Power and Progress

Compare presidential approaches to reform in the Progressive Era

USH.C.2.4 "Analyze and compare the personalities, actions and policies of presidents during the Progressive Era. Describe the efforts of President Theodore Roosevelt's administration, including the promises of the Square Deal, Meat Inspection Act..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one action or policy for each president, and circle two phrases that show how their approaches differed. Number the two third-party candidates in the 1912 election 1 and 2.

Three Presidents, Different Paths

1. Theodore Roosevelt treated the presidency like a public stage. His Square Deal promised ordinary people a fair chance against powerful interests. He used antitrust laws to challenge some giant companies, but accepted large firms that he thought served the public. After reports of filthy meatpacking plants, he signed the 1906 Meat Inspection Act, which required federal inspection of meat. He also backed the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act and protected millions of acres of public land, making conservation a national priority.

2. William Howard Taft had a quieter style, yet his administration brought more antitrust lawsuits than Roosevelt's. Roosevelt often chose which trusts to fight; Taft relied more on court action, even suing a company Roosevelt had allowed to grow. Taft did not create the Interstate Commerce Commission: Congress formed it in 1887. Instead, the 1910 Mann-Elkins Act strengthened its power to regulate railroad rates. Nor did Taft pass the Pure Food and Drug Act; Roosevelt signed it in 1906. Their differences helped turn former allies into rivals.

3. In 1912, Roosevelt ran as the Bull Moose Party candidate against Republican Taft. Their split helped Democrat Woodrow Wilson win. Socialist candidate Eugene V. Debs won nearly one million votes, showing a third party could gain support without winning. Wilson's New Freedom called for stronger competition by curbing monopolies and reforming banking. Unlike Roosevelt, who accepted some large firms, Wilson initially sought to limit their power. Wilson signed the 1913 Federal Reserve Act, creating a central banking system to steady credit and currency.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Taft's approach to trusts differ from Roosevelt's?

2. How did Roosevelt and Taft each use federal power to regulate businesses? Give one example for each.

3. What did the 1912 election show about the influence and limits of third parties?

4. How did Wilson's New Freedom differ from Roosevelt's approach to large firms, and what banking reform did Wilson sign?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a brief newspaper editorial from 1913 arguing which of the three presidents took the most effective approach to corporate power. Compare your choice with another president, use at least two accurate actions or policies from the passage, and explain one trade-off.

ANSWER KEY

Power and Progress

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.2.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one action or policy for each president, and circle two phrases that show how their approaches differed. Number the two third-party candidates in the 1912 election 1 and 2. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Taft's approach to trusts differ from Roosevelt's?	**Roosevelt chose which large firms to challenge and accepted some; Taft relied more on lawsuits and brought more of them.**
2	How did Roosevelt and Taft each use federal power to regulate businesses? Give one example for each.	**Roosevelt signed the Meat Inspection Act, requiring federal inspection of meat. Under Taft, the Mann-Elkins Act strengthened the Interstate Commerce Commission's power over railroad rates.**
3	What did the 1912 election show about the influence and limits of third parties?	**Roosevelt's Bull Moose campaign split Republican support and helped Wilson win. Debs drew nearly one million votes for the Socialist Party, but neither third-party candidate won.**
4	How did Wilson's New Freedom differ from Roosevelt's approach to large firms, and what banking reform did Wilson sign?	**Wilson initially sought to curb monopolies and increase competition, while Roosevelt accepted some large firms. Wilson signed the Federal Reserve Act.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Roosevelt's approach to corporate power was more effective than Taft's because he paired antitrust action with safeguards people could see. He challenged some giant companies and signed the Meat Inspection Act to protect consumers. Taft brought more antitrust lawsuits, which may have made enforcement more consistent, but court cases alone did not address unsafe meat. Roosevelt's trade-off was that he let some big firms remain if he believed they served the public.

Accept other supported judgments that compare two presidents, cite at least two accurate actions or policies, and explain a plausible trade-off. Do not credit claims that Taft created the Interstate Commerce Commission or signed the Pure Food and Drug Act.