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Teaching Project

I choose to focus on two aspects of the presidential election of 1896; one, the rise of Populism in the United States and the election itself. I am thinking about this as if the two topics were going to be addressed during one week of instruction (like during a class that meets on Tuesday and Thursday, for instance). Each class period would be about 1 hour and 15 minutes long.

Part One: Historical Question (699 words)

This teaching project addresses two historical questions. By the end of this first lesson I want my students to understand that changing economic conditions, inequality, and loss of freedom led to social and political unrest and the formation of a “third party,” the Populists. And, by the end of this second lesson, I want my students to understand that *political cartoons* (a significant form of media at the time) were used to sway public opinion about candidates and issues in the 1896 presidential election (similar to the way that social media is used today).

Many of issues facing the country in the lead-up to the 1896 presidential election have parallels today. Similar to the panic of 1893, we had an economic depression in 2008 resulting in social and financial upheaval which led voters to seek two unconventional presidential candidates, Bernie Sanders on the left and Donald J. Trump on the right in the 2016 Presidential election. We also see the rise of monopolies and preferential treatment for corporations which are wielding comparable levels of power as they did in the Gilded Age. In addition to these economic similarities, we can see a resurgence in racial prejudice, white supremacy and attacks on immigrants, which were common place in the nineteenth century. Following McKinley’s election, the United States declared its first war of imperialism, the Spanish American War, and gained its first foreign colonies.

In the 1800s newspapers and magazines were the principal media of the day. Cartoonists, like William Allen Rogers, used his art to create compelling messages chock-full of political satire and symbolism designed to sway public opinion about issues and candidates. We see analogous treatment of political issues in social media and corporate run media today. Using this historical moment as a starting point, and political cartoons as a way to engage students in this topic, I would like to incorporate digital citizenship and media mindfulness practices into the classroom to help students become more knowledgeable consumers of social media.

The textbook that I chose to use for this project, *Building the American Narrative: 1877 to the Present*, explains the importance of voting to the American people of this time. More than at any other time in our nation’s history, voting turnout reached unprecedented levels of an average of

78 percent despite the vast number of people who were disenfranchised.¹ Some politicians argued fervently for states' rights and others saw that the future of the United States was dependent upon a "united" states and strong federal government. There were many forces which threatened this unity, including suffrage and the aftermath of slavery, social Darwinism, the unchecked power of corporations, immigration, environmental and economic upheaval as farmers were forced to move to urban centers, the rise of a strong labor movement, Indian removal, the end of the frontier and the advance of railroads. All of these developments are covered by this text.

Even though some sources claim that the election of 1896 was one of the most complicated in history, the textbook explains the conditions of the election in just enough detail for students in a survey course to understand. William McKinley, a former Republican congressman from Ohio, opposed William Jennings Bryan who ran as a Democrat, but whose platform was Populist. A proponent of the Protestant Social Gospel, he believed that a democratic government should advocate and legislate for all members of the populace, not just the powerful few. Following Bryan's nomination to the Democratic party, the Populists were in a quandary. They questioned whether they should align themselves with the Democrats in order to continue supporting their man, Bryan, or risk running a third-party candidate and throwing the election to McKinley. They made their choice: Bryan lost the election and the Populist Party faded into obscurity.²

The text makes no mention of political cartoons; however, it does point to the biases inherent in the media of the time, particularly *Harper's Weekly* and the *New York Times* in their treatment of the Pullman strike of 1894. In *Harper's Weekly*, the very existence of the union was predicated on breaking this strike. The *New York Times* on the other hand, recognized that this struggle was between capital and labor.³

Part Two: Lesson Plan (1074 words)

First Class Period – The Populists

Lesson Content:

The driving questions for this lesson are:

- How did the economic depression of 1893 contribute to the rise of Populism? (*cause and effect, turning points, through their eyes*)
- How did one's occupation (ex. Farmer or industrial worker), religion (ex. Protestant or Catholic) and experience of racial discrimination (ex. the aftermath of Slavery, Chinese Exclusion) determine one's support or opposition to Populism? (*through their eyes, change and continuity, cause and effect*)

¹ Jane Dailey, *Building the American Republic: 1877 to the Present*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 2.

² Jane Dailey, *Building the American Republic: 1877 to the Present*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 28-29.

³ Jane Dailey, *Building the American Republic: 1877 to the Present*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 27.

Lesson Process:

1. On the first day of class, students would be introduced to the categories of inquiry (*cause and effect, change and continuity, turning points, using the past and through their eyes*) by Mandell and Malone. I will explain that we will explore history together and learning to think like historians based on these categories of inquiry. All students will be assigned to a team. Team membership will remain consistent throughout the semester.
2. Prior to class, students will be assigned to read pg. 1-23 in their text book, "*Building the American Republic.*"
3. I like the idea from "Team Based Learning" of giving the students a quick, individual, multiple-choice quiz based on the reading assignment to test their preparation (see quiz questions in *Accompanying Documents* section).
4. Following the quiz, teams would discuss their answers and be encouraged to work together to "back up" their answers with quotes or citations from the text. They would need to "justify" their answers to their group-mates by providing specifics about their answers. Teams would then turn in their "group answer sheet." This would count towards a participation grade.
5. Next, I would write the driving questions for this lesson on the whiteboard. This would provide a "lesson outline" and gives the students some pre-understanding of the topics to be discussed.
6. A brief lecture (15 minutes) would be given which would specifically address the issues in the driving questions, especially the panic of 1893 and the rise of Populism (see Lecture Notes in the *Accompanying Documents* section).

Lesson Application:

1. I will provide students with a primary source document of the *People's Party Platform* adopted at St. Louis, July 24, 1896.⁴ To facilitate understanding, students will be taught the "Four Reads" technique from teachinghistory.org.⁵
 - a. Reading #1: Reading for Origins and Context
 - b. Reading #2: Reading for Meaning
 - c. Reading #3: Reading for Argument
 - d. Reading #4: Reading Like a Historian
2. Then, student teams will be given "profiles" - quotes or information about different people, ex. A Midwest farmer, a union organizer from Chicago (Eugene V. Debs), an Irish Catholic woman (Mary Ellen Lease), a white suffragist (Susan B. Anthony), the "Richest Man in the World" (Andrew Carnegie), and a wealthy banker (J.P. Morgan) - (see *Accompanying Documents* section).
3. Student teams would engage in a discussion to analyze their profile and answer some key questions. To answer question "e", they would need to find evidence to support their position from the *People's Party Platform* of 1896:
 - a. Is the profile your group was given, a primary or secondary source?

⁴ People's Party Platform adopted at St. Louis, July 24, 1896 <http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/peoplesplatform.html>

⁵ Four Reads <http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/25690>

- b. From the profile your group was given, identify the issue(s) that are important to this person.
 - c. How does the language of the profile indicate the author's perspective?
 - d. From the evidence provided, how is this person involved in politics?
 - e. How likely is it that this person would join the Populist party? Would they have joined the Republican Party?
 - f. What issues expressed in this document sound similar in today's political climate?
4. Student teams will submit a paragraph or two at the end of class with their answers to the above questions.
 5. At this point, students are directed back to the driving questions and will use the activities and insights gained from their study to respond.
 6. Before leaving, students are encouraged to think like historians using the five categories of inquiry (*cause and effect, change and continuity, turning points, using the past and through their eyes*) and pose some additional questions. They would be given index cards and asked to leave their questions with me. We would then start the next class with those questions.

Second Class Period – Election of 1896

Lesson Content:

- Which candidate was supported by the “robber barons” and “Captains of Industry” and which candidate was supported by farmers and industrial workers? Why? (*through their eyes, change and continuity, cause and effect*)
- How were political cartoons used to stir up emotional responses to the economic issues of 1896? (*through their eyes*)
- How are the economic issues of this election similar or dissimilar to the economic issues of the present? (*using the past*)

Lesson Process:

1. Prior to class, students would have been assigned to read pg. 23-37 in their textbook.
2. Questions that students left on the index cards from the previous class period would be posed and other students would be invited to answer or comment on the questions. Those questions could be added to the driving questions for the class.
3. I would begin this class period by writing the driving questions for this lesson on the whiteboard. This provides a “lesson outline” and gives the students some pre-understanding of the topics to be discussed.
4. Through a brief lecture (15 minutes), I would introduce the main candidates: William McKinley and William Jennings Bryan (see Lecture Notes in *Accompanying Documents* section).

Lesson Application:

1. Provide primary source documents – assign the 2 political cartoons to the teams (assuming there are 6 teams, there would be three teams working with the same image) and ask them to:
 - a. Identify who and what is depicted in the cartoon. What emotions is the cartoonist depicting or trying to illicit?

- b. According to what you see, what issues did this political cartoonist identify as the most important in this election?
 - c. What perspective is being expressed? (For instance, is the cartoon pro-Populist or pro-Republican?) Why?
 - d. Would the argument expressed in the cartoon have convinced the audience
 - e. Take note of when and where the image was published and who the audience would have been (was it a national or local publication, for instance?)
2. In teams, using the Republican Party Platform <http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/gopplatform.html>, identify what issues were important to Republicans.
 - a. Compare and contrast this platform to the People’s Party Platform from the previous class period.
 3. At this point, we return to the initial set of driving questions. Focusing specifically on the last question, “How are the economic issues of this election similar or dissimilar to the economic issues of the present?” Ask students to write a paragraph or two about this question before leaving class.

Part Three: Challenges to Conventional Understandings about the Study of History (710 words)

When one considers a conventional understanding of the study of history, a passive approach is usually imagined. This approach involves students sitting in a classroom, and listening to a teacher lecture. Teachers check for understanding by giving multiple choice or sometimes short answer or essay question quizzes and tests. Memorization of facts, dates, names of people and places are required. Students are not engaged in historical thinking. They are expected to sit, listen, memorize, learn, then regurgitate what they have learned in order to earn a grade on a test. As soon as the test is over, all that was learned is forgotten.

Sam Wineburg explains how important it is “to think about the past by recognizing the inadequacy of one’s own conceptual apparatus” which is “essential in teaching people how to understand others different from themselves.”⁶ He goes on to explain how important this recognition and understanding is so that students can view the world through another lens instead of only judging circumstances and decisions by our own experiences and values. In short, historical thinking helps people understand others’ perspectives and grow into more caring and compassionate people.

These two lesson plans challenge the conventional approach because students are engaged in multiple strategies whereby, they get to “do history,” and think like historians. Each of the driving questions involve some aspect of the five thinking like a historian “categories of inquiry” from Mandell and Malone’s *Thinking Like a Historian* framework.⁷ These driving questions address *cause and effect*, *turning points* and *through their eyes* when examining how the

⁶ Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 110.

⁷ Nikki Mandell and Bobbie Malone, *Thinking Like a Historian: Rethinking History Instruction*, Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society: 2007, 7

economic depression of 1893 contributed to the rise of Populism, especially through the lesson's exploration of how various people would have voted. The use of both primary and secondary sources for this activity not only gives the students practice in thinking like a historian, but also helps them become more adept at identifying a primary or secondary source.

The second lesson plan uses political cartoons to exemplify how media can influence public opinion. Inherent in this lesson are elements of media mindfulness because images are being examined and analyzed. Symbols need interpretation and research must be done to understand the imagery employed. The use of compelling, thought-provoking and emotionally charged cartoons lead students into deeper exploration of the topic. Mandell and Malone's historical categories of inquiry, *change and continuity* and *using the past* are employed for the last driving question for this lesson; students are asked to identify and discuss similarities and differences between 1890's influence and today's media influence over public opinion. Using the past to understand the present is a constant theme throughout these lessons, this provides the "so what" to this project.

Michaelsen and Sweet's team-based learning approach is also employed.⁸ Permanent teams would be assigned for this class. A quiz would be given on the first day of class each week to test an individual's preparedness, i.e. did they complete the assigned reading. Then, teams take the same test together. They must agree on the correct answer and will be given ample time for discussion. They are encouraged to find quotes from their text to "back up" their answers and must "justify" any incorrect answers in writing before turning in their team test. This strategy provides peer evaluation and requires students to engage with each other and the material.

Elements of Olwell and Stevens' Reacting to the Past pedagogy is also employed in this lesson when students are asked to put themselves in the shoes of potential voters in the 1896 election. Although, not fully designed as a "game," there are interactive elements included in the lesson plans presented.

Finally, Calder's Uncoverage Pedagogy provided the inspiration to shy away from the lengthy lecture (even though this is something I enjoy about history classes) and focus more on engaging the students with the material and each other. In a sense, the classroom is flipped. Students are required to come to class prepared, by having done the reading. Then, the exploration begins with the activities presented. This pedagogy moves away from the certainty of memorized facts, names and places, what Calder defines as "what history is not: a definitive story, facts stung together, a clear-cut and painlessly acquired knowledge of the past"⁹ to what history is, an "argument without end."¹⁰

Accompanying Documents:

First Class Period QUIZ

⁸ Larry K. Michaelsen and Michael Sweet, "Team Based Learning," *New Directions for Teaching*, no. 128, (Winter 2011): 41-51.

⁹ Lendol Calder, "Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (Mar., 2006): 1365.

¹⁰ Calder, 1366.

Note: Questions borrow language from the textbook. The citations in parentheses following the questions are my notes and would be deleted prior to giving to the students.

1. At the end of the nineteenth century, what groups of people were “worried that expanded access to democracy would destroy American civilization?” (text pg.2 – correct answers **bold**)
 - a. Immigrants
 - b. Opponents of women’s suffrage**
 - c. White supremacists**
 - d. Freed blacks
2. The People’s Party or Populists were founded by which three groups in 1892 Omaha, Nebraska? (text pg. 22)
 - a. Farmer’s Alliance**
 - b. Knights of Labor**
 - c. AFL**
 - d. Representatives from Wall Street
3. At the end of the nineteenth century, the United States underwent a massive economic revolution. The forces that contributed to this revolution included: (text pg. 3)
 - a. Abundant natural resources
 - b. Expansion of railroads and communication networks (telegraph)
 - c. A labor pool consisting of immigrants from abroad
 - d. Strong federal government determined to incorporate territory of the West
 - e. All of the above**
4. What were two of the early issues facing an emerging labor workforce? (text pg. 14-15)
 - a. unemployment**
 - b. Right to work**
 - c. 12 hour work day
 - d. Ineligibility to vote

First Class Period Lecture Notes

Panic of 1893

- President Cleveland (1893-1897) opened the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago on May 1, 1893 to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus’ voyage to the New World.
- Three days later, the stock market in New York crashed, rallied, then crashed again. The American economy was in danger of collapsing.
- Earlier in the year, investors had become timid and uneasy. This was caused by uncertain currency values (lack of regulation), an inadequate banking system, depressed agricultural prices, declining exports. This was tied to foreign investment in the Argentinian wheat crop – which had failed – causing investors to make a run for gold on the U.S. Treasury.
- Philadelphia and Reading Railroad went bankrupt after 1M of its shares had been sold.

- U.S. and European demand for gold was overwhelming, U.S. Treasury could not keep up. Reserves fell to dangerously low levels.
- Friday, May 5th was called “Industrial Black Friday” as the Stock Exchange was flooded with orders and leading stocks were plunged to record lows.
- Northern Pacific Railroad announced bankruptcy.
- Price of silver dropped from 81 cents to 62 cents an ounce in four days.
- In August, mills, factories, furnaces, mines shut down everywhere. Hundreds of thousands of workers were now “unemployed” a new word coined at the time.
- In mid-October, Union Pacific Railroad declared bankruptcy.
- During 1893, some 15,000 business forms and more than 600 banks failed.
- People began questioning whether President Cleveland and the Democrats could “do something” about the depression.
- This depression offered a sudden opportunity to the Republicans and Populists to lure the discontented into new coalitions. ¹¹

The rise of Populism

- The Civil War had been financed through currency expansion (printing more money, called “greenbacks”), bonds, taxes and tariffs. In 1866, Congress voted to “retire” the greenbacks by buying them with gold. They had depreciated – so it took \$130 greenbacks to get \$100 in gold. Rather than buy gold with greenbacks, debtors used them to pay loans. Lenders were not happy.
- The Coinage Act of 1873, ended the production of silver dollars which had circulated alongside gold, greenbacks and private bank notes (there was no uniform currency – different banks could issue their own currency). The Bland-Allison Act of 1878 allowed silver coins to be produced again.
- Farmers and workers wanted “free silver” because it would mean increasing the money supply and lowering the burden of their debts – which had been inflated because of protective tariffs. Business and manufacturing opposed “free silver.”
- Farmers produced more goods, paid more taxes and voted more than any other groups, but were ignored by Washington.
- Cotton and grain farmers in the South and Midwest were at the mercy of railroad and commodity storage and exchange systems because they monopolized routes and set their own rates. A Nebraskan farmer said, “We have three crops, corn, freight rates and interest. The farmers farm the land, and the businessmen farm the farmers.”¹²
- Farmers banded together to a collective bargaining organization called “The Grange.” The Grange morphed into “The Farmers’ Alliance” and had 1.5 million members (many were women) and outposts from California to New York. Their “chief goal was to free working Americans, including farmers, from a demeaning dependence on those who otherwise controlled the economy.”¹³

¹¹ First part of lecture, notes from Williams, p 25-30

¹² Jane Dailey, *Building the American Republic: 1877 to the Present*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 20.

¹³ Jane Dailey, *Building the American Republic: 1877 to the Present*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 21.

- In 1890, Alliance members met in Ocala, Florida and issued “Ocala Demands.” Expressed deep distrust of “the money power” – banks and corporations whose financial power allowed them to manipulate a supposedly “free market.” Demands included; reduce tariffs on imported merchandise, expand currency supply through bimetallism (silver), enact a federal income tax to support functions of government, public ownership of railroads and communication networks.
- In 1891, delegates from many Alliances, the Knights of Labor, the AFL, and other reform groups (including African Americans) met in St. Louis to form a third political party, The People’s Party, known as “The Populists.”¹⁴

First Class Period Profiles

Note: Each of these profiles would be printed on separate sheets of paper so that they could be distributed to the teams. The following questions would be posed for each profile:

- Is the profile your group was given, a primary or secondary source?
- From the profile your group was given, identify the issue(s) that are important to this person.
- How does the language of the profile indicate the author’s perspective?
- From the evidence provided, how is this person involved in politics?
- How likely is it that this person would join the Populist party? Would they have joined the Republican Party?
- What issues expressed in this document sound similar in today’s political climate?

A MIDWEST FARMER

¹⁴ Part two of lecture based on textbook pages 18-23.



“The Land was mined, not farmed” - Marcus Lee Hansen. “We have three crops, corn freight rates, and interest. The farmers farm the land, and the businessmen farm the farmers.”¹⁵

Although great advances in agricultural practices were made during this time period, those advances had unintended consequences which were devastating for ecology and farmers. In the four years from 1888 to 1892 half of the population of western Kansas were forced to leave their land and move on. Economic depressions of 1873 and 1893 were devastating. The price of wheat fell from \$1.05 per bushel to \$0.67 by 1895 and European countries had enacted trade barriers which made it

less advantageous for American farmers to export. Argentina and Russia also expanded their wheat crop which resulted in greater competition.¹⁶

A UNION ORGANIZER – Eugene V. Debs

July 27, 1896
Terre Haute, Indiana

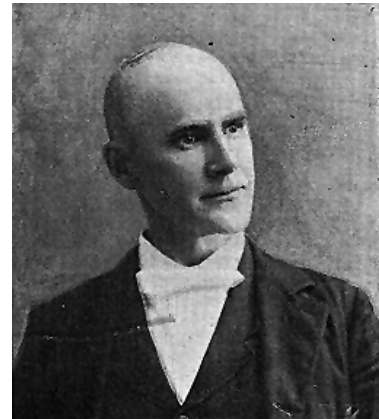
My dear Mr. Bryan,

With millions of others of your countrymen I congratulate you most heartily upon being the People's standard bearer in the great uprising of the masses against the classes. You are at this hour the hope of the Republic--the central figure of the civilized world. In the arduous campaign before you the millions will rally to your standard and you will lead them to a glorious victory. The people love and trust you--they believe in you as you believe in them, and under your administration the rule of the money power will be broken and the [gold barons of Europe](#) will no longer run the American government.

Will all good wishes believe me always

Your faithfully, [Eugene V. Debs](#)

Bryan Manuscripts, Library of Congress, reprinted in J. Robert Constantine, ed., **Letters of Eugene V. Debs**, Volume I (1874-1912), ed. J. Robert Constantine (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990) <http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/democrats.html#anarchy>



AN IRISH CATHOLIC WOMAN – Mary Ellen Lease

¹⁵ Jane Dailey, *Building the American Republic: 1877 to the Present*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 20.

¹⁶ Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age: From the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 3rd Ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 314.



“Mrs. Lease was educated a Catholic, but thought herself out of that communion, and is now not over-weighted with reverence for the clergy of any sect. She not infrequently rouses their ire by her stinging taunts as to their divergence from the path marked out by their professed Master, whose first concern was for the poor and needy....”

--Annie L. Diggs, "The Women in the Alliance Movement," [Arena](#), July 1892

“Mrs. Lease is representative of the party--we will not call it Democratic--which presents Mr. Bryan as a candidate.... In the principles she avows, and the policies she advocates, in the coarse vigor of her speech and the startling aggressiveness of her manner, she is in the highest degree the best and truest exponent of the

Bryan platform and party. In the extravagance of her language, the wantonness and recklessness with which she appealed to class hatred, pointing out by name as the proper objects of popular vengeance good and honorable citizens whose only offence is the possession of property accumulated honestly under the laws, she may have seemed to be in advance of her party. But only a step; just enough to bring out with clearness and distinctness the real spirit and purpose of the revolutionists and Anarchists who are bent on the destruction of public credit and the overthrow of social order. A step behind this raging virago, foaming with fury and blazing with wrath, is the wild mob of levellers eager for the general distribution of spoils; behind them the Terror, with its bloody bacchanals and merciless savagery.”

--[New York Tribune](#), August 13, 1896

<http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/lease.html>

A WHITE FEMALE SUFFRIGIST – Susan B. Anthony



OAKLAND, August 8. --The Populists of Alameda county opened the campaign tonight for Bryan and Watson with a torchlight procession and a big mass meeting at Germania Hall. The Populists made the best public showing ever achieved by their organization in Oakland.

... Miss Susan B. Anthony spoke for the eleventh amendment. She said: "In a Populist convention I come to thank you as a party that from the very first your organization has recognized human equality--equal rights for all and special privileges to none. My good friends, you Populists are all converted now, you are the ninety and nine

sheep that are saved. I want to find the lost sheep. I shall have to go somewhere else." [San](#)

[Francisco Examiner](#), August 9

<http://project.vassar.edu/1896/suffrage.html>

THE RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD – Andrew Carnegie

“Head of the Carnegie Steel Works, Andrew Carnegie was called the 'Richest Man in the World.' Born to a poor family in Scotland, Carnegie emigrated to the U.S., working in a textile mill and a telegraph office before moving up through the ranks at the Pennsylvania Railroad. Carnegie built his steel empire through vertical integration--owning and controlling all parts of the steel production process, from coal mines all the way to sale of the final product. 'Watch the bottom line' was one of his business rules, and he kept a firm hand on the costs not only of raw materials, but of labor. He did allow unionization, but during the Homestead strike of 1892, Carnegie and his second-in-command, Henry Frick, hired a private army to put down a strike by the Amalgamated Iron, Steel and Tin Workers (the largest union within the American Federation of Labor), which pressed for higher wages and an eight-hour day. Many Americans who were anti-union nonetheless condemned Carnegie for taking matters into his own hands, rather than seeking government aid in resolving the crisis.”

<http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/strikes.html#carnegie>



BANKER – J.P. Morgan



“In February 1895 [President Grover Cleveland](#) was forced to strike a deal with J.P. Morgan which saved the United States Gold Reserves. At the time the United States was in the midst of a terrible depression and Cleveland's popularity was rapidly dwindling. Cleveland had continued to support the traditional gold standard while his party gradually jumped ship and merged with the Populist, bimetallic platform.

Understanding the crisis that the nation would undergo if the United States gold reserves disappeared, J.P. Morgan, magnate/financier, offered to help the government. Morgan (with a profit clearly in mind) offered to form a syndicate (headed by himself) which would buy bonds from the United States in exchange for 62 million dollars worth of European gold. Cleveland, unable to see an alternative, and realizing that it would be a matter of days before the gold reserves disappeared completely, agreed to the plan, and organized the bond sale. With the deal settled, the dollar managed to recover some of its value, and Cleveland could rest easy, knowing that the gold reserves were safe.”

<http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/morganbonds.html>

Second Class Period Lecture Notes

Main candidates; William McKinley and William Jennings Bryan

- Republican, William McKinley was a former congressman from Ohio. He was popular with business interests and industrial workers because of his support for high protective tariffs. (Tariffs are taxes placed on goods coming into the country. They are intended to help keep locally made goods less expensive than imported goods). Of the tariff, he said, “It is the tax of patriotism, of home and country of self-preservation and self-development. It has made the youngest country on earth first in agriculture, the first in mining and the first in manufactures.”¹⁷
- He solidly supported the gold standard. He promised Americans a “full dinner pail” and social harmony.
- His campaign manager was Mark Hanna, a wealthy Ohio businessman.
- McKinley had enlisted in the Union Army and served in the Twenty-third Ohio under Lieutenant Colonel Rutherford B. Hayes. McKinley became the last U.S. President who was a veteran of the Civil War.
- McKinley won the nomination at the Republican National Convention and began campaigning with these themes: a sound currency, a tariff to protect American business and labor and put money in the Treasury, and a return of prosperity. He said, “What we want in this country is a policy that will give to every American working man full work at American wages...A policy that will put enough money into the Treasury of the United States to run the Government. A policy that will bring back to us such a period of prosperity and of plenty as that we enjoyed for more than thirty years prior to 1893.”¹⁸
- William Jennings Bryan was a 36-year-old former Nebraska congressman and outspoken advocate for silver interests. Popular in the south and west, he won the Democratic nomination for President at the convention in Chicago.
- Bryan had been a Populists, but had garnered so much support from the populace, that his candidacy caused a rift in the Populist party. There were those who wanted him to run as a Populist, and those who were concerned that doing so would “split the vote.” The decision was made to “fuse” with the Democrats.
- He believed that, “There are two ideas of government – there are those that believe that, if you will only legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea, however, have been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous, their prosperity will find its way up through every class which rests upon them.”¹⁹
- Whereas McKinley campaigned from his front porch, Bryan used the railroads to storm the country, garnering support for his campaign and platform.

¹⁷ R. Hal Williams, *Realigning America: McKinley, Bryan, and the Remarkable Election of 1896*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas), 50.

¹⁸ R. Hal Williams, *Realigning America: McKinley, Bryan, and the Remarkable Election of 1896*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas), 65.

¹⁹ Jane Dailey, *Building the American Republic: 1877 to the Present*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 28.

- Bryan was known as “The Great Commoner” and was a great orator who could articulate political issues and perspectives in ways that were easy to understand for ordinary Americans.

Main issues of the election

- The “fusion” of the Populist party with the Democrats. Some felt that this melding of Populism with Democratic views corrupted the party.
- Demagoguery – Kansas journalist William Allen White felt that Bryan seemed “the incarnation of demagoguery.” He said, “It was the first time in my life and in the life of a generation in which any man large enough to lead a national party had boldly and unashamedly made his cause that of the poor and the oppressed.”²⁰
- Anarchy – anti-union forces used the fear of anarchy to discredit the Populists.
- Sectionalism – there was a growing recognition that there was a great divide between the wealthy and working classes. This held true regionally with the south and Midwest on the side of the Populists, and the West and Northeast backing the Republicans.
- Bimetallism - Gold and Silver – business interests were firmly in favor of maintaining the gold standard while farmers and workers were in favor of “free silver.”
- Prejudice – strong anti-Semitism was apparent, and anti-immigrant sentiments were strong and pervasive.

Political Cartoons:

²⁰ Jane Dailey, *Building the American Republic: 1877 to the Present*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 30



1. "Double Double, Toil and Trouble, Fire Burn and Cauldron Bubble."

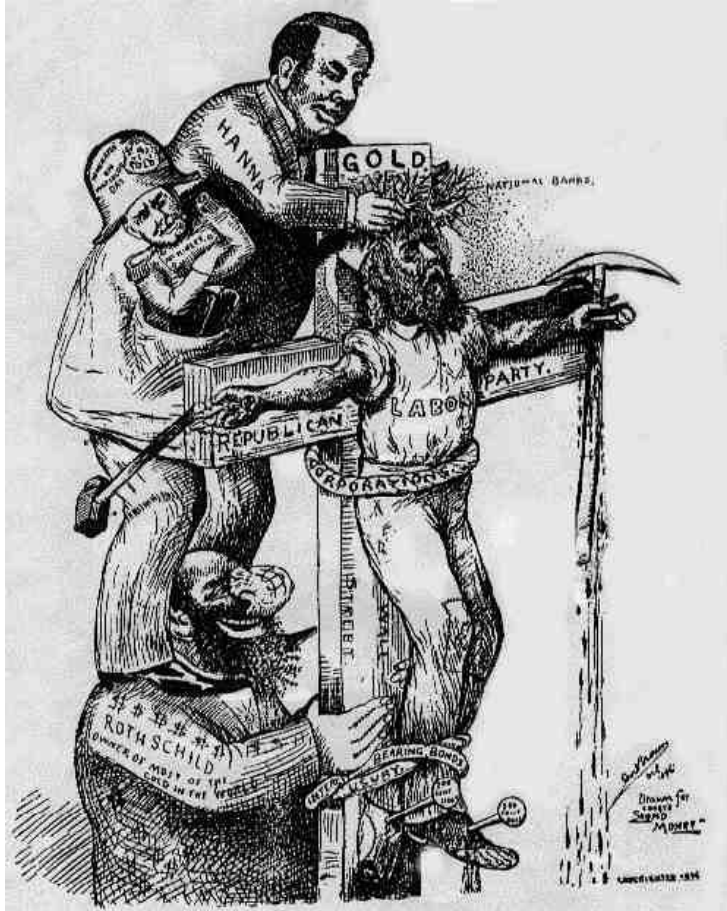
[Los Angeles Times](http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/0820lat.html), 20 August, 1896

<http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/0820lat.html>

Students in teams would discuss the cartoons and answer the following questions:

- Identify who and what is depicted in the cartoon. What emotions is the cartoonist depicting or trying to illicit?
- According to what you see, what issues did this political cartoonist identify as the most important in this election?
- What perspective is being expressed? (For instance, is the cartoon pro-Populist, pro-Democrat or pro-Republican?) Why?
- Would the argument expressed in the cartoon have convinced the audience
- Take note of when and where the image was published and who the audience would have been (was it a national or local publication, for instance?)²¹

²¹ These questions are from the "Four Reads" strategy from teachinghistory.org



2. We Want No Crown of Thorns, No

Cross of Gold-- Like This.

[Sound Money](http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/0820csm.html), 20 August, 1896

<http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/0820csm.html>

Students in terms would discuss the cartoons and answer the following questions:

- Identify who and what is depicted in the cartoon. What emotions is the cartoonist depicting or trying to illicit?
- According to what you see, what issues did this political cartoonist identify as the most important in this election?
- What perspective is being expressed? (For instance, is the cartoon pro-Populist, pro-Democrat or pro-Republican?) Why?
- Would the argument expressed in the cartoon have convinced the audience
- Take note of when and where the image was published and who the audience would have been (was it a national or local publication, for instance?)

Part Four: Appendix of Sources

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Secondary Sources:

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Richest Man in the World – Andrew Carnegie

<http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/strikes.html#carnegie>

The ‘Morgan Bonds’ – J.P. Morgan

<http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/morganbonds.html>

Primary Sources:

People’s Party Platform adopted at St. Louis, July 24, 1896

<http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/peoplesplatform.html>

Republican Party Platform adopted at St. Louis, June 16, 1896

<http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/gopplatform.html>

Susan B. Anthony speech from the San Francisco Examiner, August 9, 1896

<http://project.vassar.edu/1896/suffrage.html>

Mary Ellen Lease

<http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/lease.html>

"Double Double, Toil and Trouble, Fire Burn and Cauldron Bubble." A cartoon from the Los Angeles Times <http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/0820lat.html>

“We Want No Crown of Thorns, No Cross of Gold-- Like This.” A cartoon from Sound Money

<http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/0820csm.html>

Quote by Eugene V. Debs, from *The People*, New York, in *Public Opinion*, August 6, 1896

<http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/socialism.html#debs>

Additional Sources:

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