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 . . .

**8-5.7 Compare migration patterns of South Carolinians to such patterns throughout the United States, including the movement from rural to urban areas and the migration of African Americans from the South to the North, Midwest, and West.**

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

In the post Civil War period, westward expansion continued as people moved from one region to another and immigrated to the United States. After emancipation, some African Americans moved to towns in the West such as the Exodusters who moved to Kansas. In the postwar period, however, most South Carolinians did not move west. Neither African-American freedmen nor poor whites had the money to make such a move, even with the promise of free land. Instead they concentrated on making use of the available land and economic opportunity in their home state. Motivations for settlers from the East and from foreign countries to move West were the offers of free land by the United States government [Homestead Act] and the economic opportunities made possible by the railroad. The transcontinental railroad first brought immigrants from China and Europe to lay the track, then attracted new settlers to the West through aggressive advertising and land sales and also provided farmers access to new markets.

Depressed economic conditions and low prices for their crops drove many South Carolina farmers off of the land and to the mill villages. However mill jobs were not open to African Americans. Instead African Americans moved from rural areas in South Carolina to factory jobs in the urban areas in the Northeast and the Midwest. African Americans were also pushed out of the state by the continued agricultural depression and the ravages of the boll weevil, by the social discrimination of Jim Crow laws and by increasing violence. The wars of the 20th century would provide additional economic opportunities and prompt more migration.

Foreign immigrants did not come to South Carolina in large numbers because of the depressed economic conditions in agriculture, the lack of available land and a lack of industrial jobs. The mills had an ample supply of dispossessed farmers from the rural areas of the state. However, those immigrants who did come to the state made significant cultural and economic contributions to South Carolina. Many immigrants established businesses including the founder and editor of *The State* newspaper, who was an immigrant from Cuba.

Immigration had a much greater impact on the cities of the Northeast and Midwest. Although some immigrants moved to the plains and established farms, many immigrants were too poor to move beyond the port cities where they landed. Thus ethnic neighborhoods grew as immigrants looked for the familiar in a strange new land. Churches, schools, businesses and newspapers reflected the ethnicity of Little Italy, Greektown or Polonia. South Carolina city neighborhoods were divided into black and white sections by law. Many established immigrants helped those who had newly arrived to find jobs and housing which had a powerful impact on city politics. People voted for those who found them jobs and helped them through hard times. Immigrants gave their votes to neighborhood and ward bosses in gratitude for the help they had received, not as a result of any direct bribery. Although many political bosses were corrupt and routinely used graft and bribery in awarding city contracts, they also served an important role in helping new immigrants to adapt to their new country. The power that immigrant groups gave to this urban political machine allowed the bosses to solve urban problems. The political machine in South Carolina was controlled by the Tillmanite faction of the Democratic Party. They too were engaged in corruption and graft and controlled the votes of the people through disfranchisement of the African American voter and racist rhetoric but gave voice to the aspirations of the common white farmer. Just as the immigrant communities helped each other, the African American community in South Carolina developed organizations and churches that supported them as they attempted to protect themselves against the white political machine.

Much like the restrictions on the rights of African Americans in South Carolina, racial hostility led to restrictions on immigration. Students should understand the term nativism. In the late 19th century, resentments focused on the immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe (such as the Italians, Poles, Russians and Eastern European Jews) as the numbers of these groups grew and the differences with previous immigrant groups, (such as the Irish and Germans) and ‘native’ Americans were more obvious. Although literacy tests for immigrants were proposed in Congress in the 1890s, immigration restrictions in the form of a quota system did not pass until the 1920s. Late 19th century nativism can be seen as a Northern counterpart of the anti-African American prejudices in South Carolina.

The effect of racial and ethnic diversity on national identity in the late 19th and early 20th century was to solidify the confidence among the native white population in their inherent superiority and “100% Americanism.” The idea of Social Darwinism gave an intellectual justification for white supremacy. It was not until much later in the 20th century that immigrants and African Americans were recognized for the contributions they have made to the strength of American democracy and the richness of American culture.