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Institute: High School American History

Title of Lesson: Populism and Democracy

Amount of time required to complete lesson: 1 week on modified block (3-50-minute periods, 1-100 minute period)

Lesson Objective: Students will utilize information presented in primary and secondary sources, as well as in their text books, in order to analyze and evaluate membership, stated goals, and efficacy of the Populist party during the last years of the 19th century.

- **Standard:** Students develop a sense of historical time and historical perspective as they study the history of their community, state, nation and world.

- **Benchmarks:**
  - H-1A-H1: applying key concepts, such as chronology and conflict, to explain and analyze patterns of historical change and continuity
  - H-1A-H2: explaining and analyzing events, ideas and issues within an historical context
  - H-1A-H3: interpreting and evaluating the historical evidence presented in primary and secondary sources
  - H-1A-H4: Utilizing knowledge of facts and concepts drawn from history and methods of historical inquiry to analyze historical and contemporary issues.
  - H-1A-H5: conducting research in efforts to analyze historical questions and issues
  - H-1B-H9: analyzing the rise of the labor and agrarian movements

- **GLEs:**
  - #3: Contrast past and present events or ideas in US history, demonstrating an awareness of differing political, social or economic contexts.
  - #6: Analyze the point of view of an historical figure or group in US history.
  - #9: Evaluate and use multiple primary or secondary materials to interpret historical facts, ideas and issues.
  - #11: Propose and defend alternative courses of action to address an historical or contemporary issue, and evaluate their positive and negative implications.
  - #13: Analyze source material to identify opinion or propaganda and persuasive techniques.
  - #14: Interpret a political cartoon depicting an historical event, issue or perspective.
  - #17: Conduct historical research using a variety of resources to answer historical questions related to US history and present that research in appropriate format(s) (visual, electronic, written)
  - #27: Describe problems facing farmers and laborers, the ways they sought to enact change, and the responses of the government and business community (e.g. populism, share-croppers, rise of labor unions)
Essential Question: To what extent did the Populists aim to create an egalitarian system during the last years of the 19th century?

Materials Required:

- photocopies of primary and secondary sources
  - Omaha Platform: www.historymatters.gmu.edu/search.php
  - Political Cartoon—“Every Dog Has It’s Day”: www.csuhak.edu/~gsantos/cat15.html
  - Political Cartoon—“I am Against American Imperialism”: see attached—I forgot to write down the website, and can’t find the cartoon again to save my life!
  - News article—“Cause of Agricultural Unrest.” [The Atlantic Monthly. Volume 78, Issue 469, Nov. 1896. Use excerpts that address the author’s characterization of Populist Party members, as well as the section that deals with the basic economic concepts of supply and demand.]
  - Map of 1896 election results: www.presidentselect.org/c1896.html
  - (copies of document analysis worksheets: www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/judex.html)
- Graphs: Production and Prices, 1860-1895: see attached. Found in Document-Based Assessment Activities for US History Classes. J. Weston Walch, Publisher. Portland, Maine (purchased through Social Studies School Services catalog)
- Document analysis sheets: www.archives.gov

- library/computer access
- textbook
- chart paper
- markers

Instructional Strategies Used:

- think-pair-share
- q/a
- small-group and whole-class discussion
- cooperative learning—small group research/presentations
- individual reading/writing
- guided practice

Directions for the lesson:

- Day 1 (50 minutes):
  - Think-Pair-Share: (1) Begin the lesson with the following writing prompt on the board: “If your way of life (your job, your culture, your living situation, etc.) were being threatened by social, economic and political changes, in what ways would you respond—would you change to fit the newly-developed norms, or would you fight to maintain your right to live as you want?” (2) Have students compare their answers with an assigned partner. (3) Conduct a whole-class discussion using examples from students’ responses.
  - Have the following words written on the board/chart paper for students to define as a class: democracy, revolution, politics, government, third party. Have students give their own definitions for these words—leave space for those definitions to be expanded as the lesson continues.
  - Introduce the Populists to students by explaining that during periods of great change or hardship, certain groups come together to challenge the system and that the 1880s and 1890s represented the time for the farmers to do so because they began to see that their way of life was being threatened by the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution.
  - Present students with the Essential Question: “To what extent did the Populists aim to create an egalitarian system during the last years of the 19th century?” Tell them that the information they gather
over the course of the lesson will enable them to write an essay in response to this question. Have the essential question written on a sheet of chart paper—leave room underneath the question for use later in the week.

- Divide students into 4 groups, and tell each group that they will be researching and providing information to the class based on the Populists' views/goals on one of the following topics: (1) the nature and role of the federal government; (2) view of immigrants and foreigners (including Native Americans); (3) what role the US should have in world affairs; (4) ways in which the economic system should be changed to be more responsive to the people.

- Hand out copies of the Omaha Platform to students and have them read and discuss the information provided within the document. Tell them to highlight the information that directly affects their group's assignment.

- For homework, have students read the information regarding farmers' alliances and the Populist movement in their textbooks.

- **Day 2 (50 minutes):**

  - If possible (and potentially fruitful—check first), take students to the library/computer lab to conduct further research regarding their assigned task.

    - As students conduct their research, lead them with guiding questions, such as "How possible would it be to have direct democracy in a nation of millions, and what does that say about the Populists?"—(group 1); "Who was considered an American during this period, and did the Populists agree with this classification—how can you tell?"—(group 2); "What reasons would the Populists have for being members of the Anti-Imperialist League?"—(group 3); "What steps had the government taken to regulate business before 1892?"—(group 4)

    - Inform students that they need to have answers to the above questions, with evidence to support their assertions, by the end of the period—*this will be their deliverable.*

- **Day 3 (100 minutes):**

  - Begin class by reviewing the Omaha Platform. Ask students to list the Populists' demands. Write these on a sheet of chart paper.

  - Return yesterday's deliverables to students. Give them 5 minutes to prepare a brief presentation to the class.

  - As student groups present, have one student from each group speak, while another writes pertinent information on a piece of chart paper. Tell the class to write this information in their notebooks. *Each presentation should last between 3 and 5 minutes.*

  - Divide students into 6 groups. Provide each group with a copy (or copies) of one of the documents listed above, as well as the appropriate sheet for document analysis. Allow 15-20 minutes for interpretation of the sources, as some require more time than others. *Possible extension: have each group create 2-3 constructed response-style questions for their document, as it relates to the topic, and to social studies skills in general.*

  - Have each group present their analysis of the assigned document. Working with the knowledge that students have from yesterday's group research (and today's earlier presentations), engage students in a discussion regarding how well the views expressed in the documents relate to the Populists' views/goals.

  - Return to the large sheet of chart paper with the essential question. Underneath the question, divide the paper into four sections, one with each of the sub-topics from Day 1. Using information gathered from group research, as well as from group document analysis, find specific factual information (SFI) that relates to the sub-topic. Write it on the chart paper in the appropriate section, and follow the statement with a + if the information demonstrates ways in which the Populists were working toward a more inclusive democratic society, or a - if it represents ways in which they were working against true democratic values. Use this opportunity to

    - Provide students with a copy of the essay rubric, as well as with the essay grading sheet (both are attached). *These can be modified to fit the needs of your students.* Remind students that they must use specific factual information (SFI) to support their thesis statements. Tell them to refer both to the rubric and to the grading sheet before, during and after writing the essay.

    - If time permits, allow students time to begin working on their essays. *They are to be completed for homework.*

- **Day 4 (50 minutes):**
- As students come into class, collect their essays.
- Have students respond to the writing prompt on the board: “Were the Populists successful in initiating democratic change in the United States during this period?” Allow 3-5 minutes for students to respond.
- Ask students if they can think of any examples of Populists from different periods in history (Huey Long during the 1930s, Ralph Nader/Michael Moore today). What does it mean to be a populist?
- Engage students in a class discussion regarding the concept of democracy. Are we a democratic country today? Do we value all citizens as equals? How do we, as a nation, regard foreign-born Americans or foreigners in our nation? What role do we think the US should play in the world? What should the government do to “protect” the economic interests of various groups in America? Is our two-party system democratic? What can/should we do to make it easier for 3rd parties to access the American public (give examples of Perot’s ability to participate in presidential debates in 1992/1996, but Nader’s inability to do so in 2000).
- Allow 7-10 minutes at the end of class to assess students’ knowledge of the Populists using the traditional assessments below. This should easily allow time for students to answer questions and for the class to go over them together.

Assessment:

- essay
- Multiple Choice Questions:

1. One of the goals of the Populist movement was to induce the government to introduce
   A. free coinage of silver
   B. prohibition of all immigration from China and Japan
   C. the construction of a transcontinental railroad at government expense
   D. a “single tax” on land

2. The chief cause of farm protest in the late 19th century was
   A. overproduction of crops on the Great Plains
   B. malleon, trusts and railroads
   C. the increased money supply and prices
   D. increased competition from international sources

3. Which of the following characterized agriculture in both the West and the South in the period 1870-1900?
   A. increased production
   B. introduction of sharecropping
   C. raising crops for subsistence, not for commerce
   D. rising prices for farm products
1. Why does the cartoon depict the People's entrance to the Senate as "closed"?

2. What does this cartoon say about the influence of big business on government during the late 19th and early 20th centuries?

3. How would a member of the Populist Party react to this cartoon? Give a minimum of three suggestions that a Populist would give to change this phenomenon.

Enrichment Activity:

- Students compare the Populist platform from 1892/1896 to that of the Democrats and Republicans in 2004.
- Introduce students to Henry Littlefield's characterization of "The Wizard of Oz" as an allegory to the Populist movement, as well as the backlash against his findings: [www.halcyon.com/piglet/Populism.htm](http://www.halcyon.com/piglet/Populism.htm)

Attachments:

- Bryan cartoon
- Production graphs
- Essay Rubric
- Essay Grading Sheet

Links:

- See above (materials)
- [www.harpweek.com](http://www.harpweek.com)
Rubric for Essays

8-9 (93-100 A)
- contains a clear and well-developed thesis
- understands the complexity of the question; analyzes rather than describes
- supports thesis with substantial and relevant information
- shows superior analysis; displays well-reasoned cause and effect; evaluates historical change; reaches fully-supported conclusions
- may contain minor errors
- (DBQ—analytical use of approximately half of the documents in addition to substantial use of 'outside' information)

5-7 (85-92 B)
- contains a limited or partially-developed thesis
- shows limited understanding of the complexity of the question, but has some sense of historical causes and changes
- uses some factual information, but less supporting material than an 8-9 essay
- shows limited analysis; is mostly descriptive
- may contain errors that do not detract from the overall argument
- (DBQ—analytical use of less than half of the documents; limited use of 'outside' information)

2-4 (75-84 C)
- thesis is confused, limited and/or poorly developed
- essay shows little or no understanding of complexity
- lacks supporting information or contains information that is minimal and/or irrelevant
- deals with the question in a superficial way; simplistic explanation
- may contain major errors
- (DBQ—quotes or briefly cites some documents; little or no 'outside' information included)

1 (70-74 D)
- contains no thesis or simply paraphrases or restates the question
- shows little or no understanding or the question
- contains numerous errors, both major and minor
- (DBQ—little or no understanding of the documents or ignores them completely; fails to include 'outside' information)
US History
Grading Sheet for Thematic Essay

Name: Date: Topic: Grader:

Interpretation

3 Strong, well-developed thesis which clearly addresses the question
2 Valid thesis, deals with significant issues and trends
1 Thesis may be absent, limited, confused, poorly-developed
0 No thesis at all or one that is irrelevant to the question

Comments:

Content

5 Sophisticated and substantial use and analysis of relevant SFI; recognizes historical causation, change and continuity
4 Decent use and some analysis of SFI to develop thesis; chronologically coherent
3 Contains some relevant SFI with limited analysis information
2 Little use of SFI; little or no analysis of information; more descriptive than analytical
1 Some information is inaccurate or irrelevant
0 Poor, confused, inappropriate or no use of SFI
(no real knowledge of subject displayed)
-1 Major factual error given (per infraction)

Comments:

Organization

1 Standard Organization (Introduction, Body—min. 3 paragraphs, conclusion)
0 Some element missing (one paragraph)
-1 Some elements missing (two paragraphs)
-2 No elements present

Comments:

Style (Appearance and Readability)

-1 Poor penmanship
-1 Unclear, confused language
-1 Grammatical errors frequently hinder comprehension
-1 Grammar errors/spelling errors

Comments:

Commendations: Recommendations:
Clear/well-written ( ) More SFI ( )
Use of specific details ( ) Deeper analysis ( )
Abundant outside facts ( ) Need more facts/details ( )
Strong analysis of topic and facts ( ) Rework organization ( )
Fine command of topic ( ) Rework intro/conclusion ( )

Grade: