



The Reckless Decade: America in the 1890s

H.W. Brands

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"Large-scale economic change, job uncertainty, the politics of extremism and paranoia, arguments over America's international role, racial conflicts. Sound familiar?" (Fritz Lanham, *Houston Chronicle*) Just as we do today, Americans of the 1890s faced changes in economics, politics, society, and technology that led to wrenching and sometimes violent tensions between rich and poor, capital and labor, white and black, East and West. In *The Reckless Decade*, H. W. Brands demonstrates that we can learn a lot about the contradictions that lie at the heart of America today by looking at them through the lens of the 1890s.

The 1890s saw the closing of the American frontier and a shift toward imperialist ambitions. Populists and muckrakers grappled with robber barons and gold-bugs. Americans addressed the unfinished business of Reconstruction by separating blacks and whites. Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and other black leaders clashed over the proper response to continuing racial inequality. Those on top of the economic heap—Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Morgan—created vast empires of wealth, while those at the bottom worked for dimes a day. Brands brings all this to life in a vivid narrative filled with larger-than-life characters facing momentous challenges as they worked toward an uncertain future.

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