

Populism Packet

Directions: Below is a cause and effect graphic organizer that you will need to fill out. Below the organizer is a list of items that you need to sort into the correct column.

Causes of the Rise of Populism	Populist Party Established	Effects of the Rise of the Populist

Topic/Item Word Bank

- Interstate Commerce Act-Government regulates railway charges
- Food Prices fall due to the opening of the West and over production
- High cost of farm expenses such as equipment, and improvements to their land
- Rural isolation of being a farmer
- New Ideas for Parties- Income tax based on wealth, 8 hour work day, direct election of US senators
- Granger-Co-Ops- Allowed farmers to reduce debt by buying in bulk
- High interest loans for farmers who borrowed money for farm equipment
- High Railroad shipping charges for farm goods shipped east
- Election of 1896- Call to allow for the unlimited coinage of silver to raise farm prices, make loan payments, etc.
- Democratic Party adopts popular ideas of the populist movement.

Source: Sherman Anti-Trust Act (1890)

An act to protect trade and commerce against unlawful restraints and monopolies.

Sec. 1. Every contract, combination in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce among the several States, or with foreign nations, is hereby declared to be illegal. Every person who shall make any such contract or engage in any such combination or conspiracy, shall be deemed guilty ... shall be punished ...

Sec. 2. Every person who shall monopolize, or attempt to monopolize, or combine or conspire with any other person or persons, to monopolize any part of the trade or commerce among the several States, or with foreign nations, shall be deemed guilty ...shall be punished

Sec. 3. Every contract, combination in form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce in any Territory of the United States or of the District of Columbia... is hereby declared illegal...

Historical Context	
Purpose	
How would tycoons react to this?	

J. Sterling Morton What Farm Problem? (1896)

The People's Party and its reform agenda aroused intense opposition. Democrat J. Sterling Morton of Nebraska served as secretary of agriculture under Grover Cleveland from 1893 to 1897. He vigorously denied that there was a serious "farm problem" and staunchly opposed the Populist movement's efforts to gain government benefits for farmers.

From The Report of Secretary of Agriculture, 1896 (Washington, D.C., 1896), pp. xlv-vi.

Out of each thousand farms in the United States only 282 are mortgaged, and three-fourths of the money represented by the mortgages upon the 282 farms was for the purchase of those farms or for money borrowed to improve those farms. And the prevalent idea that the West and the South are more heavily burdened with farm mortgages than the East and Northeast sections of the United States is entirely erroneous. . . .

The constant complaint by the alleged friends of farmers, and by some farmers themselves, is that the Government does nothing for agriculture. In conventions and congresses it has been proclaimed that the farmers of the country are almost universally in debt, despondent, and suffering. Largely these declarations are without foundation. Their utterance is a belittlement of agriculture and an indignity to every intelligent and practical farmer of the United States. The free and independent farmers of this country are not impoverished; they are not mendicants; they are not wards of the Government to be treated to annuities, like Indians upon reservations. On the other hand, they are the representatives of the oldest, most honorable, and most essential occupation of the human race. Upon it all other vocations depend for subsistence and prosperity. The farmer is the copartner of the elements. His intelligently directed efforts are in unison with the light and heat of the sun, and the success of his labors represents the commingling of the raindrops and his own sweat.

Legislation can neither plow nor plant. The intelligent, practical, and successful farmer needs no aid from the Government. The ignorant, impractical, and indolent farmer deserves none. It is not the business of Government to legislate in behalf of any class of citizens because they are engaged in any specific calling, no matter how essential the calling may be to the needs and comforts of civilization. Lawmakers can not erase natural laws nor restrict or efface the operation of economic laws. It is a beneficent arrangement of the order of things and the conditions of human life that legislators are not permitted to repeal, amend, or revise the laws of production and distribution.

1. What did Morton mean by "practical" farmers and "impractical" farmers?
2. What did Morton mean when he wrote that the farmer was the "copartner of the elements"? What important factor did he omit in this context?
3. What relationship, if any, did the government have with natural or economic laws? How does this reflect late-nineteenth-century notions about governance?

Document A: Mary Elizabeth Lease, 1890 (Modified)

The mightiest movement the world has known in two thousand years. . . is sending out the happiest message to oppressed humanity that the world has heard since John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness that the world's Redeemer was coming to relieve the world's misery.

To this sterile and remote region, infested by savage beasts and still more savage men, the women of the New England States, the women of the cultured East, came with husbands, sons and brothers to help them build up a home [in the West] . . . We endured hardships, and dangers; hours of loneliness, fear and sorrow. . . We toiled in the cabin and in the field; we helped our loved ones to make the prairie blossom. . .

Yet, after all our years of toil and deprivation, dangers and hardships, our homes are being taken from us by an infamous [wicked] system of mortgage foreclosure. It takes from us at the rate of five hundred a month the homes that represent the best years of our life, our toil, our hopes, our happiness. How did it happen? The government, siding with Wall Street, broke its contracts with the people. . . . As Senator Plumb [of Kansas] tells us, "Our debts were increased, while the means to pay them [cash] was decreased."

No more millionaires, and no more paupers; no more gold kings, silver kings and oil kings, and no more little waifs of humanity starving for a crust of bread. We shall have the golden age of which Isaiah sang and the prophets have so long foretold; when the farmers shall be prosperous and happy, dwelling under their own vine and fig tree; when the laborer shall have that for which he toils. . . .When we shall have not a government of the people by capitalists, but a government of the people, by the people.

Source: Mary Elizabeth Lease became politically involved as a speaker for the rights of workers and farmers. She had a powerful voice and charismatic speaking style. In this speech, Lease gave a speech to the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1890, a women's movement against alcohol.

Document B: William Jennings Bryan, 1896 (Modified) "Cross of Gold" Speech

The merchant at the corner store is as much a businessman as the merchant of New York. The farmer who goes forth in the morning and toils all day...is as much a businessman as the man who [works on Wall Street]. We come to speak for this broader class of businessmen....It is for these that we speak. We are fighting in the defense of our homes and our families. We have petitioned, and our petitions have been scorned. We have entreated, and our entreaties have been disregarded. We have begged, and they have mocked us.

We beg no longer; we entreat no more; we petition no more. We defy them!

You come to us and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard. I tell you that the great cities rest upon these broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic. But destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in this country.

Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them: you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.

Source: The speech above was delivered by William Jennings Bryan at the Democratic National Convention in July 1896. It is considered one of the most famous speeches in American history. The passage is an excerpt.

1. Where is Bryan speaking? What is his purpose?
2. Based on the speech, how do you think farmers and workers were feeling about business and industry? Find a quote to support your answer.
3. What is the main point of his speech?
4. What makes the speech so powerful? Pick the line that you think is most powerful and explain your choice.
5. What are two similarities between this speech and the speech by Mary Elizabeth Lease?
6. Using both speeches, write a paragraph in response to the following question: Why were speakers like Lease and Bryan popular with farmers in the 1890s? (6-8 Sentences)

Source: Omaha Platform

FINANCE We demand a national currency, safe, sound, and flexible issued by the general government....

1. We demand free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the present legal ratio of 16 to 1.
2. We demand that the amount of circulating medium be speedily increased....
3. We demand a graduated income tax.
4. We believe that the money of the country should be kept as much as possible in the hands of the people, and hence we believe that all State and national revenues shall be limited to the necessary expenses of the government, economically and honestly administered....
5. We demand that postal savings banks be established by the government for the safe deposit of the earnings of the people and to facilitate exchange....

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation being a means of exchange and a public necessity, the government should own and operate the railroads in the interest of the people. The telegraph and telephone... should be owned and operated by the government in the interest of the people.

LAND

The land, including all the natural sources of wealth, is the heritage of the people, and should not be monopolized for speculative purposes, and alien ownership of land should be prohibited. All land now held by railroads and other corporations in excess of their actual needs, and all lands now owned by aliens should be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers only.

Historical Context	
Intended Audience	
Purpose	
Point of View	
Comparison to another time period.	

NC Election of 1898

Populists didn't always align with Democrats; sometimes they aligned with Republicans, especially in the South where Republicans were poor black farmers and Democrats were rich land owners. When Populists united with Republicans, their platform was sometimes called the "Fusion" ticket.

North Carolina Election Timeline

1865 The Civil War ends.

1867 The Republican Party is formed in North Carolina.

1870 The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution is ratified, guaranteeing African Americans the right to vote.

1870 The Democrats regain control of the North Carolina legislature, as Reconstruction comes to an end.

1876 Democrat Zebulon Vance is elected Governor.

1892 In statewide elections, the combined totals of Populist and Republican votes are more than those for the Democrats.

1894 In the first fusion election, the Republicans and Populists run together and the Democrats lose control of both houses of the legislature.

1896 Elections bring more fusion success: the Republicans and Populists run together again and keep control of the legislature. A Republican is elected Governor.

1898 Democrats win a majority of seats in the legislature.

DOCUMENT A (Modified)

A WHITE MAN'S DAY.

Eight to Ten Thousand People Listen.

TILLMAN MAKES A GREAT SPEECH FOR DEMOCRACY

Tillman said that he could not understand why whites in North Carolina did not use their large majority to prevent negro domination. He blamed both Democrats and Populists for their continued division, but appealed to the Populists to re-unite with the Democrats. When they had restored white rule, they would have plenty of time to settle their differences. By taking his advice the Populists would reinforce the silver-backed dollar and help keep the Republican goldbugs from making policy.

The crowd yelled with delight at every attack on the Republicans.

Source: The article above appeared in the Democratic newspaper, News and Observer, on October 21, 1898. The article describes a speech by Democratic Senator Ben Tillman who was convincing the large crowd to vote Democratic in the upcoming election. 1898 North Carolina Election

1. What party does Tillman represent?
2. Who is he trying to convince to vote Democratic?
3. What are two things that Tillman promises will happen if the Democrats win?

DOCUMENT B (Modified)

I have been told that several political meetings have been broken up by armed men, using threats, intimidation, and, in some cases, actual violence; that in other cases property has been actually destroyed, and citizens fired on, that several citizens have been taken from their homes at night and

whipped; that in several counties peaceful citizens have been intimidated and terrorized by threats of violence to their persons and their property, until they remove their names from the voter registration.

Therefore, I, Daniel L. Russell, Governor of the State of North Carolina, by virtue of authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws, will use all lawful efforts to preserve the peace; and to secure to all the people the quiet enjoyment of all their rights of free citizenship.

And I do further commend and require that all persons who may have entered this State from other states, to leave this State upon pain of being arrested and dealt with according to law.

By the Governor,
DANIEL L. RUSSELL.

Source: The speech above was published in a Populist newspaper on October 26, 1898.

1. Governor Russell says that there's been violence. What party do you think is behind the violence?
2. Who do you think is being attacked? Why would those people be attacked?
3. Do you think this speech had any effect on the violence? Why or why not?

Document C: Source: The following political cartoon appeared in the Democratic newspaper, News and Observer, on August 13, 1898



Pant leg is labeled, "THE NEGRO."

Figure being stepped upon is labeled, "WHITE MAN."

Caption reads, "A SERIOUS QUESTION - HOW LONG WILL THIS LAST?"

1. What's the main message of this cartoon?
2. Who do you think was its intended audience?
3. What does it tell you about the Democrats' strategy for the 1898 election?
4. Overall: The Fusion ticket (Populists + Republicans) won in 1894 and 1896. So why did the Democrats beat the Fusion ticket in 1898?

POPULISM THEN AND NOW

“[W]e say not one word against those who live upon the Atlantic Coast; but those hardy pioneers who braved all the dangers of the wilderness, who have made the desert to blossom as the rose—those pioneers away out there, rearing their children near to nature’s heart, where they can mingle their voices with the voices of the birds—out there where they have erected schoolhouses for the education of their children and churches where they praise their Creator, and the cemeteries where sleep the ashes of their dead—are as deserving of the consideration of this party as any people in this country. ...

“There are two ideas of government. There are those who believe that if you just legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, that their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous their prosperity will find its way up and through every class that rests upon it. ...

“If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we shall fight them to the uttermost, having behind us the producing masses of the nation and the world. Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them, you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.”

~ William Jennings Bryan, speech to Democratic National Convention, July 9, 1896

“Inequality ... distorts our democracy. It gives an outsized voice to the few who can afford high-priced lobbyists and unlimited campaign contributions, and it runs the risk of selling out our democracy to the highest bidder. It leaves everyone else rightly suspicious that the system in Washington is rigged against them, that our elected representatives aren’t looking out for the interests of most Americans.

“But there’s an even more fundamental issue at stake. This kind of gaping inequality gives lie to the promise that’s at the very heart of America: that this is a place where you can make it if you try. We tell people -- we tell our kids -- that in this country, even if you’re born with nothing, work hard and you can get into the middle class. We tell them that your children will have a chance to do even better than you do. That’s why immigrants from around the world historically have flocked to our shores.

“And yet, over the last few decades, the rungs on the ladder of opportunity have grown farther and farther apart, and the middle class has shrunk. You know, a few years after World War II, a child who was born into poverty had a slightly better than 50-50 chance of becoming middle class as an adult. By 1980, that chance had fallen to around 40 percent. And if the trend of rising inequality over the last few decades continues, it’s estimated that a child born today will only have a one-in-three chance of making it to the middle class -- 33 percent.

“It’s heartbreaking enough that there are millions of working families in this country who are now forced to take their children to food banks for a decent meal. But the idea that those children might not have a chance to climb out of that situation and back into the middle class, no matter how hard they work? That’s inexcusable. It is wrong. It flies in the face of everything that we stand for.”

~President Barack Obama, speech in Osawatomie, Kansas, December 6, 2011

1. How did Bryan's style of campaigning contrast with McKinley's in 1896? What made his campaign so unorthodox for the time?
2. What was the purpose of the religious references in Bryan's speech? How did that rhetoric both help and hurt him during the 1896 campaign?
3. These speeches were given 115 years apart, but some similarities exist. How are Bryan's and President Obama's messages alike? Consider factors such as the intended audience, geography, and political viewpoints.
4. In 1896, Bryan carried Kansas and most western states. It has been decades since any Democrat has made serious inroads in the Great Plains – Obama lost Kansas by 22 percent in 2012. Why does this kind of economic populist rhetoric seemingly not work as well today?