

UNIT 7 ESSAY

During the course of this unit on the “Gilded Age,” we are investigating a variety of subjects from Reconstruction to Populism. Your task for this assessment is to construct an **interpretive essay** that links the **disparate facets** that we are examining in the readings and in class. In essence, develop a thesis that would inform a reader: *“In a nutshell, viewing the Gilded Age through **this particular lens** is **one** of the best ways to understand the era and to tie together its seemingly disparate elements.”* You might decide that it’s a particular institution or a particular economic, cultural, or ideological development or perhaps just a particular fundamental characteristic that successfully captures the underlying tenor of the age (remember the Unit 5 essay). Whatever you come up with, make certain that you **tie** together as many of the **disparate topics** that we have covered. If you can’t directly tie your thematic to a particular topic or development in the Gilded Age, you must at least acknowledge that limitation, i.e. do not ignore it. Unlike the Unit 5 essay, it is **not a requirement** to address other particular interpretations or insist upon it being the “best” interpretation; it only need be an interpretation that works. I encourage all of you to **consult with me** while preparing your response. As always, you **must** integrate **primary** sources and **secondary** readings assigned in Unit 7 in your essay. You can even integrate sources and readings that were not assigned, but there is sufficient material already within the unit to successfully respond to this prompt. Obviously, use the textbook and your class notes for the background (but you do not have to footnote material from the textbook or classes). Be sure to use concrete **historical evidence** to substantiate your **generalizations** and to illustrate your answer.

Your essay should be at least **five** pages with **margins** of 1 inch on all sides and type in a standard (preferably Times Roman) 12-point font. In such a short paper, remember that **clarity** and **brevity** are essential in constructing a successful response.

The essay is due Tuesday, April 29th in my office by the end of Ad Hoc

See the next page for the Essay Checklist

Essay Checklist:

- 1) Does the paper have an **introduction** that **engages** the reader, a **thesis statement**, and a brief “**road map**” to the rest of your discussion?
- 2) Consistently ask yourself: “What’s the essay’s thesis? Is it precise? Does it make sense?”
- 3) Does each paragraph **support** your thesis or discuss counterevidence that might potentially undermine your thesis?
- 4) Have you concretely and judiciously integrated the appropriate number of **primary and secondary readings** from the unit into your essay?
- 5) Have you avoided citing websites that are not scholarly in nature and, thus, not verifiable as to the information they put forward—this includes **Wikipedia**.
- 6) Have you used quotations appropriately?
 - a. Generally **do not** quote from the secondary literature but instead put the quotation in your own words.
 - b. Refrain from using large block quotations unless you are going to specifically analyze the passage.
 - c. If you do choose to quote, then identify who it was who wrote or said the words you have chosen to quote
- 7) Does the essay have a conclusion that does more than merely restate the thesis? If not, think about what would make for an appropriate conclusion.
- 8) Have you appropriately **cited** the sources you used and placed the citations as either **endnotes** or **footnotes** according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*?
- 9) Have you used a **standard font 12-point font**?
- 10) Do you have **one-inch margins** all around?
- 11) Is your essay **double-spaced**?
- 12) Have you included page **numbers** (beginning with 1 after the cover page)?
- 13) Have you avoided using the **passive** voice?
- 14) Have you avoided the **first person plural**—that is “we,” “our,” and “us.”
- 15) Have you found appropriate **replacement words** for “**said**” and “**felt**.”
- 16) Have you written the essay in the **correct tense** and been consistent in your use of tense?
- 17) Have you refrained from using **colloquial** language and too many **contractions**?
- 18) Have you read your essay **aloud** and corrected any sentences that were difficult to speak?
- 19) Have you **proofread** the final draft of your essay at least **4 times**?
- 20) Have included a **cover page**?
- 21) Have you **stapled** your essay?