

**Social
Darwinists**

Believers in the idea, popular in the late nineteenth century, that people gained wealth by “survival of the fittest.” Therefore, the wealthy had simply won a natural competition and owed nothing to the poor, and indeed service to the poor would interfere with this organic process. Some social Darwinists also applied this theory to whole nations and races, explaining that powerful peoples were naturally endowed with gifts that allowed them to gain superiority over others. This theory provided one of the popular justifications for U.S. imperial ventures like the Spanish-American war.

**Standard Oil
Company**

John D. Rockefeller's company, formed in 1870, which came to symbolize the trusts and monopolies of the Gilded Age. By 1877 Standard Oil controlled 95% of the oil refineries in the U.S. It was also one of the first multinational corporations, and at times distributed more than half of the company's kerosene production outside the U.S. By the turn of the century it had become a target for trust-busting reformers, and in 1911 the Supreme Court ordered it to break up into several dozen smaller companies.

trust

A mechanism by which one company grants control over its operations, through ownership of its stock, to another company. The Standard Oil Company became known for this practice in the 1870s as it eliminated its competition by taking control of smaller oil companies