



▲ These boys toiled in a West Virginia coal mine.

WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

Children in the Coal Mines

Progressive reformers were appalled by the child labor that was common in coal mines, textile mills, and other industries. John Spargo, a union organizer and socialist, sadly described the terrible conditions endured by boys working in the coal mines.

“The coal is hard, and accidents to the hands, such as cut, broken, or crushed fingers, are common among the boys. Sometimes there is a worse accident: a terrified shriek is heard, and a boy is mangled and torn in the machinery, or disappears in the chute to be picked out later smothered and dead. Clouds of dust fill the breakers and are inhaled by the boys, laying the foundations for asthma and miners’ consumption.”

—John Spargo, *The Bitter Cry of the Children*, 1906

The Drive for Reform

Objectives

- Identify the causes of Progressivism and compare it to Populism.
- Analyze the role that journalists played in the Progressive Movement.
- Evaluate some of the social reforms that Progressives tackled.
- Explain what Progressives hoped to achieve through political reforms.

Terms and People

Progressivism
muckraker
Lincoln Steffens
Jacob Riis
Social Gospel
settlement house

Jane Addams
direct primary
initiative
referendum
recall

NoteTaking

Reading Skill: Identify Details Fill in a chart like this one with details about Progressivism.

Progressivism		
Problems	Muckrakers	Reforms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial hazards • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposed conditions • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factory laws •

Why It Matters Industrialization, urbanization, and immigration brought many benefits to America, but they also produced challenging social problems. In response, a movement called **Progressivism** emerged in the 1890s. Progressives believed that new ideas and honest, efficient government could bring about social justice. Progressive ideas brought lasting reforms that still affect society today. **Section Focus Question:** What areas did Progressives think were in need of the greatest reform?

Origins of Progressivism

The people who made up the Progressive Movement came from many walks of life. They came from all political parties, social classes, ethnic groups, and religions. Many Progressive leaders emerged from the growing middle class, whose power and influence was rapidly spreading. Dissatisfied industrial workers also joined the Progressive Movement. So did a few wealthy Americans driven by a desire to act for the good of society.

Progressives Share Common Beliefs What the Progressives shared in common was a belief that industrialization and urbanization had created troubling social and political problems. Progressives wanted to bring about reforms that would correct these problems and injustices. They encouraged their state legislatures and the federal government to enact laws to address the issues faced by the poor. Progressives wanted to use logic and reason to make society work in a more efficient and orderly way. Many, motivated by religious faith, sought social justice.

Progressivism was similar to the Populist Movement of the late 1800s. Both were reform movements that wanted to get rid of corrupt government officials and make government more responsive to people's needs. Both sought to eliminate the abuses of big business. Still, the two movements differed. At the forefront of Progressivism were middle-class people. They believed that highly educated leaders should use modern ideas and scientific techniques to improve society. Leaders of the Populist Movement, on the other hand, consisted mostly of farmers and workers.

Progressives Target a Variety of Problems Some Progressives thought that political reform was the most urgent need. For many women, the number one goal was winning the right to vote. Other Progressives considered honest government to be the most important goal. Reformers targeted city officials who built corrupt organizations, called political machines. The bosses of these political machines used bribery and violence to influence voters and win elections. They counted on the loyalty of city workers who looked the other way when they took public money for themselves. Bosses also helped people solve personal problems, which often kept voters loyal.

Corrupt and ineffective government combined with the booming growth of cities produced other problems. The people living in America's crowded cities needed paved streets, safe drinking water, decent housing, and adequate municipal services. The lack of adequate services led to wretched living conditions for the urban poor. Too often, dishonest business owners and politicians controlled municipal services. Bribes and shady deals made them rich while conditions for urban residents remained unsafe and little changed.

While some Progressives focused on government, others were worried about big business. As you have learned, wealthy industrialists took over businesses and built huge trusts that limited competition and raised prices. Middle-class Progressives wanted the government to “bust the trusts” and so create more economic opportunities for smaller businesses. Progressives complained that the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 was inadequate and ineffective in limiting the abuses of big business.

Other Progressive reformers, often motivated by their religious faith, sought to reduce the growing gap between the wealthy and the poor. Progressives attacked the harsh conditions endured by miners, factory workers, and other laborers. They wanted better conditions for poor people living in city slums. They wanted social welfare laws to help children, as well as government regulations to aid workers and consumers.

 **Checkpoint** What problems did Progressive reformers hope to solve?



Analyzing Political Cartoons

Business and Government Corruption In the 1880s, Jacob Sharp expanded his streetcar business by bribing New York City aldermen and other government officials.

1. What symbols represent the corruption of city government?
2. According to the cartoonist, what is the effect of the street railroad monopoly on the taxpayer?

Muckrakers Reveal the Need for Reform

Socially conscious journalists and other writers dramatized the need for reform. Their sensational investigative reports uncovered a wide range of ills afflicting America in the early 1900s. Even though Theodore Roosevelt agreed with much of what they said, he called these writers **muckrakers** because he thought them too fascinated with the ugliest side of things. (A muckrake is a tool used to clean manure and hay out of animals' stables.) The writers were angry at first but in time took up Roosevelt's taunting name as a badge of honor. The muckrakers' articles appeared in magazines and newspapers that entered millions of American homes. People across the nation were horrified by the conditions that were revealed to them.

Journalists Uncover Injustices One leading muckraker was **Lincoln Steffens**, managing editor at *McClure's*, a magazine known for uncovering social problems. In 1903, Steffens published *The Shame of the Cities*, a collection of articles on political corruption. His reports exposed how the government of Philadelphia let utility companies charge their customers excessively high fees. He showed how corrupt politicians won elections by bribing and threatening voters, and revealed how political corruption affected all aspects of life in a city.

Primary Source

“The visitor [to St. Louis] is told of the wealth of the residents, of the financial strength of the banks, and of the growing importance of the industries; yet he sees poorly paved, refuse-burdened streets, and dusty or mud-covered alleys; he passes a ramshackle firetrap crowded with the sick and learns that it is the City Hospital. . . . Finally, he turns a tap in the hotel to see liquid mud flow into [the] wash basin or bathtub.”

—Lincoln Steffens and Claude Wetmore, “Corruption and Reform in St. Louis,” *McClure's Magazine*, October 1902

Jacob Riis ▼



● INFOGRAPHIC

EXPOSING HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES

“Long ago it was said that ‘one half of the world does not know how the other half lives.’ . . . It did not know because it did not care.” Jacob Riis, believing that the “poor were the victims rather than the makers of their fate,” used images and words to make the public confront the conditions of New York City’s tenement slums.

Riis’s 1890 book ▼



▲ A horse lies dead in a New York City street as children play nearby. A lack of city services forced slum-dwellers to live in unsanitary conditions.

Another influential muckraker was **Jacob Riis**, a photographer for the *New York Evening Sun*. Riis turned his camera on the crowded, unsafe, rat-infested tenement buildings where the urban poor lived. Between 1890 and 1903, he published several works, including *How the Other Half Lives* (see Infographic below), that shocked the nation's conscience and led to reforms.

Other outraged writers joined Riis and Steffens. In *The History of Standard Oil*, Ida Tarbell reported that John D. Rockefeller used ruthless methods to ruin his competitors, charge higher prices, and thereby reap huge profits. Others proclaimed the need to improve schools or warned of the breakdown of family life because mothers had to work long hours in factories. John Spargo focused attention on the dangerous and difficult lives of child workers. (See the Witness History at the beginning of this section.)

Novelists Defend the Downtrodden Fiction writers put a human face on social problems. They developed a new genre—the naturalist novel—that honestly portrayed human misery and the struggles of common people. Theodore Dreiser, a midwesterner raised in poverty, published *Sister Carrie* in 1900. His provocative novel traces the fate of a small-town girl drawn into the brutal urban worlds of Chicago and New York.

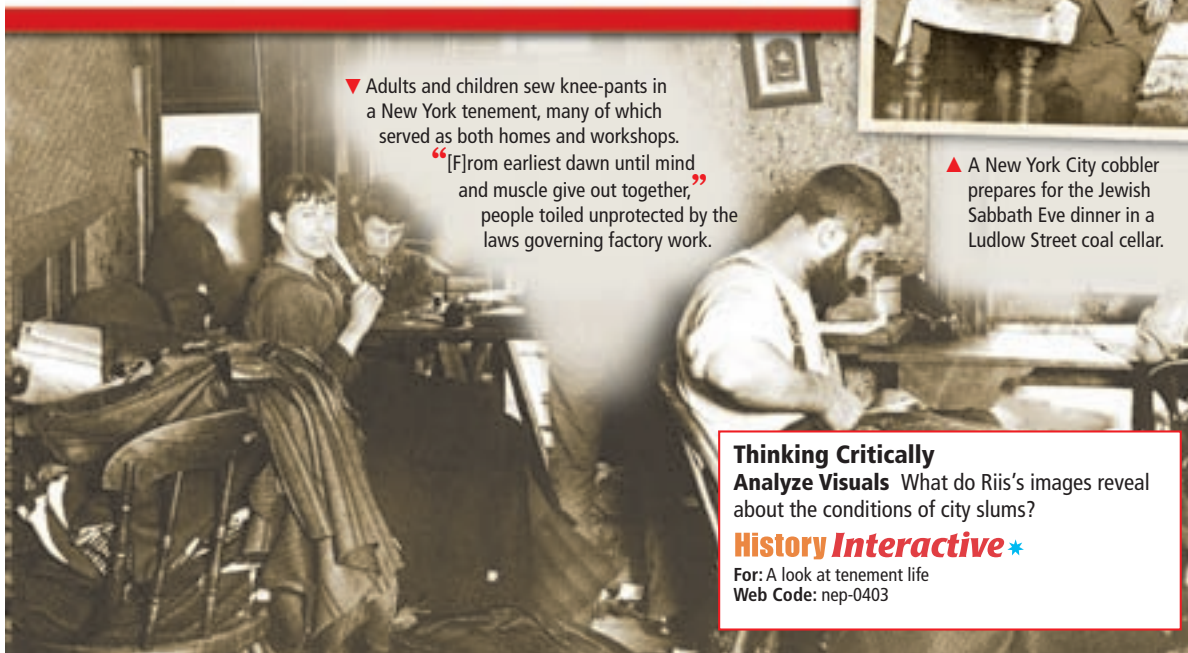
Naturalist novels became very popular. Frank Norris's *The Octopus* fascinated readers by dramatizing the Southern Pacific Railroad's stranglehold on struggling California farmers. In *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair related the despair of immigrants working in Chicago's stockyards and revealed the unsanitary conditions in the industry. (See an excerpt from the novel at the end of this section.) African American author Frances Ellen Watkins portrayed some of the struggles of black Americans in her 1892 novel *Iola Leroy*.

 **Checkpoint** What role did journalists and other writers play in the Progressive Movement?



▲ A New York City cobbler prepares for the Jewish Sabbath Eve dinner in a Ludlow Street coal cellar.

▼ Adults and children sew knee-pants in a New York tenement, many of which served as both homes and workshops.
“[F]rom earliest dawn until mind and muscle give out together,” people toiled unprotected by the laws governing factory work.



Thinking Critically
Analyze Visuals What do Riis's images reveal about the conditions of city slums?

History Interactive★

For: A look at tenement life
Web Code: nep-0403

Progressives Reform Society

The work of the muckrakers increased popular support for Progressivism. Progressive activists promoted laws to improve living conditions, public health, and schools. They urged government to regulate businesses. They believed that careful social planning would make American life better.

The Social Gospel Guides Reform Efforts Many reformers, like Walter Rauschenbusch, thought that Christianity should be the basis of social reform. A child of German immigrants, Rauschenbusch had become a Baptist minister. He blended ideas from German socialism and American Progressivism into a plan for building a better society. His book *Christianity and the Social Crisis* outlined what he called the **Social Gospel**. By following the Bible's teachings about charity and justice, he explained, people could make society "the kingdom of God."

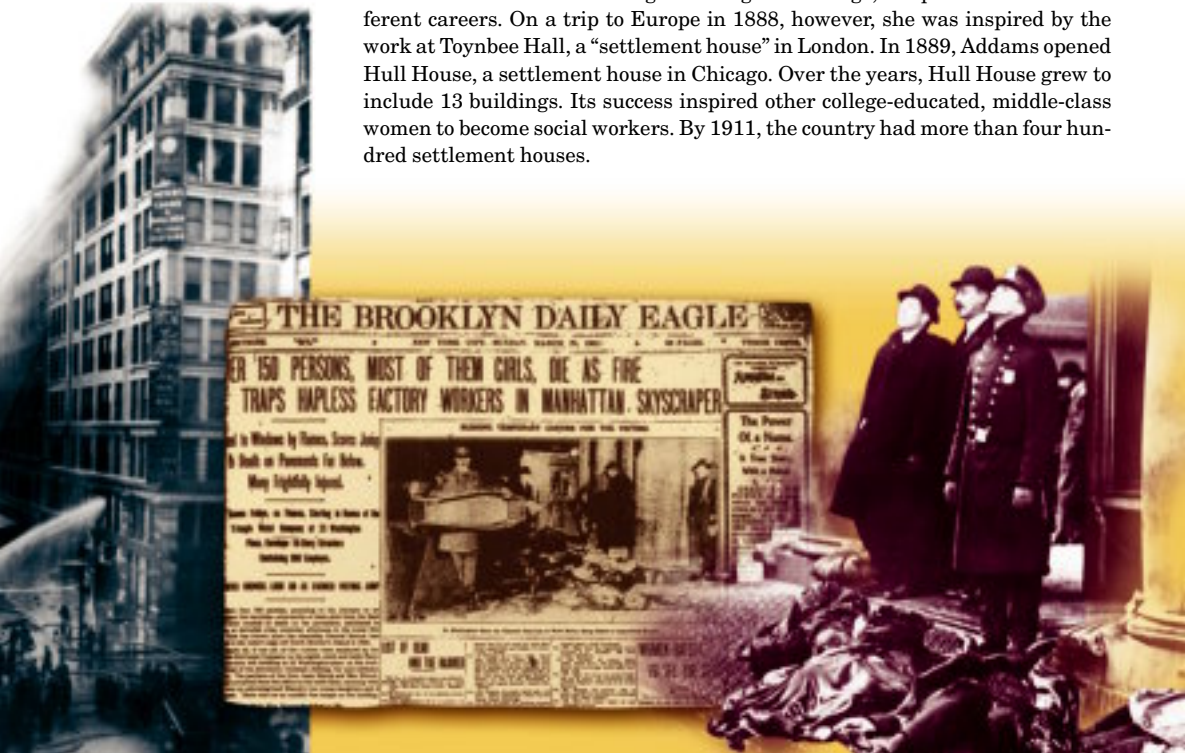
Many Protestant leaders followed Rauschenbusch's program. They began to urge the end of child labor and a shorter workweek. They also pushed for the federal government to limit the power of corporations and trusts.

Settlement House Workers Aid the Urban Poor An important goal of many Progressives was to improve the lives of poor people in the cities. One approach was the **settlement house**, a community center that provided social services to the urban poor. Before settlement houses, there were private charities that helped poor people. Settlement house workers gave mothers classes in child care and taught English to immigrants. They ran nursery schools and kindergartens. They also provided theater, art, and dance programs for adults.

A young woman named **Jane Addams** became a leading figure in the settlement house movement. After graduating from college, she pursued several different careers. On a trip to Europe in 1888, however, she was inspired by the work at Toynbee Hall, a "settlement house" in London. In 1889, Addams opened Hull House, a settlement house in Chicago. Over the years, Hull House grew to include 13 buildings. Its success inspired other college-educated, middle-class women to become social workers. By 1911, the country had more than four hundred settlement houses.

The 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

Victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire lie at the feet of a police officer as he looks up at the deadly blaze. *How did the fire help or hurt Progressives' efforts to reform workplace conditions?*



Protecting Children and Improving Education Progressives also tried to help children. Leading the effort was a lawyer named Florence Kelley. Kelley helped convince the state of Illinois to ban child labor, and other states soon passed similar laws. In 1902, Kelley helped form the National Child Labor Committee, which successfully lobbied the federal government to create the U.S. Children's Bureau in 1912. This new agency examined any issue that affected the health and welfare of children. The agency still works to protect children today.

But progress in children's rights had a long way to go. In 1916, Congress passed the Keating-Owens Act, which banned child labor. However, two years later, the Supreme Court ruled the law unconstitutional. It was not until 1938 that Congress would end child labor for good.

Progressives also tried to better children's lives by improving education. A number of states passed laws that required children to attend school until a certain age. However, there were heated debates about what children should learn and how they should learn. Some argued that they should be taught only work skills. Others said they should learn to appreciate literature and music. Most educators agreed that girls should learn different things from boys.

Educator John Dewey criticized American schools for teaching children to memorize facts but not to think creatively. Dewey wanted schools to teach new subjects such as history and geography, as well as practical skills like cooking and carpentry. His ideas were not adopted at once, but in later years, many states put them into effect.

Progressives Help Industrial Workers In the early 1900s, the United States had the highest rate of industrial accidents in the world. Long hours, poor ventilation, hazardous fumes, and unsafe machinery threatened not only workers' health but also their lives. Each year some thirty thousand workers died on the job, while another half a million were injured.

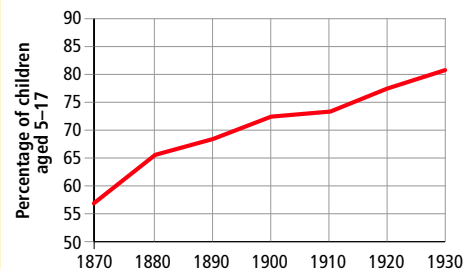
In March 1911, a fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City shocked Americans and focused attention on the need to protect workers. Workers in the factory had little chance to escape the raging fire because managers had locked most of the exits. The fire killed 146 workers, most of them young Jewish women. Many jumped from the windows in desperation. Inside the smoldering ruins, firefighters found many more victims, "skeletons bending over sewing machines."

After the blaze, outraged Progressives intensified their calls for reform. New York passed laws to make workplaces safer, and other cities and states followed suit. Many states also adopted workers' compensation laws, which set up funds to pay workers who were hurt on the job.

Progressives also persuaded some states to pass laws limiting the workday to 10 hours. However, their efforts suffered a blow in 1905 when the Supreme Court ruled in *Lochner v. New York* that such laws were unconstitutional.

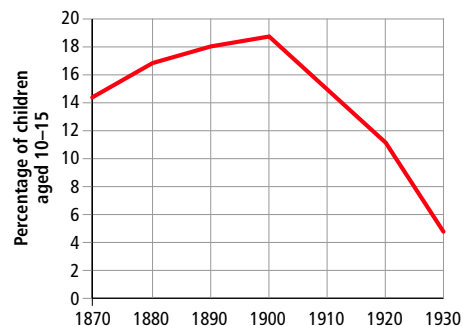
 **Checkpoint** How did Progressives work to help the urban poor?

Children Enrolled in Public School, 1870–1930



SOURCE: Historical Statistics of the United States

Children Employed, 1870–1930



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

Graph Skills During the Progressive Era, child labor declined sharply while school enrollment increased. According to the graphs, how did the percentage of children employed change from 1890 to 1920? How did school enrollment change during the same period?



Post-Hurricane Reforms in Galveston

- Galveston adopts a new commission form of government that spreads to other reform-minded cities.
- New city government builds a 17-foot-high seawall as protection against future storms.
- City government uses landfill to raise low-lying neighborhoods above sea level.

Devastated Galveston

After the coastal city of Galveston, Texas, was hit by a powerful hurricane, it adopted the commission form of government to lead the rebuilding effort. *What features would a city government need to handle a reconstruction job of the scale seen here?*

Reforming Government

Progressive reformers realized that they needed to reform the political process in order to reform society. They would have to free government from the control of political bosses and powerful business interests. They wanted to give people more control over their government and make government more effective and efficient in serving the public.

Reformers Improve City Government Just as the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire spurred reformers to action, so did another disaster. In 1900, a massive hurricane left the city of Galveston, Texas, in ruins. The greatest national calamity in American history, the hurricane killed more than 8,000 people. As an emergency measure, Galveston replaced its mayor and board of aldermen with a five-person commission. The commission form of government proved very efficient as the city carried out a tremendous rebuilding effort. The following year, Galveston decided to permanently adopt the commission form of government.

Known as the Galveston plan, many other cities decided to take up the commission form of government. By 1918, nearly 500 cities had adopted some form of the Galveston plan. Dayton, Ohio, and other cities modified the plan by adding a city manager to head the commission. The new city governments curbed the power of bosses and their political machines. The reform governments purchased public utilities so that electric, gas, and water companies could not charge city residents unfairly high rates.

Progressives Reform Election Rules Progressives also pushed for election reforms, taking up some Populist ideas. Traditionally, it was the party leaders who picked candidates for state and local offices. But in Wisconsin, reform governor Robert M. La Follette established a **direct primary**, an election in which citizens themselves vote to select nominees for upcoming elections. By 1916, all but four states had direct primaries.


Progressives also wanted to make sure that elected officials would follow citizens' wishes. To achieve this goal, they worked for three other political reforms: the initiative, the referendum, and the recall. The **initiative** gave people the power to put a proposed new law directly on the ballot in the next election by collecting citizens' signatures on a petition. This meant that voters themselves could pass laws instead of waiting for elected officials to act. The **referendum** allowed citizens to approve or reject laws passed by a legislature. The **recall** gave voters the power to remove public servants from office before their terms ended.

Progressives won yet another political reform: They adopted the Populist call for the direct election of senators by voters, not state legislators. That reform became law in 1913 when the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution was approved.

Progressive Governors Take Charge Dynamic Progressives became the leaders of several states, and chief among them was Robert La Follette of Wisconsin. Elected governor in 1900, "Fighting Bob" won the passage of many reform laws. Under his leadership, the Wisconsin state government forced railroads to charge lower fees and pay higher taxes. La Follette helped his state to improve education, make factories safer, and adopt the direct primary. Progressives called Wisconsin the "laboratory of democracy."

Hiram Johnson, governor of California, shattered the Southern Pacific Railroad's stranglehold on state government. He put in place the direct primary, initiative, referendum, and recall. He also pushed for another goal of some Progressives—planning for the careful use of natural resources such as water, forests, and wildlife.

Other Progressive governors included Theodore Roosevelt of New York and Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey. Roosevelt worked to develop a fair system for hiring state workers and made some corporations pay taxes. Wilson reduced the railroads' power and pushed for a direct primary law. Both Roosevelt and Wilson later became President and brought reforms to the White House.

 **Checkpoint** How did Progressive reformers change local and state governments?

Vocabulary Builder
dynamic—(di NAM ihk) *adj.*
energetic; relating to change or productive activity

SECTION

1

Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-test with vocabulary practice

Web Code: nea-0402

Comprehension

- 1. Terms** Explain how each of the following terms is an example of a social or political reform.
 - settlement house
 - direct primary
 - initiative
 - referendum
 - recall
- 2. NoteTaking Reading Skill: Identify Details** Use your flowchart to answer the Section Focus Question: What areas did Progressives think were in need of the greatest reform?

Writing About History

- 3. Quick Write: Compare and Contrast Points of View** In a narrative essay, you may compare and contrast points of view on an issue through the opinions of various individuals. Compare and contrast Social Darwinism with Social Gospel through the personalities of William Graham Sumner, Billy Sunday, and Dwight L. Moody. Use library or Internet resources to complete this assignment.

Critical Thinking

- 4. Recognize Cause and Effect** What problems did muckrakers expose and what effects did their work have on Progressive reform?
- 5. Summarize** Describe Walter Rauschenbusch's ideas about Social Gospel and the Progressive Movement.
- 6. Identify Points of View** Which groups in American society might have opposed Progressive reform? Explain.

The Jungle by Upton Sinclair

When Upton Sinclair published *The Jungle* in 1906, he meant to open America's eyes to the plight of workers in the filthy, dangerous Chicago stockyards. Instead, popular outrage focused on the wider-reaching threat of spoiled meat. Congress quickly passed the nation's first legislation regulating the meat, food, and drug industries. Sinclair, disappointed by his failure to provoke more sympathy for the overworked, underpaid workers, noted "I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach."

There was never the least attention paid to what was cut up for sausage. . . . There would be meat that had tumbled out on the floor, in the dirt and sawdust, where the workers had tramped and spit uncounted billions of consumption [tuberculosis] germs. There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. It was too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together. This is no fairy story and no joke; the meat would be shoveled into carts, and the man who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one—there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit. There was no place for the men to wash their hands before they ate their dinner, and so they made a practice of washing them in the water that was to be ladled into the sausage. There were the butt-ends of smoked meat, and the scraps of corned beef, and all the odds and ends of the waste of the plants, that would be dumped into old barrels in the cellar and left there. Under the system of rigid economy which the packers enforced, there were some jobs that it

only paid to do once in a long time, and among these was the cleaning out of the waste barrels. Every spring they did it; and in the barrels would be dirt and rust and old nails and stale water—and cartload after cartload of it would be taken up and dumped into the hoppers with fresh meat, and sent out to the public's breakfast.



Thinking Critically

- Analyze Literature** Describe the author's style in this excerpt.
- Evaluate Literature** How does Sinclair's way of writing boost his credibility?