**Handout A: Background Essay: Women in the Gilded Age Review Questions Answer Key**

1. Social and economic changes occurring in the lives of Gilded Age women include:
   - Increasing numbers of women began entering the workforce: in factories, as domestic servants, on piecemeal work on garments. African-American women were restricted to working as servants or in agriculture.
   - Single, middle-class women were able to get positions as secretaries, store clerks, teachers, and nurses.
   - Women also began engaging in social reform such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), settlement houses, and National Consumers’ League.
   - As more women began to enter the work force, women would also seek to form their own unions such as the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU).
   - As women began organizing for various economic and social reforms, they met at Seneca Falls, New York in 1848 and issue a Declaration of Sentiments, aimed at securing equal rights for women, namely, the right to vote.

2. Different experiences of women in the workforce include the following:
   - Lower-class women who chose to work outside of the home were mostly confined to low-skill jobs in factories.
   - Few women were accepted into professions of law and medicine.
   - Women were not admitted into common labor unions such as the American Federation of Labor. Therefore, women would form their own unions within the workplace.
   - Eventually, some states implemented “protective legislation” for women. This legislation encompassed a number of laws aimed at things such as restricting the working hours of women to account for "physical inequality" between women and men.

3. There were a number of women’s social movements during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era aimed at influencing a variety of areas in society. One of the first of these was the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) whose goal was to close saloons and end alcohol consumption. Jane Addams’s Hull House and its staff sought to improve the assimilation process for immigrants. The National Consumers’ League pressured stores to offer better pay for female clerks and other protective legislation for women in the workplace. Additionally, due to the inability to join the American Federation of Labor (AFL), Lilian Wald and other women would form the Women’s Trade Union League to fight for the demands of working women. Another example of a woman led union was the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU). Much like the Women’s Trade Union League, the ILGWU aimed to improve the lives of working women in the garment industry.
4. At Seneca Falls in 1848, a group of women and men met and issued the Declaration of Sentiments, making women’s suffrage one of the main demands. However, the women’s suffrage movement would split in 1869 as the National Woman Suffrage Association desired a constitutional amendment to grant women’s suffrage while the American Woman Suffrage Association desired to achieve women’s suffrage at the state level. These movements would unite once again in 1890 and, together, would follow the state-by-state strategy. Despite successes, another split would occur in 1913 leading to the founding of the Congressional Union (later called the National Women’s party) that would once again seek a constitutional amendment.

5. Women employed a variety of strategies in the struggle for the constitutional amendment for suffrage including winning suffrage in several states, speaking and writing in favor of equality, demonstrating and picketing, going to jail and engaging in hunger strikes, and pressuring members of Congress and the President.

Handout B: Women in the Gilded Age Graphic Organizer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Date/Founder</th>
<th>Reforms Supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Christian Temperance Union</td>
<td>Frances Willard (1879)</td>
<td>Promoting an improved moral climate in society and politics; closing saloons and ending the consumption of alcohol because of the ill effects of drunkenness on families; women’s suffrage as a means of achieving prohibition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hull House</td>
<td>Jane Addams (1889)</td>
<td>Providing immigrants with vital services in poor, ethnic neighborhoods; helped immigrants to adapt to American society by teaching English and civics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Consumers’ League</td>
<td>Florence Kelley (1898)</td>
<td>Pressured stores to pay female clerks better; protective legislation regulating the hours and conditions for women and children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Date/Founder</td>
<td>Reforms Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Trade Union League</td>
<td>Lilian Wald (1903)</td>
<td>Helped women organize their own labor unions to bargain for better working conditions and increased wages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union</td>
<td>Rose Schneiderman (1909)</td>
<td>Desired to protest against poor wages, grueling hours, and dangerous conditions in the garment industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Woman Suffrage Association</td>
<td>Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1869)</td>
<td>Achieving voting rights for women through an amendment to the United States Constitution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Woman Suffrage Association</td>
<td>Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell (1869)</td>
<td>Achieving women’s suffrage on a state-by-state basis through state amendments rather than one to the United States Constitution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Handout C: Timeline of Women’s Suffrage**

Students may list a variety of different significant events and landmarks for their timeline. Some prominent examples are listed below, but accept well-reasoned and applicable responses:

- **1848**: First women’s rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York
- **1850**: First National Women’s Rights Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts
- **1869**: Formation of National Woman Suffrage Association (May)
- **1869**: Formation of American Woman Suffrage Association (November)
- **1869**: Wyoming passes first women’s suffrage law
- **1878**: Susan B. Anthony writes a federal woman suffrage amendment and it is introduced to Congress
- **1890**: National Women Suffrage Association and American Women Suffrage Association merge in order to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association
1893: Colorado adopts an amendment granting women the right to vote
1896: Idaho adopts an amendment granting women the right to vote
1903: Formation of the National Women’s Trade Union League to help advocate for higher wages and better working conditions for working women
1910: Washington state adopts an amendment granting women the right to vote
1911: California adopts an amendment granting women the right to vote
1912: Oregon, Kansas, and Arizona adopt an amendment granting women the right to vote
1913: Alaska and Illinois adopt an amendment granting women the right to vote
1913: Formation of the Congressional Union which sought an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would grant women the right to vote at the federal level; this group would later change its name to the National Women’s Party
1914: Montana and Nevada adopt an amendment granting women the right to vote
1917: New York adopts an amendment granting women the right to vote
1918: Michigan, South Dakota, and Oklahoma adopt an amendment granting women the right to vote
1919: Federal woman suffrage amendment is passed by the House and Senate and sent to the states for ratification
1920: The Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution is signed into law by Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby.

Handout D: Images of Women’s Suffrage

1. The Awakening represents how during the Gilded Age, the push for women’s suffrage truly began in the West, with almost all of the states passing women’s suffrage amendments prior to the Nineteenth amendment being states in the West. The Awakening symbolizes how this movement which began in the west is moving eastward in its goal of providing women across the nation with the right to vote.

2. While President Wilson’s signature would not be necessary for securing the constitutional amendment, many desires his support to add legitimacy to the cause of women’s suffrage. The persistence of those in support of women’s suffrage would help to persuade Wilson to support women’s suffrage.
The decades after the American Civil War witnessed a vast array of social, economic, technological, cultural, and political changes in the American landscape. These changes transformed the United States from a largely local to a national society. This new society was characterized by a more integrated nation with large institutions and a broad, national outlook.

The economy experienced significant growth during the late nineteenth century that built on the beginnings of the industrial revolution that had begun before the Civil War. The rise of the factory system depended on technological change and new power sources that made the mass production of goods possible. The expansion of the railroad created a national distribution network for the goods. The modern business corporation grew as a response to managing the national production and distribution of goods. The practices of big business came under media and regulatory scrutiny as equal opportunity seemed to shrink. The great wealth of several industrialists was also scrutinized by those who feared their influence and were concerned about growing inequality.

American workers were the backbone of this new industrial economy as they worked with machines to secure the raw materials from the earth and used them to create a finished product. Millions of workers saw great changes in the nature of their work in the factory system. They earned higher wages and enjoyed greater standards of living but sometimes at a great cost due to dangerous, unhealthy conditions. Workers organized into labor unions to meet the growing power of big business. The labor unions gave workers a sense of solidarity and a greater bargaining position with employers. Waves of strikes and industrial violence convulsed the country, and led to an uncertain future for organized labor.

American farmers were caught between two competing trends in the new industrial economy. The future seemed bright as new western lands were brought under cultivation and new technology allowed farmers to achieve much greater production. However, banks and railroads offered mixed blessings as they often hurt the farmers’ economic position. Farmers organized into groups to protect their interests and participate in the growing prosperity of the rapidly industrializing American economy. At the same time, difficult times led many to give up on farming and find work in factories.

American cities became larger throughout the period as the factory system drew millions of workers from the American countryside and tens of millions of immigrants from other countries. The large cities created immense markets that demanded mass-produced goods and agricultural products from American farms. The cities were large, impersonal places for the newcomers and were centers of diversity thanks to the mingling of many different cultures. The urban areas lacked basic services and were often run by corrupt bosses, but the period witnessed the growth of more effective urban government that offered basic services to improve life for millions of people.

The tens of millions of immigrants that came to the United States primarily settled in urban areas and worked in the factories. They came for the opportunities afforded by large, industrial
economies and provided essential low-skill labor. The “new immigrants” were mostly from southeastern Europe, Asia, and Mexico. They had to adapt to a strange new world, and in turn brought with them new ethnicities, languages, religious practices, foods, and cultures. This tension over assimilation led to debates about American values and the Americanization of immigrants. Some native-born Americans wanted to restrict the number of immigrants coming into the country, while others defended the newcomers.

The changes in the economy and society created opportunities and challenges for millions of other Americans. The status and equal rights of women experienced a general, long-term growth. Many women enjoyed new opportunities to become educated and work in society, though these opportunities were still limited when compared with men. The history of women during the late nineteenth century was not monolithic as white, middle-class women often had a very different experience than women who were poor, or from a minority or immigrant background. Because many women entered the workforce, a debate occurred over the kinds and amount of work that women performed, which led to legal protections. The women’s suffrage movement won the biggest success for equal rights in the period with the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, granting women the right to vote.

African Americans did not participate in the growing opportunities and prosperity that other groups in American society did. The long and bloody Civil War had ended with the freeing of African Americans from slavery. This was followed by further gains of constitutional and legal protections, however, many of these rights would soon evaporate. During the late nineteenth century, African Americans found inequality and racism in the segregation of the South, but they were also victimized by inequality and racism in northern cities in the early twentieth century as they moved there in increasing numbers. Black leaders debated the right path to full equality, civic participation, and economic opportunity in American life.

The changes that affected the American economy and society led to a growth in the federal government. The important issues of the nineteenth century were increasingly contested on the national rather than local levels. Businesses, organized labor, farmers, and interest groups turned to the national government to resolve their disputes. The executive branch saw an expansion of its role and influence as it increased its regulatory power over the many aspects of American life. A widespread reform movement called “progressivism” introduced many reforms that were intended to address the changes in society resulting from the modern industrial economy and society. This increased government’s responsiveness but also dramatically increased the size and powers of the federal government. The national government therefore began to supplant the local and state governments in the minds of many Americans and in the American constitutional system.

The late nineteenth century also ushered in great changes in how the United States interacted with the rest of the world. For the first century of its existence, the United States traded with other countries, acquired territory for continental expansion, and fought in a few major wars. However, the United States was generally neutral in world affairs and focused on its domestic situation. That changed as America entered the world stage as a major global
power. This expansion in world affairs led to an internal debate over international powers and responsibilities. Americans also struggled over the character of its foreign affairs. Debates raged over the growth of American military power and whether Americans had a duty to spread democracy around the world.

The changes in the late nineteenth century were bewildering to most Americans who experienced them. Many debates took place to make sense of the changes and to consider how to respond to them. Americans rarely found easy answers and often conflicted with one another on the different solutions. The vast changes that occurred laid the foundation of modern America. The questions and challenges that they faced are still relevant and are debated by Americans today in the twenty-first century. Americans continue to discuss the power and regulation of banks and large corporations. Workers grapple with the globalization of the economy, stagnant wages, and changing technology. Farmers still struggle to make an income amid distant markets determining commodity prices while keeping up with changing consumer tastes about organic and locally-sourced food. Headlines are filled with news of African Americans suffering racism and police brutality. Issues related to the equality of women continue to be debated even as women run for president. Smartphones, social media, the internet, and other technologies change our lives, the culture, and the world economy every day. After more than a century since the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, the fundamental challenges of the era still face us today.