

The New Global Economy

MAIN IDEA

Because of technological advances and new trade laws, the U.S. economy underwent a boom during the late 20th century.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

New types of business have meant new work environments and new challenges for American workers.

Terms & Names

- service sector
- downsize
- Bill Gates
- NASDAQ
- dotcom
- General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

One American's Story

As Bill Clinton took office in 1993, some regions of the nation, particularly the Northeast, were still in an economic recession. Near Kennebunkport, Maine, the John Roberts clothing factory faced bankruptcy. With help from their union, the factory workers were able to turn their factory into an employee-owned company.

Ethel Beaudoin, who worked for the company for more than 30 years, was relieved that the plant would not be closing.



▲ Workers at the John Roberts clothing factory

A PERSONAL VOICE ETHEL BEAUDOIN

“It’s a nice feeling to be part of the process . . . of deciding what this company buys for machinery and to know the customers more intimately. They’re our customers, and it’s a nicer feeling when the customers know that the coat that we put out is made by owners.”

—quoted in *Divided We Fall*

Beaudoin’s experience offered one example of the economic possibilities in America. A new global economy—brought about by new technologies, increased international competition, and the end of the Cold War—changed the nation’s economic prospects.

The Shifting Economy

Americans heard a great deal of good news about the economy. Millions of new jobs were created between 1993 and 1999. By the fall of 2000, the unemployment rate had fallen to the lowest it had been since 1970.

ECONOMIC BACKGROUND



GREENSPAN AND THE FED

Alan Greenspan was chairman of the Federal Reserve System (the Fed) from 1987, when he was appointed by President Reagan, until he retired in 2006. The Fed has been described as the economic pacemaker of the United States because it helps determine how much money there will be in the American economy.

Before being elected president in 2000, George W. Bush made it a point to meet with Alan Greenspan before meeting with anyone else in Washington. (See *interest rate* in the Economics Handbook, page R42.)

But there was alarming news as well. Wage inequality between upper- and lower-income Americans—the income gap—widened. Median household income began to drop. Although economists disagreed about the reasons for the economy’s instability, most everyone agreed it was undergoing significant changes.

MORE SERVICE, LESS SECURITY Chief among the far-reaching changes in the workplace of the 1990s was the explosive growth of jobs in the **service sector**, the part of the economy that provides services to consumers. By 2000, nearly 80 percent of American workers were teachers, medical professionals, lawyers, engineers, store clerks, waitstaff, and other service workers.

Low-paying jobs, such as sales and fast-food, grew fastest. These positions, often part-time or temporary, offered limited benefits. Many corporations, rather than invest in salaries and benefits for full-time staff, instead hired temporary workers, or temps, and began to **downsize**—trim payrolls to streamline operations and increase profits. Manpower, Inc., a temporary services agency, became the largest U.S. employer, earning \$2 billion in 1993 when fully 640,000 Americans cashed its paychecks. In 1998, over one-fourth of the nation’s work force worked in temporary or part-time positions. **A**

Of those cut in downsizing, younger workers suffered higher rates of unemployment. In 1999, an average 11 percent of workers aged 16 to 24 were unemployed—more than double the national rate. Three out of four young Americans expected to earn less money as adults than their parents did.

FARMS AND FACTORIES The nation’s shift to a service economy came at the expense of America’s traditional

workplaces. Manufacturing, which surpassed farming mid-century as the largest job sector, experienced a sharp decline in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1992, for example, 140,000 steelworkers did the same work that 240,000 had accomplished ten years earlier. Larry Pugh talked about the downsizing of a farm equipment factory in his hometown of Waterloo, Iowa.

A PERSONAL VOICE LARRY PUGH

“There used to be 17,500 people working here. . . . Now there are 6000. Those people spent their money. They bought the cars. They bought the houses. They were replaced by people that are at the minimum wage—seven or eight dollars an hour, not 15 or 20 dollars an hour. These people can hardly eke out a living at today’s wages.”

—quoted in *Divided We Fall*

The decline in industrial jobs contributed to a drop in union membership. In 1945, 35 percent of American workers belonged to unions; by 1998, only 14 percent were union members. In the 1990s, unions had trouble organizing. High-tech and professional workers felt no need for unions, while low-wage service employees feared losing their jobs in a strike. Some workers saw their incomes decline. The increased use of computer-driven robots to make manufactured goods eliminated many jobs, but it also spurred a vibrant high-tech economy. Those with advanced training and specialized technical skills or a sense of entrepreneurial risk-taking saw their salaries rise and their economic security expand. **B**

MAIN IDEA

Summarizing

A How did the change from an industrial economy to a service economy affect Americans’ economic security?

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Effects

B How did downsizing affect people?

Persons Employed in Three Economic Sectors*			
Year	Farming	Manufacturing	Service Producing
1900	11,050	7,252	6,832
1950	6,001	18,475	20,721
2005	N/A	14,285	89,579

*numbers in thousands
Sources: *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970; Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1953, 1954, 2007 (online)*

SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Charts

1. What sector of the U.S. economy has seen the greatest decline in workers over the past century?
2. In terms of employee participation, by roughly what percent did the service sector grow between 1950 and 2005?

HIGH-TECH INDUSTRIES In the late 1990s, entrepreneurs turned innovative ideas about computer technology into huge personal fortunes, hoping to follow in the footsteps of **Bill Gates**, the decade’s most celebrated entrepreneur. Gates founded the software company Microsoft. In 2000, it had made him the wealthiest individual in the world, with assets estimated at about \$60 billion.

A rapid outcropping of new businesses accompanied the explosive growth of the Internet late in the decade. The **NASDAQ** (National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotation System), a technology-dominated stock index on Wall Street, rose dramatically as enthusiasm grew for high-tech businesses. These businesses were known as **dotcoms**, a nickname derived from their identities, or addresses, on the World Wide Web, which often ended in “.com.” The dotcoms expanded rapidly and attracted young talent and at times excessive investment funding for such untested fledgling companies.

Thousands of smaller businesses were quick to anticipate the changes that the Internet would bring. Suddenly companies could work directly with consumers or with other companies. Many predicted that the price of doing business would fall dramatically and that overall worldwide productivity would jump dramatically. The boom of new business was termed “The New Economy.”

However, the positive economic outlook fueled by “The New Economy” was short lived. In 2000, only 38 percent of online retailing made a profit. As a result, many dotcoms went out of business. This decline had many causes. Entrepreneurs often provided inadequate advertising for their e-companies. Also, many dotcoms had hard-to-use Web sites that confused customers. The unsuccessful dotcoms caused many investors to stop putting money in Internet businesses.

In 2002, the U.S. economy was also hard hit by corporate scandals, when Enron was charged with using illegal accounting practices and WorldCom filed the largest bankruptcy claim in U.S. history. Investors began to lose faith in corporations. In addition, after the September 11 attacks, the continued threat of terrorism had a negative effect on the economy. All of these factors caused the NASDAQ index to decline for three straight years (2000–2002). After lows in 2002 and 2003, the NYSE and NASDAQ rose again to record highs in 2007.

At 18 years old, Shawn Fanning started a free music downloading service on the Internet called Napster. He became a multimillionaire after forming an alliance with a German media company.



Background
See *e-commerce* on page R40 in the Economics Handbook.

World Trading Blocs, 2000

INTERACTIVE



-  **OPEC** Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
-  **APEC** Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
-  **G8** Group of Eight
-  **Andean Group**
-  **ASEAN** Association of Southeast Asian Nations
-  **CACM/MCCA** Central American Common Market
-  **CAEU** Council of Arab Economic Unity
-  **CARICOM** Caribbean Community and Common Market
-  **CIS** Commonwealth of Independent States
-  **EFTA** European Free Trade Association
-  **EU** European Union
-  **MERCOSUR** Southern Cone Common Market
-  **NAFTA** North American Free Trade Agreement
-  **SADC** Southern African Development Community
-  **UDEAC** Central African Customs and Economic Union

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER

- 1. Location** What is the only G-8 country located outside Europe and North America?
- 2. Location** To which world trade organizations does the United States belong?

Change and the Global Economy

In 1900, airplanes hadn't yet flown and telephone service was barely 20 years old. U.S. trade with the rest of the world was worth about \$2.2 billion (roughly 12 percent of the economy). Nearly a century later, New Yorkers could hop a supersonic jet and arrive in London within three hours, information traveled instantly by fax machines and computers, and U.S. trade with other countries approached \$2 trillion (more than 25 percent of the economy). As American companies competed for international and domestic markets, American workers felt the sting of competing with workers in other countries.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE The expansion of U.S. trade abroad was an important goal of President Clinton's foreign policy, as his support of NAFTA had shown. In 1994, in response to increasing international economic competition among trading blocs, the United States joined many other nations in adopting a new version of the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**. The new treaty lowered trade barriers, such as tariffs, and established the World Trade Organization (WTO) to resolve trade disputes. As

President Clinton announced at the 1994 meeting of the Group of Seven, (the world's seven leading economic powers, which later became the Group of Eight when Russia joined in 1996), "[T]rade as much as troops will increasingly define the ties that bind nations in the twenty-first century."

Background
“Job flight” had occurred in the 1970s, when cheap but quality auto imports from Japan and Germany forced many U.S. workers out of high-paying jobs.

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Effects

C What were some of the effects of NAFTA and GATT?

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION International trade agreements caused some American workers to worry about massive job flight to countries that produced the same goods as the United States but at a lower cost.

In the 1990s, U.S. businesses frequently moved their operations to less economically advanced countries, such as Mexico, where wages were lower. After the passage of NAFTA, more than 100,000 low-wage jobs were lost in U.S. manufacturing industries such as apparel, auto parts, and electronics. Also, competition with foreign companies helped U.S. companies to maintain low wages and decrease benefits. **C**

INTERNATIONAL SLOWDOWN Around the turn of the 21st century, the global economy began to slow down. Between 1997 and 2002, the gross domestic product in Japan declined by 6 percent. In 2001, the economies of more than a dozen countries were in recession, and many other countries reported lower growth rates than they had the previous year.

The flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) to developing countries declined dramatically. As a result, the economies of these countries were particularly hard hit. For example, the overall growth of Africa’s economies slowed to 2.7 percent in 2002.

The U.S. economy also suffered. As it happened, both the U.S. and world economies began to reverse the downward trend by 2004. But in 2007, with the U.S. economy again sluggish, China’s 10% economic growth marked it as an economic standout.



▲ In Montreal, Canada, on March 29, 2001, protesters demonstrate at a summit on globalization and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

SECTION 2

ASSESSMENT

1. TERMS & NAMES For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- service sector
- downsize

- Bill Gates
- NASDAQ

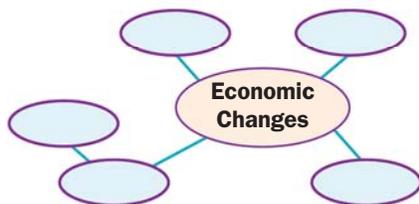
- dotcom

- General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

MAIN IDEA

2. TAKING NOTES

In a cluster diagram like the one below, record the major changes that occurred in the U.S. economy during the 1990s.



Which change has affected you the most? Explain.

CRITICAL THINKING

3. ANALYZING EFFECTS

Explain who was negatively affected by the changes in the economy and what negative effects they suffered.

Think About:

- who had the highest unemployment rates
- what types of jobs were eliminated
- what other negative effects there were

4. ANALYZING ISSUES

How do you explain some Americans’ fears over the international trade agreements?

5. DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Considering the economic changes described in this section, how do you think workers can best prepare themselves for the future?

Women Writers Reflect American Diversity

1978–2000 The broadening of opportunities for American women that began in the 1970s is as evident in literature as it is in other fields. Toni Morrison, Mary Oliver, Nikki Giovanni, Amy Tan, Anne Tyler, Alice Walker, Marge Piercy, Sandra Cisneros—these are just a few of the talented women novelists and poets who reflect the multicultural nature of the American identity. These women’s writing shares a common characteristic—that of conveying the American experience through the exploration of personal memories, nature, childhood, and family.



◀ NIKKI GIOVANNI

In the late 1960s, Nikki Giovanni won instant attention as an African American poet writing about the Black Power movement. Since then her poetry has often focused on childhood, family ties, and other personal concerns. In the following poem, Giovanni deals with individual empowerment—even under less than ideal circumstances.

Choices

if i can't do
what i want to do
then my job is to not
do what i don't want
to do

it's not the same thing
but it's the best i can
do

if i can't have
what i want then
my job is to want
what i've got
and be satisfied
that at least there
is something more
to want

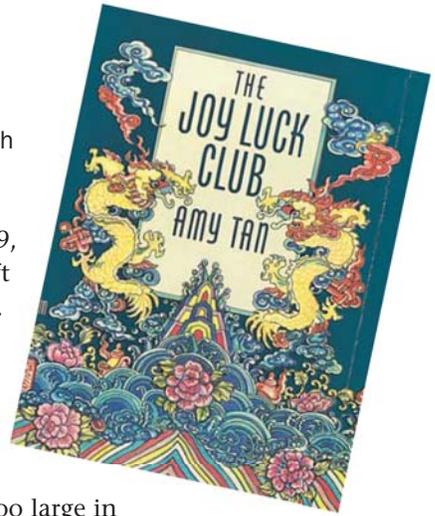
since i can't go
where i need
to go then i must go
where the signs point
though always understanding
parallel movement
isn't lateral

when i can't express
what i really feel
i practice feeling
what i can express
and none of it is equal
i know
but that's why mankind
alone among the mammals
learns to cry

—Nikki Giovanni,
“Choices,” from *Cotton Candy on a Rainy Day* (1978)

AMY TAN

A native of Oakland, California, Amy Tan draws on personal experiences in *The Joy Luck Club*, a series of interconnected stories about four Chinese-American daughters and their immigrant mothers. The four mothers establish a club for socializing and playing the game of mahjong.



My mother started the San Francisco version of the Joy Luck Club in 1949, two years before I was born. This was the year my mother and father left China with one stiff leather trunk filled only with fancy silk dresses. There was no time to pack anything else, my mother had explained to my father after they boarded the boat. Still his hands swam frantically between the slippery silks, looking for his cotton shirts and wool pants.

When they arrived in San Francisco, my father made her hide those shiny clothes. She wore the same brown-checked Chinese dress until the Refugee Welcome Society gave her two hand-me-down dresses, all too large in sizes for American women. The society was composed of a group of white-haired American missionary ladies from the First Chinese Baptist Church. And because of their gifts, my parents could not refuse their invitation to join the church. Nor could they ignore the old ladies' practical advice to improve their English through Bible study class on Wednesday nights and, later, through choir practice on Saturday mornings. This was how my parents met the Hsus, the Jongs, and the St. Clairs. My mother could sense that the women of these families also had unspeakable tragedies they had left behind in China and hopes they couldn't begin to express in their fragile English. Or at least, my mother recognized the numbness in these women's faces. And she saw how quickly their eyes moved when she told them her idea for the Joy Luck Club.

—Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989)

SANDRA CISNEROS ►

Sandra Cisneros is one of many Chicana writers to win fame in recent years. In *The House on Mango Street*, she traces the experiences of a poor Hispanic girl named Esperanza (Spanish for *hope*) and her warm-hearted family. Nenny is her sister.



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THINKING CRITICALLY

- 1. Comparing** From these selections, what can you infer about women's experiences in American life today? Cite passages to support your response.



SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R8.

- 2. INTERNET ACTIVITY CLASSZONE.COM**

Visit the links for American Literature to find and choose selections for an anthology of writing by three contemporary American women. Write a "capsule biography" summarizing each writer's background and achievements.