GROWING URBAN POPULATIONS TOOK ADVANTAGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES TO MAKE CITIES MORE LIVABLE. ONE ADVANCE WAS THE USE OF STEEL FRAMEWORKS TO BUILD TALL BUILDINGS. SKYSCRAPERS MADE CITIES GROW VERTICALLY; STREETCAR LINES HELPED THEM GROW HORIZONTALLY. PEOPLE COULD NOW LIVE IN ONE PART OF A CITY AND WORK IN ANOTHER. SOON TRANSIT LINES LINKED CITIES AND SUBURBS INTO LARGER AREAS. TO AVOID CONGESTION ON THE STREETS, SOME CITIES BUILT ELEVATED TRAIN LINES. STEEL BRIDGES JOINED SECTIONS OF CITIES ACROSS RIVERS.

Urban planners tried to make cities more livable by creating parks and recreational areas. One of the most extensive was Central Park in New York City. Both Boston and Chicago grew by following plans.

Technology also improved communications. Orville and Wilbur Wright of Dayton, Ohio, built the first airplane. The government quickly adopted the new technology to transport mail across the continent. As the number of people who could read soared, publishers printed more and more books, magazines, and newspapers. Improvements in papermaking, printing, and typesetting helped spur this growth as well.

Another invention made pictures, rather than words, more accessible. With George Eastman’s camera, millions of Americans were able to take pictures as a hobby. Journalists used cameras to capture news as it happened.

REFORMERS AIMED TO IMPROVE PUBLIC EDUCATION. NOT ALL CHILDREN ATTENDED SCHOOL, AND MOST OF THOSE WHO DID LEFT AFTER FOUR YEARS. IN THE LATTER DECADES OF THE 1800S, 31 STATES PASSED LAWS REQUIRING CHILDREN FROM 8 TO 14 TO ATTEND SCHOOL FOR ANYWHERE FROM 12 TO 16 WEEKS EVERY YEAR. TEACHERS DID NOT ALWAYS EMPHASIZE ACADEMIC SUBJECTS, HOWEVER, AND PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT MADE SCHOOL DIFFICULT FOR MANY CHILDREN. AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN—ESPECIALLY THOSE IN THE SOUTH—SUFFERED FROM A LACK OF SCHOOLING.

The number of schools increased. Kindergartens grew from 200 in 1880 to 3,000 in 1900. High schools saw an even greater increase: from 800 in 1878 to 5,500 in 1898. The high-school curriculum expanded to include courses preparing students for industrial and office jobs.

While African Americans were blocked from attending school, the children of immigrants were welcome. Some immigrants hoped the schools would “Americanize” their children. Many adult immigrants attended school at night to prepare to become American citizens and to learn English.

Just over two percent of young people attended college in 1900. Most came from wealthy or middle-class homes. Still, the last two decades of the 1800s saw a tremendous growth in the number of colleges. The curriculum changed, too, as universities began to pursue research in science and technology and formed professional schools in law and medicine.

Some colleges were established to offer higher education for African Americans. They provided opportunities for only a small percentage of people, however. In 1895, W. E. B. Du Bois became the first African American to earn a Ph.D.

Opportunities to taste culture grew in the period as well. Art galleries and museums spread. A new cultural treasure of many cities was the public library. While serious novelists addressed concerns of contemporary society, many readers enjoyed the more popular dime novels.
**Segregation and Discrimination**

**KEY IDEA** African Americans lead the fight against institutionalized racism and other discrimination.

By 1900, southern states restricted African Americans’ right to vote, weakening their political power. One law required voters to be able to read. Another put a tax on voting. A third disabled voters if they, their fathers, or their grandfathers could not vote before January 1, 1867—the first day that African Americans could vote. All these laws were passed specifically to take away blacks’ right to vote. The Supreme Court allowed these laws to remain standing.

The southern states also passed Jim Crow laws that segregated whites and blacks into separate facilities. When Homer Plessy was denied a seat on a railroad car, he sued, but the Supreme Court ruled separate facilities legal.

Racial etiquette—customs—restricted the rights of African Americans even when laws did not. Booker T. Washington argued that blacks should not insist on full equality—which whites, he felt, would resist—but work for economic security. Ida Wells crusaded nationwide to end lynching—hanging people without trial. African Americans in the North faced discrimination as well.

Mexican Americans, especially in the Southwest, faced similar discrimination. The railroads hired them to build new lines but paid little. Landowners forced workers to work to repay debts, a system called debt peonage that the Supreme Court ruled against in 1911.

The Chinese population in the West grew until 1880, and white workers felt threatened by competition from Chinese workers. Congress responded to their pressure in 1882 by passing the Chinese Exclusion Act. It prohibited further immigration from China.

**Dawn of Mass Culture**

**KEY IDEA** Americans have more time for leisure activities, and a modern mass culture emerges, especially through newspapers and retail advertising.

Shorter work weeks meant more leisure time, and Americans found new ways to use that time. Many city dwellers enjoyed trips to amusement parks. Cycling and tennis became popular sports as well. Those who did not wish to exercise watched professionals play sports. Boxing and baseball became two popular spectator sports.

Many spectators preferred the theater, where they watched actors or singers perform famous plays or songs. Many more enjoyed the more raucous entertainment available in vaudeville. But the biggest spectacle was the circus.

The most popular music of the time was Ragtime, which blended African-American spirituals and European forms. This music contributed to the later development of jazz.

Art and technology joined in a new form: the motion picture. The first movies were only 10-minute stories, but 1914’s three-hour *Birth of a Nation* changed movies. Although many objected to its racist portrayal of Reconstruction, the movie was long and spectacular and used bold new techniques that became part of movie making. Americans were also entertained by the new newspapers. To increase sales, publishers presented the news in sensational ways.

Another change was in the sale of goods. Cities developed shopping areas that concentrated many retail establishments in certain areas. Huge department stores arose that offered consumers a wide range of goods to purchase. National chains developed as some retailers created stores in many sites, offering goods at lower prices. To persuade consumers to buy these goods, retailers and manufacturers spent large amounts of money on advertising.

To reach rural consumers, some companies sold their goods through catalogs. They were helped by the U.S. Post Office, which began delivering packages to rural people in 1896.

**Review**

1. What technological changes at the turn of the twentieth century affected American life?
2. How did education change in the late 1800s?
3. What discrimination was faced by minority groups in the late 1800s?
4. What evidence of modern mass culture can you find near the turn of the twentieth century?
Chapter 8, Summary
LIFE AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Responses will vary but should include points similar to the following:

1. Skyscrapers made cities grow taller; streetcars made them larger and easier to get around. Use of airplanes speeded mail delivery. Printing technology increased the number of books, magazines, and newspapers.

2. In the late 1800s, schools became compulsory in more states and the curriculum changed. The number of kindergartens and high schools increased, as did the number of colleges.

3. African Americans suffered the passage of Jim Crow laws in the South and faced discrimination in the North. Mexican Americans suffered discrimination, too. Laws prevented more Chinese from immigrating to the country.

4. Modern mass culture was launched with the beginning of professional sports, movies, department stores, and catalog shopping.