

**THE HISTORY CHANNEL PRESENTS:
10 DAYS THAT UNEXPECTEDLY CHANGED AMERICA™
Murder at the Fair: The Assassination of President McKinley
(SEPTEMBER 6, 1901)**

On the sweltering afternoon of September 6, 1901, hundreds of people waited in line to meet President William McKinley at the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. The exposition was the first world's fair of the 20th century, and the popular president had come to the fair to make a speech and celebrate America's achievements in technology, culture and recent emergence as a world power. McKinley, age 58, planned to shake hands with the public for just ten minutes, but within that brief time, a young man named Leon Czolgosz reached the front of the line and shot the president twice, at point-blank range. Despite doctors' initially positive prognosis, McKinley died a week after the shooting, shocking the nation. Upon McKinley's death, Vice President Theodore Roosevelt was sworn in as the youngest U.S. President in history. The 28-year-old Czolgosz was the son of working-class Polish immigrants. A self-proclaimed anarchist, Czolgosz was extremely disaffected by the growing social and economic divide within the United States. The assassination traumatized and deeply saddened the nation, but also revealed an undercurrent of public dissatisfaction brewing beneath America's surface optimism. Smart, impulsive and extraordinarily charismatic, as McKinley's successor Roosevelt ushered in a new era in American politics, embracing the nation's desire for economic reform and regulation of big business.

Key Terms: Identify the following terms.

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| 1. Alienated | 6. Hierarchy |
| 2. Arbitrary | 7. Epitome |
| 3. Progress | 8. Buckboard |
| 4. Alias | 9. Facetiously |
| 5. Infrastructure | 10. Reform |

Comprehension Questions:

1. What was the purpose of World's Fairs such as the Pan American Exposition? Why were they called the "timekeepers of progress"?
2. Why do you think Leon Czolgosz was so unhappy with his life? Do you think his dissatisfaction revealed larger problems in American society? Discuss.
3. Why, according to the historians who speak in this documentary, did Czolgosz decide to assassinate President McKinley? Do you agree with their arguments?
4. What do you think the symbolism of Czolgosz use of the World's Fair as the place to assassinate McKinley? Why was McKinley so fond of world's fairs?
5. How did people in the United States react to the assassination of President McKinley? What do you think they expected and feared in the wake of his assassination?
6. McKinley's assassination paved the way for Theodore Roosevelt to become president. Many felt that Roosevelt was not suited for the job. Compare and contrast the presidencies and personalities of McKinley and Roosevelt.
7. What was the fate of Czolgosz after the assassination? Do you think his sentence was fair and reasonable, given the historical context? Discuss.
8. What connections do you see between the economic and social despair Americans such as Czolgosz felt and the popularity of Theodore Roosevelt? Discuss.
9. What long-term impact did the assassination of President McKinley have on America?