



SOCIAL STUDIES NOTES™



THE REBIRTH OF A NATION 1865-1901

Reconstruction, Industrialization, Immigration,
Expansion, and Society during the Gilded Age



UIL Social Studies Notes

2026-2027

TOPIC: The Rebirth of a Nation: Reconstruction, Industrialization, Immigration, Expansion, and Society during the Gilded Age, 1865-1901

Written by
Hexco Academic

UIL Social Studies Notes is a time-tested 'tool kit' for building a solid annual topic foundation. Covering concepts, documents, terms, people, themes, events, and a plethora of significant facts, *Social Studies Notes* is arranged to facilitate full-topic comprehension, and the order of discussion may differ from the actual test. In this regard, students will be able to form their own unique ideas and opinions which are especially useful in the essay portion of the contest as well as in everyday life. We encourage students to become familiar with the format of the contest while reading which consists of 45 multiple-choice questions and an essay.

UIL High School Social Studies contest test format is as follows for a possible total of 100 points.

- Part 1—General Knowledge = 20 points (20 questions, 1 point each)
- Part 2—Primary Reading = 30 points (15 questions, 2 points each)
- Part 3—Supporting Documents = 30 points (10 questions, 3 points each)
- Essay = 20 points

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— President Hexco Inc., Linda Tarrant

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Social Studies Notes 2026-2027

INTRODUCTION

Between 1865 and 1901, the United States experienced one of the most dramatic periods of change in its history. The nation emerged deeply divided from the Civil War and faced the difficult task of rebuilding the South, redefining freedom, and deciding what rights formerly enslaved people would have. At the same time, the country rapidly industrialized, millions of immigrants arrived, railroads expanded across the continent, and the U.S. began to take a larger role in world affairs. This era was filled with both progress and conflict. New technologies and businesses created wealth and opportunity, but poverty, discrimination, political corruption, labor unrest, and violence also shaped American life.

This period is sometimes described as a "rebirth." The meaning of citizenship changed through constitutional amendments, the economy shifted from farming toward industry, and the nation expanded westward and overseas. However, this rebirth was uneven. African Americans faced the rise of segregation after Reconstruction, Native Americans lost land and sovereignty, many workers struggled under harsh conditions, immigrants faced nativism, and farmers protested the power of railroads and banks. By 1901, the U.S. had become more modern, more industrial, more urban, and more powerful, but it had also created problems that would lead to reform movements in the Progressive Era.

Reconstruction, 1865-1877

After the Civil War ended in 1865, the U.S. had to decide what freedom would mean for formerly enslaved people. This period, known as Reconstruction, focused on bringing the former Confederate states back into the Union, rebuilding the South's economy, and defining the rights of newly freed African Americans. The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments ended slavery, granted citizenship and equal protection, and protected voting rights for Black men. However, Reconstruction also faced strong resistance from many white Southerners, who used Black Codes, violence, intimidation, and groups such as the Ku Klux Klan to limit African American freedom. Although Reconstruction brought important political and constitutional changes, it ended in 1877 when federal troops were withdrawn from the South, allowing white Southern Democrats to regain control and begin creating the system of segregation known as Jim Crow.

Industrialization, 1870s-1900

After the Civil War, the U.S. rapidly transformed from a mostly agricultural nation into one of the world's leading industrial powers. Railroads expanded across the country, factories grew, cities became centers of production, and new inventions changed the way Americans lived and worked. Business leaders such as Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and J. P. Morgan built enormous corporations in industries such as steel, oil, railroads, and finance. Supporters saw these men as "captains of industry" who helped modernize the nation, while critics called them "robber barons" because of their unfair business practices and extreme wealth. This era became known as the Gilded Age because, beneath the appearance of prosperity and progress, the nation struggled with poverty, political corruption, dangerous working conditions, and a growing gap between the rich and the poor.

STUDY TOOLS AND THEMATIC REVIEW**Timeline**

Date	Event
March 3, 1865	Freedmen's Bureau is established to assist formerly enslaved people and poor Southerners.
April 9, 1865	Civil War effectively ends when Robert E. Lee surrenders at Appomattox Court House.
April 14, 1865	Abraham Lincoln is assassinated.
April 15, 1865	Andrew Johnson becomes president.
December 6, 1865	13 th Amendment is ratified.
1865-1866	Southern states pass Black Codes.
April 9, 1866	Civil Rights Act of 1866 is passed over Johnson's veto.
March 2, 1867	First Reconstruction Act is passed.
February 24, 1868	Andrew Johnson is impeached by the House of Representatives.
July 9, 1868	14 th Amendment is ratified.
November 3, 1868	Ulysses S. Grant is elected president.
May 10, 1869	First Transcontinental Railroad is completed.
January 10, 1870	Standard Oil is founded by John D. Rockefeller.
February 3, 1870	15 th Amendment is ratified.
May 31, 1870-April 20, 1871	Enforcement Acts are passed to protect Black voting rights and fight the Ku Klux Klan.
November 5, 1872	Ulysses S. Grant wins reelection.
September 18, 1873	Panic of 1873 begins after Jay Cooke & Company collapses.
May 10, 1876	Centennial Exposition opens in Philadelphia.
June 25-26, 1876	Battle of Little Bighorn takes place.
November 7, 1876	Rutherford B. Hayes and Samuel J. Tilden compete in the disputed Election of 1876.
January 29, 1877	Congress creates the Electoral Commission to settle the disputed election.
February-March 1877	Compromise of 1877 resolves the election dispute and helps end Reconstruction.
March 5, 1877	Rutherford B. Hayes is inaugurated as president.
July 14, 1877	Great Railroad Strike begins in Martinsburg, West Virginia.
November 2, 1880	James A. Garfield is elected president.
September 20, 1881	Chester A. Arthur assumes the presidency after Garfield dies following an assassination attempt.
May 6, 1882	Chinese Exclusion Act is passed.
January 16, 1883	Pendleton Civil Service Act is passed.
November 4, 1884	Grover Cleveland is elected president.
May 4, 1886	Haymarket Affair takes place in Chicago.
February 8, 1887	Dawes Act is passed.
November 6, 1888	Benjamin Harrison is elected president.
July 2, 1890	Sherman Antitrust Act is passed.

Presidents and the Changing Nation

These presidents show the shift from Reconstruction to industrial growth, political reform, immigration restriction, and overseas expansion.

Abraham Lincoln, 1861-1865

Lincoln's presidency ended with Union victory in the Civil War and the beginning of Reconstruction planning. His assassination in April 1865 meant that he did not oversee Reconstruction, leaving the process to Andrew Johnson and Congress.

Andrew Johnson, 1865-1869

Johnson favored a lenient approach to Reconstruction that allowed many former Confederates to regain power quickly. His conflict with Radical Republicans over civil rights and federal authority led to his impeachment in 1868.

Ulysses S. Grant, 1869-1877

Grant's presidency was closely tied to Reconstruction enforcement, especially federal efforts to protect Black voting rights and suppress the Ku Klux Klan. His administration was also damaged by scandals and the Panic of 1873, which weakened Republican support.

Rutherford B. Hayes, 1877-1881

Hayes became president after the disputed Election of 1876 and the Compromise of 1877. His presidency marked the formal end of Reconstruction as federal troops were removed from the South.

James A. Garfield, 1881

Garfield's brief presidency exposed the dangers of the spoils system after he was assassinated by a disappointed office seeker. His death helped build support for civil service reform.

Chester A. Arthur, 1881-1885

Arthur surprised many by supporting civil service reform, despite his earlier connection to machine politics. During his presidency, the Pendleton Civil Service Act began replacing patronage with merit-based government jobs, while the Chinese Exclusion Act reflected growing anti-immigrant politics.

Grover Cleveland, 1885-1889

Cleveland promoted limited government and opposed many forms of federal economic aid. His first term included the Interstate Commerce Act and Dawes Act, showing the federal government's growing involvement in railroads and Native American policy.

Benjamin Harrison, 1889-1893

Harrison's presidency saw high tariffs, major federal spending, and the Sherman Antitrust Act. His administration also reflected early expansionist thinking and growing debates over business regulation.

Quick Reference	
President	Party
Abraham Lincoln	Republican
Andrew Johnson	Democrat
Ulysses S. Grant	Republican
Rutherford B. Hayes	Republican
James A. Garfield	Republican
Chester A. Arthur	Republican
Grover Cleveland	Democrat
Benjamin Harrison	Republican
Grover Cleveland	Democrat
William McKinley	Republican
Theodore Roosevelt	Republican

Frederick Jackson Turner v. Josiah Strong (1885-1893)

Category	Frederick Jackson Turner	Josiah Strong
Goals	Explain the frontier's role in shaping American democracy and character.	Promote expansion through religion, race, and Anglo-Saxon mission ideas.
Beliefs	The frontier encouraged individualism, democracy, and national development.	Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans had a duty to spread their civilization and Christianity.
Actions	Presented <i>The Significance of the Frontier in American History</i> in 1893.	Wrote <i>Our Country</i> and influenced religious and expansionist thinking.
Impact	Shaped historical interpretation of western expansion for generations.	Helped justify missionary reform, imperialism, and expansionist attitudes.

Eugene Debs v. Samuel Gompers (1890s-1900s)

Category	Eugene Debs	Samuel Gompers
Goals	Build broad working-class solidarity and eventually move toward socialism.	Win better wages, hours, and conditions for skilled workers.
Beliefs	Capitalism created deep class conflict that required systemic change.	Labor should focus on achievable economic gains rather than broad political revolution.
Actions	Led the ARU, supported the Pullman boycott, went to jail, and later became a socialist leader.	Led the AFL and emphasized collective bargaining and practical unionism.
Impact	Became the best-known socialist labor figure in the U.S.	Made the AFL the dominant national labor organization.

Booker T. Washington v. W.E.B. Du Bois (1895-1903)

Category	Booker T. Washington	W.E.B. Du Bois
Goals	Promote Black American progress through vocational education, economic self-help, and gradual advancement.	Demand civil rights, political equality, and higher education for Black leaders.
Beliefs	Economic strength and practical skills would eventually lead to respect and rights.	Rights had to be demanded directly, and higher education was necessary for leadership.
Actions	Gave the Atlanta Compromise speech and built Tuskegee Institute.	Criticized accommodation, promoted the Talented Tenth, and later helped found the NAACP.
Impact	Became the most influential Black leader of the late 19 th century among many white philanthropists and officials.	Shaped 20 th -century civil rights activism.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Individuals

Adams, Henry – (1838-1918) Adams was a writer, journalist, historian, and member of the famous Adams political family. He became a sharp critic of the new industrial and financial order. Adams believed the post-Civil War world had become confusing, corrupt, and dominated by machines, money, speculation, and corporate power. His response to events such as the Erie War and Black Friday showed his fear that capitalism had weakened older forms of politics, learning, public virtue, and social leadership.

Akerman, Amos T. – (1821-1880) Akerman was a lawyer from Georgia who became U.S. attorney general under President Ulysses S. Grant during Reconstruction. Although he had lived in the South and served the Confederacy during the Civil War, he later became a strong Republican supporter of Reconstruction and voting rights for Black Americans. As attorney general, Akerman helped enforce federal laws against the Ku Klux Klan and other groups that used violence to stop Black Americans from voting and participating in politics.

Alger, Horatio – (1832-1899) Alger was a popular American author. He wrote many novels for young readers that followed poor boys who improved their lives through honesty, hard work, courage, and perseverance. His stories helped popularize the idea that anyone could rise from poverty to success, an idea often connected to the "American Dream." Although his books usually showed success coming through good character and help from mentors rather than sudden wealth, the phrase "Horatio Alger story" later came to mean a rags-to-riches success story.

Ames, Adelbert – (1835-1933) A Union Army officer and Reconstruction-era Republican politician, Ames served in the Civil War and became involved in Mississippi politics during Reconstruction and served as both a U.S. senator and governor of Mississippi. Ames supported political rights for formerly enslaved Black Americans, which made him a controversial figure in the postwar South. White Democrats and opponents of Reconstruction attacked him as a "carpetbagger," while supporters saw him as part of the federal effort to rebuild the South and protect Black citizenship.

Ames, Oakes – (1804-1873) A Massachusetts businessman and Republican member of Congress, Ames was involved in building the Union Pacific Railroad, one of the companies responsible for the transcontinental railroad. Ames became nationally known for his role in the Crédit Mobilier scandal, in which railroad insiders used a construction company to make large profits from government-supported railroad building. Members of Congress were accused of receiving discounted stock, creating a major corruption scandal during the Grant era. Ames was censured by the House of Representatives, and his name became associated with political corruption.

Arthur, Chester A. – (1829-1886) He became the 21st president after President James A. Garfield was assassinated in 1881. Before becoming president, Arthur had been connected to New York political machines and the patronage system, which rewarded political supporters with government jobs. Surprisingly, as president he supported the Pendleton Civil Service Act of 1883, which helped create a merit-based system for many federal jobs.

Bell, Alexander Graham – (1847-1922) He was an inventor, scientist, and teacher of the deaf. He is best known for inventing and patenting the telephone in 1876. Bell's work grew partly from his interest in sound, speech, and helping people with hearing impairments. He also worked on other inventions and scientific projects, including improvements to the phonograph, experiments with transmitting sound by light, and research connected to flight.

Individuals by Theme: Quick Reference

Some individuals could fit into more than one category. They are grouped here by the role or issue most useful for studying this topic.

Reconstruction, Civil Rights, and Black Citizenship

Individual	Quick ID
Akerman, Amos T.	Grant attorney general; prosecuted the Ku Klux Klan
Ames, Adelbert	Reconstruction governor and senator from Mississippi
Bradley, Aaron Alpeoria	Black lawyer and Georgia Reconstruction politician
Catto, Octavius	Black civil rights activist killed during election violence
Douglass, Frederick	Abolitionist; civil rights, voting rights, Black citizenship
Grant, Ulysses S.	President; Reconstruction enforcement and anti-Klan action
Harlan, John Marshall	Supreme Court justice; dissented in <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i>
Hayes, Rutherford B.	Compromise of 1877; end of Reconstruction
Johnson, Andrew	Lenient Reconstruction; conflict with Congress; impeachment
Rainey, Joseph	First Black American U.S. representative
Stevens, Thaddeus	Radical Republican; federal protection for Black Americans
Sumner, Charles	Radical Republican; civil rights and equality
Trumbull, Lyman	Helped write Civil Rights Act of 1866
Wells, Ida B.	Anti-lynching journalist and activist

Politics, Parties, and Government Reform

Individual	Quick ID
Arthur, Chester A.	Pendleton Act; civil service reform
Blaine, James G.	Republican leader; Pan-Americanism
Cleveland, Grover	Limited government; gold standard; Pullman response
Conkling, Roscoe	Stalwart Republican; patronage politics
Garfield, James A.	Assassination helped spur civil service reform
Godkin, E. L.	Editor; critic of corruption and machines
Hanna, Mark	McKinley campaign manager; business-backed politics
Harrison, Benjamin	Sherman Antitrust Act; high tariffs
Reed, Thomas	Speaker of the House; Reed Rules
Sand, Julia	Letters urging Arthur to rise above machine politics
Schurz, Charles	Civil service reform; anti-imperialism
Sherman, John	Sherman Antitrust Act; money and regulation
Tweed, William M.	Boss Tweed; Tammany Hall corruption

Related Terms

100th meridian – The 100th meridian is the line of longitude at 100 degrees west, often used as a rough dividing line between the wetter eastern U.S. and the drier Great Plains and western regions. Explorer and geologist John Wesley Powell used this line to help explain why farming in the West required different land-use policies than farming in the East. East of the line, rainfall was usually more reliable, while west of it, farming was riskier without irrigation or special adaptations. The 100th meridian became important in debates over settlement, agriculture, water use, and the limits of westward expansion.

***A Fool's Errand, by One of the Fools* by Albion W. Tourgée** – This 1879 novel by Albion W. Tourgée is about Reconstruction in the South after the Civil War. Tourgée was a Northern reformer and judge who lived in North Carolina, so the book drew on his own experiences with Southern politics, racism, and resistance to Reconstruction. The novel follows a Northern man who moves South hoping to help rebuild society and support former slaves, only to face violence, prejudice, and political failure.

***A Hazard of New Fortunes* by William Dean Howells** – William Dean Howells, one of the leading American realist writers, wrote this novel in 1889 which focuses on New York City and follows characters connected to the creation of a new magazine. Through their experiences, Howells explores class divisions, labor conflict, capitalism, immigration, socialism, and the pressures of urban life.

Alabama Claims – These were demands made by the U.S. against Great Britain after the Civil War. The dispute centered on Confederate ships, especially the CSS Alabama, that had been built in Britain and used to attack Union merchant ships. The U.S. argued that Britain had failed to remain truly neutral during the war. The issue was settled by international arbitration after the Treaty of Washington, and in 1872 Britain was ordered to pay the U.S. \$15.5 million. The Alabama Claims helped establish arbitration as a peaceful way to settle international disputes.

American Federation of Labor – The AFL was a national labor organization founded in 1886 and led for many years by Samuel Gompers. Unlike the Knights of Labor, the AFL focused mainly on skilled workers organized by trade or craft. It emphasized practical goals such as higher wages, shorter hours, safer working conditions, and collective bargaining. The AFL avoided some broader reform movements and instead concentrated on "bread-and-butter" unionism. It became one of the most powerful labor organizations in the U.S.

American Protective Association – The APA was a secretive anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant organization founded in Iowa in 1887. It reflected nativist fears that Catholic immigrants, especially those in cities, were becoming too powerful in American politics and society. The APA claimed to defend Protestant values and American institutions, but it spread prejudice and suspicion against Catholics and immigrants. Its popularity grew during the 1890s before declining as other political issues, especially the money question and the 1896 election, became more important.

American Railway Union – A labor union organized by Eugene Debs in 1893, it united railroad workers across different crafts into one large industrial union instead of separating workers by specific trade. The union became nationally known during the Pullman Strike of 1894, when workers protested wage cuts and conditions connected to the Pullman Company. The federal government intervened against the strike, and Debs was jailed.

PRIMARY READING – *American Colossus*

The following is a summary of *American Colossus: The Triumph of Capitalism, 1865-1900* by H. W. Brands. The summary is intended to help students review the assigned reading.

PART ONE – THE RISE OF THE MOGULS

I. PROLOGUE

- A. J. P. Morgan and other wealthy businessmen made large profits during the Civil War while ordinary soldiers and workers faced danger and hardship.
- B. Morgan avoided fighting by hiring someone to serve in his place, then used wartime business deals and private information to make money.
- C. Other future industrial giants, including Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jay Cooke, Jay Gould, and Daniel Drew, also used the chaos of the war to increase their fortunes.
- D. The Civil War also highlights a major tension in American life between democracy and capitalism.
 - 1. Democracy is based on political equality, meaning each citizen has one vote and equal standing in government.
 - 2. Capitalism is based on economic inequality, because people enter the marketplace with different skills, resources, and advantages, and they do not receive equal rewards.
 - 3. The U.S. became a powerful example of both systems, but the ideals of equality and competition often worked against each other.
 - 4. For much of early American history, democracy and capitalism competed for influence.
 - 5. In the first half of the 19th century, democracy became stronger as more states allowed ordinary white men to vote and political parties began appealing to common citizens.
- E. Andrew Jackson represented this democratic spirit because he came from humble beginnings and believed political power should come from the people.
- F. During and after the Civil War, capitalism gained power.
- G. The Republican Party helped end slavery, but it also helped business interests by supporting railroads, raising tariffs, creating a national currency, and allowing financiers like J. P. Morgan to profit from wartime opportunities.
- H. After the war, Morgan became even more powerful.
 - 1. He was not the richest capitalist of his time, but his control over money gave him enormous influence.
 - 2. His financial power helped reorganize railroads, create U.S. Steel, and even rescue the federal government from financial crisis.
- I. Capitalism changed the South, West, and cities of the North and East.
 - 1. In the South, it helped replace older social and economic systems with a more modern capitalist economy.
 - 2. In the West, it contributed to the destruction of Native peoples and economies while encouraging the exploitation of land and natural resources.
 - 3. In eastern and northern cities, it created both great wealth and terrible poverty.
 - 4. Capitalism also reshaped politics and law, as courts and political parties increasingly protected business interests.
 - 5. By the late 19th century, capitalism threatened to overpower democracy.

2. His experience convinced him that many manufacturers did not truly understand their own costs.
3. Carnegie used careful cost accounting to gain an advantage over competitors.
4. He tracked expenses closely, demanded efficiency, and pushed production costs down wherever possible.
5. When other steelmakers formed pools to divide contracts, Carnegie used his knowledge of costs to demand the best share and threaten lower prices if he did not get it.
6. His success came from knowing the details of production better than his rivals and constantly reducing waste.
7. Carnegie believed the key to steel was controlling costs.
8. He constantly replaced old equipment with newer, more efficient machinery, even when the old machines still worked.
9. He believed that using outdated methods would cause the U.S. to fall behind Britain, so he pushed modernization aggressively.
10. Carnegie focused on cost because it was the part of the business he could control.
11. He wanted to know exactly how much everything cost, not just how much profit the company made.
12. He also expanded control over supplies by buying coke ovens, iron mines, steamers, and railroads, which helped protect his company from outside inefficiencies and kept his mills running at full capacity.
13. By the 1880s, Carnegie had become the leading figure in the steel industry.
14. His low costs allowed him to undercut rivals when necessary and still make money.
15. He understood steel as a system that brought together iron ore, coal, limestone, manganese, transportation, machinery, and labor to produce a cheap but essential material for modern industry.

V. CHAPTER 4 – TOIL AND TROUBLE

- A. Carnegie's success in steel depended on organization as much as invention.
 1. He did not create one single new steelmaking method, but he gathered workers, trained them, rewarded strong performance, dismissed weak performance, and adapted other people's ideas effectively.
 2. Rockefeller did something similar with Standard Oil by building a highly organized system that improved efficiency and crushed competition.
 3. Although Carnegie's steel empire depended on labor, he rarely emphasized the workers who mined coal and iron, transported materials, and ran the mills.
 4. This was especially important because industrial capitalism helped create a permanent American working class.
- B. Work in places like Pennsylvania coal mines was harsh, dirty, dangerous, and exhausting.
 1. Industrial workers helped build the wealth of capitalists, but they often lived and labored in grim conditions.
 2. Coal mining became essential because coal was the best fuel for steam power, and the richest anthracite coal deposits were in Pennsylvania.
 3. Early mining was small and simple, but as mines went deeper, they required more expensive technology, especially pumps, stronger supports, and larger systems of transportation.

Legislation

Reconstruction Acts, 1867-1868

Summary/Context: The Reconstruction Acts were passed by Congress after the Civil War because many Republicans believed Southern states had not done enough to protect former slaves or create loyal governments. Congress rejected President Andrew Johnson's lenient Reconstruction plan and placed the former Confederate states, except Tennessee, under military rule. These laws marked the beginning of Congressional Reconstruction, when the federal government took a stronger role in rebuilding the South and protecting Black civil and political rights.

Main Provisions: Divided the South into five military districts, required former Confederate states to write new state constitutions, required states to ratify the 14th Amendment, and required Black male suffrage before Southern states could rejoin Congress

Purpose: To rebuild Southern governments under federal supervision and protect the rights of formerly enslaved people

Impact: The acts gave Black men political power in the South and helped create new Republican state governments during Reconstruction. They also increased conflict between Congress and President Johnson, eventually contributing to his impeachment.

Significance: The Reconstruction Acts showed a major expansion of federal power over the states. They helped enforce the 14th Amendment and temporarily created more democratic governments in the South, but they also sparked strong white Southern resistance.

The Chinese Exclusion Treaty, 1880 and Chinese Exclusion Act, 1882

Summary/Context: The Chinese Exclusion Treaty of 1880, also known as the Angell Treaty, modified earlier U.S.-China agreements and allowed the U.S. to restrict Chinese immigration. This helped clear the way for the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which was passed during a period of intense anti-Chinese racism and labor conflict, especially in the West. The act suspended the immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years, while allowing limited exceptions for groups such as merchants, teachers, students, travelers, and diplomats. It became the first major federal law to restrict immigration based on race or nationality and was not fully repealed until 1943.

Main Provisions: Allowed the U.S. to limit Chinese labor immigration, suspended the entry of Chinese laborers for ten years, required certain Chinese immigrants to prove they qualified for entry, required Chinese residents leaving the U.S. to obtain certificates for reentry, and prohibited Chinese immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens

Purpose: To restrict Chinese immigration and respond to anti-Chinese demands from white workers, politicians, and labor organizations

Impact: The act sharply limited Chinese immigration and made Chinese immigrants already in the U.S. more vulnerable to exclusion, surveillance, and deportation. It also created a federal immigration enforcement system that targeted a specific racial and national group.

Significance: The Chinese Exclusion Act marked a major turning point in U.S. immigration policy. It showed that the federal government was willing to use immigration law to enforce racial exclusion, and it shaped later restrictions on Asian immigration and citizenship.

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