

Manias of the Gilded Age



The Gilded Age saw the introduction of many games, sports, dances, hobbies, and activities that blazed bright for a while, but then dimmed considerably. Test your knowledge of these 19th-century fads.

1. By far, the biggest puzzle craze of 19th-century America was:

- Tangram sets, first brought from China by New England sailors in the 1820s
- Pigs in Clover, a maze of concentric circles, first marketed in the 1880s, which the player tilted in order to bring marbles into a central pen
- The Fifteen Puzzle, also called the "Boss puzzle" and the "Gem puzzle," which first became popular around 1880. It was a shallow square box containing blocks, numbered 1 to 15. Like later forms of the "sliding puzzle," the player had to rearrange the numbered blocks by sliding them around into a set order. The set was usually sold arranged so that all the numbers were in order except for the last two, 14 and 15, which were reversed.
- Crossword puzzles

2. Which of these popular Gilded Age card games is not in the same family of games as the others?

- Euchre
- Whist
- Poker
- Bridge

3. Between 1878 and 1885, tens of thousands of Americans paid to see:

- Foot races on indoor tracks that lasted six days nonstop, the winner being the "pedestrian" who covered the most miles during that time
- Massed male choirs whose performances consisted of whistled arrangements of popular tunes in four-part harmony
- Cart races on indoor tracks in which women sat and held the reins and their husbands pulled the carts
- Circuses in which all the performers were chimpanzees or orangutans dressed like human clowns, aerialists, gymnasts, and animal trainers



4. A game that swept the United States at the turn of the 20th century, after it had become a fad in England was:

- Monopoly
- Skee ball
- Pin the tail on the donkey
- Ping pong

Sources:

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