**Standard 8-5:** The student will understand the impact of Reconstruction, industrialization, and Progressivism on society and politics in South Carolina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**Enduring Understanding:**

During the periods of Reconstruction, industrial expansion, and the Progressive movement, South Carolina searched for ways to revitalize its economy while maintaining its traditional society. To understand South Carolina’s experience as representative of its region and the United States as a whole during these periods the student will . . .

**8-5.5 Compare industrial development in South Carolina to industrialization in the rest of the United States, including the expansion of railroads, the development of the phosphate and textile industries, and immigration.**

**It is essential for students to know:**

In the post Civil War period, spurred by wartime government spending and the federal government’s support for the building of the transcontinental railroad, industry throughout the United States expanded rapidly. Discoveries of iron ore and coal in the west and the need for steel for the railroad as well as the role of entrepreneurs and new technologies led to a growth in the steel and oil industries. Meat packing and grain processing plants were built to make the bounty of the ranches and farms of the west and Midwest available to people throughout the country. Immigrants anxious to make their fortunes in America provided the labor for expanding factories.

South Carolina remained largely unaffected by the economic growth in the rest of the country in the immediate postwar period and consequently South Carolina did not attract large numbers of immigrants looking for work. The planter elite looked down on the development of industry as a less noble calling than their antebellum agricultural society. Conservatives did little to support South Carolina’s struggling industrial development, being more interested in reviving the old South than in fostering the birth of a New South. However, the railroad boom that spurred national industrialization in the post war period was also felt in South Carolina. Major cities grew as a result of their location on track routes that connected them to suppliers and markets throughout the country. Columbia was a regional railroad hub served by over 100 trains a day. The transcontinental trains promoted the establishment of time zones and standard time, so time in South Carolina was standardized, too.

In part, due to the railroad boom, the textile industry that had begun prior to the Civil War eventually became very important to South Carolina. A ready supply of raw materials and a changing attitude about the development of industry led to the growth of the textile industry in the Upcountry of South Carolina**.** New entrepreneurial leadership became boosters of the idea of the industrialized New South. Local investors provided most of the capital for the building of textile mills, located close to the cotton fields and along rivers that would supply power. Although South Carolina did not attract a large number of foreign immigrants, the state had a ready supply of workers. Poor farmers who could no longer make a living from the land were attracted to mill villages that provided homes, schools, churches, and stores in addition to jobs. Most African Americans, however, purposely were not considered for traditional textile mill labor. The first mills were started in the upstate, but within 15 years there were mills in the Midlands and the Lowcountry. The boom for mill building came after 1895 due to technological innovations. Modeled after New England mills, these textile mills produced finished cloth on their many spindles. By 1910, South Carolina was the second largest textile producing state in the nation.

Life for workers in the mill villages was not ideal. Conditions depended upon the generosity of the mill owners and the economic conditions of the times. When depression struck, workers were laid off and lost their homes as well as their jobs. Many children worked in the mills where their small fingers made them better able to retie broken threads but their youth made them more susceptible to workplace accidents. Men, women and children worked long hours for low pay and were often looked down upon as “lint heads.” Workers in South Carolina earned less than half of what mill workers in other parts of the United States earned and women and children were paid even less than men. They worked from 6 am until 6 pm until Governor Tillman’s law reduced hours to 66 per week. Workers often suffered from diseases of the lung including tuberculosis from breathing in the cotton fiber and from the crowded conditions of their workplace. Workplace accidents that could end a worker’s career were also an ever-present possibility. Workers were unable to organize to improve their lot as union organizers were immediately fired and the organized labor movement consistently crushed by the mill owners. Low wages and poor conditions mirrored what was happening to workers throughout the United States. Although workers outside of South Carolina were somewhat more effective in organizing unions and in launching some protests through strikes, the national unions were not successful in improving conditions. The United States government backed the interests of the owners, just as the political leadership of South Carolina supported the interests of the mill owners, rather than those of the workers.

The production of cottonseed oil, lumber and phosphates for fertilizers all increased after Reconstruction due mainly to the states’ ability to lure northern mills south by offering a source of cheap and non-union labor. Phosphate rock that was found near Charleston and Beaufort was a major part of the commercial fertilizer that was produced in the state for about twenty years after the Civil War. In the late nineteenth century, phosphate mining brought a degree of wealth to the coastal area from Charleston to Beaufort. In the Beaufort area, phosphate mining never recovered after the 1893 hurricane. When rich deposits were found in Florida, the South Carolina companies went out of business.