

## Module 6: A Nation Grows - 1877 to the 1900s

### Topic 3 Content: Mass Culture Emerges

#### Introduction

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Middle-class Americans from all parts of the country began to share new experiences for leisure. By the end of the Nineteenth Century, Americans relaxed by enjoying amusement parks, playing and watching sports like baseball, tennis, and boxing, reading the newspaper, observing fine art, reading popular fiction, and shopping in a variety of new shops and stores. In this interactivity, click on each of the images in the media panel to learn about America's new leisure activities.



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#### Amusement Parks

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Major cities began building recreation parks with playgrounds and playing fields for community members to enjoy the outdoors. On the outskirts of cities, Amusement Parks were also built. Thrill seeking Americans traveled to places like Coney Island, New York in 1884 to ride roller coasters. In Chicago, Americans rode the first Ferris wheel.

*Image: Coney Island, New York*



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#### Bicycling

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Early bicycles contained large front wheels and were not very stable. Even the slightest bump could toss a rider to the ground. As advancements in bicycle design improved, both men and women partook in this pastime. By 1890, ten million bicycles were produced. Clearly, Americans enjoyed the freedom bicycles provided.



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#### Tennis

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*Image: An early tennis match*



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#### Spectator Sports

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Baseball and boxing became large spectator sporting events. Baseball became an organized sport in 1845, and more than fifty different clubs were quickly developed. The National and American Leagues, which still exist today, began in 1876 and 1900. Due to segregation, African Americans formed two of their own leagues, the Negro National League and Negro American League. Segregation in baseball ended in 1947 when Jackie Robinson of the Brooklyn Dodgers took the field. Boxing was another big spectator sport. Although not everyone could attend matches, many listened to highlights through telegraphed communications.



*Image: Jackie Robinson, 1954*



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*Image: Jackie Robinson, 1954*

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#### Newspapers

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Since an increased number of Americans attended school and could read, daily newspapers became very popular. Using catchy headlines and containing news from around the country, some newspapers circulated over a million copies per day.

*Image: Front page of New York World, 1915*



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#### Fine Art

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In 1900, art-galleries existed in every major city. Most of the early art was realistic, portraying life as it really happened. By the end of the Twentieth Century, European-influenced abstract art began appearing in many of the art galleries. Americans also enjoyed the many public libraries that emerged. While art galleries and libraries were open to the public, African Americans were not given access to these facilities.

*Image: Painting by American Thomas Eakins*



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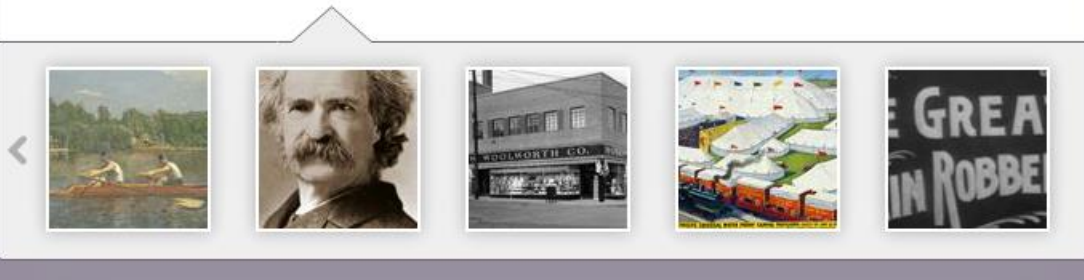
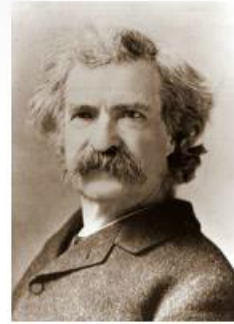
#### Popular Fiction

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As literacy rates and education in the United States improved, Americans began reading for pleasure. Most Americans read short, fictional stories called "dime novels," which were named appropriately because they cost ten cents. Other readers preferred realistic fictional novels like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain. This novel is still widely read today and is considered an American classic.

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#### Shopping

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By the Twentieth Century, shopping in the United States had changed drastically. Americans could travel to chain stores, like Woolworth, to buy a variety of goods and services. Woolworth stores popped up in close to 600 locations and could sell a million dollars of goods in a day. Department stores and shopping centers developed in urban areas. These types of stores attracted buyers with a variety of shops in one area, and were located in areas accessible to public transportation.

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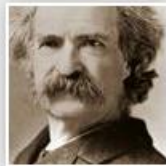
#### The Circus

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Established in 1871, the circus traveled by train to different locations around the United States. It attracted customers through a huge parade, and would stay in one location for a couple of days before packing up and heading to the next site. The P.T. Barnum and Bailey Circus was deemed, "The Greatest Show on Earth." This circus still travels through the United States today.

*Image: Advertisement for Barnum and Bailey Circus*



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#### Theatre and Movies

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##### Theatre and Movies

Live performances were another popular leisure activity at this time in the United States. Vaudeville shows, which are a performance made up of a series of unrelated acts like singers, dancers, comedians, animal trainers, magicians, and acrobats just to name a few, were extremely popular at this time. In addition, Americans viewed motion pictures on the silver screen. These films were generally short and contained no audio. Today, performance theatre and movies are still popular forms of entertainment.



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*Image: Opening still image for The Great Train Robbery, the earliest American motion picture.*