws in the passage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence recommendation to a reform group in 1920: should it prioritize stronger business regulation or expanded voter power to limit corporate influence? Compare actions under two presidents, cite one amendment, and acknowledge a limit of your choice.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.20

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one business action by each president, circle one stated limit of a business law, and number the two voting reforms. Use your marks to compare what the reforms changed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Taft's use of the Sherman Act compare with Roosevelt's?	**Both used the Sherman Act against trusts, but Taft's administration filed more antitrust suits.**
2	What did the Standard Oil decision show about both the power and the limits of the Sherman Act?	**The decision broke up Standard Oil, showing the law could be effective. By applying it only to unreasonable restraints, the Court also left uncertainty about what the law prohibited.**
3	How did the Clayton Act address a problem with the Sherman Act, and what limit remained?	**The Clayton Act named specific practices instead of relying only on the Sherman Act's broad language. Its effectiveness still depended on enforcement by officials and courts.**
4	How did the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Amendments change political participation, unlike the business laws in the passage?	**The Seventeenth Amendment gave voters direct election of senators, and the Nineteenth barred denying the vote on account of sex. The business laws regulated trade practices and railroad rates instead.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would prioritize stronger business regulation to limit corporate influence. Roosevelt used the Sherman Act to challenge trusts, but its broad wording left decisions about illegal conduct to courts. Wilson's Clayton Act named harmful practices more clearly, while the Federal Trade Commission could investigate unfair conduct. The Seventeenth Amendment gave voters direct control over Senate elections, but it could not directly stop unfair mergers. Stronger business rules would still need consistent enforcement.

Accept either priority in Part 3 if the response compares two presidents, accurately cites an amendment, and explains a relevant limit. For question 3, students may note that courts and officials still had to enforce the Clayton Act.