

Document Based Question: What are the three most important issues of the Populist Movement?



AMERICAN POPULISM

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STUDENT ASSIGNMENT: Complete all source questions in writing. After answering the questions, decide upon the three most important issues to Populists. Use these three issues, along with any additional information you have about Populism, to create a tri-fold campaign pamphlet for the Populist movement. You may choose to use this as an ad for William Jennings Bryan for President, a general ad promoting the Populist movement or platform, or as an ad for a fictitious Populist candidate running for any political office, past or present.

Sample layout for 8 1/2 x 11 tri-fold campaign pamphlet:

Fold this direction



Fold this direction



Front cover	Middle	Inside Flap
Picture of WJB or something related to Populism	Issue #3	Issue #2
Information on Issue #1 (stats, quotes, chart, etc...)	Picture Chart Quotes Slogans Etc...	Picture Chart Quotes Slogans Etc...

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Grading Rubric for Tri-Fold pamphlet

Category	A	B	C	D
Use of text & graphics in tri-fold	Graphics go well with the text and there is a good mix of text and graphics	Graphics go well with the text, but there are so many that they distract from the text.	Graphics go well with the text, but there are too few and the brochure seems "text-heavy"	Graphics do not go with the accompanying text or appear to be randomly chosen.
Content	Covers topic in-depth with details and examples. Subject knowledge is excellent.	Includes essential knowledge about the topic. Subject knowledge appears to be good.	Includes essential information about the topic but there are 1-2 factual errors.	Content is minimal OR there are several factual errors
Attractiveness & Organization	The brochure has exceptionally attractive formatting and well-organized information	The brochure has attractive formatting and well-organized information.	The brochure has well-organized information.	The brochure's formatting and organization of material are confusing to the reader.
Originality	Product shows a large amount of original thought. Ideas are creative and inventive.	Product shows some original thought. Work shows new ideas and insights.	Uses other people's ideas (giving them credit), but there is little evidence of original thinking.	Uses other people's ideas, but does not give them credit.

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Populism can be defined as:

- 1)** *the political doctrine that supports the rights and powers of the common people in their struggle with the privileged elite*
(found at wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn)
- 2)** *A political ideology that emphasizes government's role as an agent of the common man, the worker, and the farmer, in struggles against concentrated wealth and power. ...*
(found at www.laits.utexas.edu/gov310/IPOM/glossary.html)
- 3)** *A political party formed in 1891 to represent agrarian interests. The Populists were most famous for their advocacy of the free coinage of silver money and government control of monopolies.*
(found at www.tsl.state.tx.us/exhibits/railroad/glossary.html)

Key Events of the Populist movement:

1873 Grasshopper plagues have devastated western farms. Droughts have exacerbated the harsh conditions under which farmers struggle for survival. In debt to banks and merchants for seed, tools, and machinery, the farmer's dream of an independent life is dissipating.

1879 Henry George analyzes the problems of urbanizing America in Progress and Poverty.

1880 The National Farmers Alliance is formed. The farmer's plight has taken on catastrophic proportions in the face of high tariffs, flood and drought, unfair railroad rates and high interest on loans and mortgages.

1885 The American Economic Association is established. A number of young economists have become disillusioned with the premises standing behind the philosophy of laissez-faire. The organization is the first economic group to argue that the state must contribute actively in the way of "positive aid" to the just progress of its citizens. These economists contend that unless concerted efforts are made to prevent further degradation of the new class of workers, the American dream will turn into a nightmare of class warfare. Woodrow Wilson and Henry Adams are among the 186 founding members.

1887 The Interstate Commerce Act is passed by Congress and signed into law. A five man commission is created to see that rates are just and "reasonable;" to forbid double-tiered rates for long and short hauls on freight carriers; to stop discriminatory rates between competitive and non-competitive localities and to stop the practice of pooling.

1888 Congress establishes a Department of Labor.

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1890 Sherman Anti-trust Act is passed. It makes illegal "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."

1890 The Southern Farmers Alliance, the Farmers Mutual Benefit Association, and the Colored Farmers Alliance meet in Ocala, Florida, to see if there is some way to take joint action on their respective grievances. Racial barriers are too strong in the South and nothing comes of the meeting.

1891 The Populist Party is formed at the national level in Cincinnati, Ohio.

1892 The Populist Party, also known as the People's Party, holds its first national convention in Omaha, Nebraska. James B. Weaver is nominated as the party's candidate for president, and the party issues forth its platform: Their important demands include government ownership of railroads, free coinage of silver, a graduated income tax, an eight hour day, the popular election of senators, the secret ballot, government ownership of telegraphs and telephones, and government-owned warehouses.

1895 U.S. v. E.C. Knight Co. The Supreme Court finds that the Sherman Anti-Trust Act is applicable only to monopolies involved in interstate trade. Ruling that a sugar combine is beyond the law, the Court draws a fine line between manufacturing and commerce. This ruling temporarily renders the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, which had been designed to regulate all forms of trusts, useless.

1896 William Jennings Bryan gives his "Cross of Gold" speech at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. He wins the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party.

American Populism: Sign of the times

Shawn Lear

To the victors go the spoils. This is true in war and in politics, and the Republicans had won them both with the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and the subsequent Civil War, and they took full advantage of their victory. From 1865 until the turn of the century, Republicans claimed not just a monopoly on American patriotism, but also exclusive credit for economic growth.¹ Proudly they pointed out the party's support for land grants, the transcontinental railroad, tariffs in support of industrial development and high wages, fiscal policy that maintained the nation's honor, and for free land under the

¹ Cherney, Robert. *A righteous cause: the life of William Jennings Bryan*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1985, 16.

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Homestead Act. Most Midwesterners were former Union soldiers who voted solidly Republican.

According to a local leader in Iowa, "Iowa will go Democratic when Hell goes Methodist."²

If Democrats were used to losing in the Midwest, so were farmers. Since the beginning of American history, owning land and being self-sufficient was a key goal for the average male. Many hopeful Americans embraced the idea of "moving west, buying unimproved land on credit, then working the land into a successful farm..."³ The total number of farms in the U.S. grew from less than 2.5 million in 1865 to over 4.5 million by 1890. In Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, and the Dakotas, farmers grew mostly wheat and corn. In the South, cotton remained the crop of choice. This led to a dramatic increase in agricultural production, and had a negative effect on the price of agricultural goods. Between 1866 and 1889, agricultural production expanded at the rate of 214% for corn and 175% for wheat.⁴ In 1866, corn sold for 66 cents a bushel, compared to 28 cents in 1889. Similarly, wheat dropped from \$2.06 a bushel to a punishing 70 cents. Dropping crop prices combined with increasing transportation costs via railroads created a precarious economic situation for most farmers. Even with free land under the Homestead Act, farmers had to borrow money for seed, supplies, livestock, and even to live on until their first harvest. Decreasing crop prices, increasing transportation costs, and unpredictable factors like a bad harvest or weather conditions contributed to losses for farmers. Agricultural areas in the South and West suffered economic depression years before industrial areas.⁵ Tensions and grievances developed between farmers and lenders, railroads, and grain elevator operators. Farmers had few choices; they had to sell to a few local buyers, and prices were set by the markets in larger cities like Minneapolis or Chicago. Railroad rates were set by corporations who felt their prices were fair, even if farmers were losing money and had no alternative but to sell their products for what they could get. Farmers felt trapped within an economic system they had virtually no control over, and blamed wealth and greed for

² Divine, Robert A.. *America Past and Present*. 7th ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005, 579.

³ Cherney, Robert. *A righteous cause: the life of William Jennings Bryan*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1985, 30.

⁴ Cherney, Robert. *A righteous cause: the life of William Jennings Bryan*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1985, 30.

⁵ Edwards, Rebecca. "Populists." 1999. <http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/1896home.html#vassar> (accessed 4/27/2011).

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the situation. By 1890, census takers counted one farm mortgage for every two people in Kansas and North Dakota, and one for every three in Nebraska, South Dakota, and Minnesota.⁶ Farmers were still forced to pay interest on their loans in spite of falling crop prices, and sunk deeper into debt, all the while hoping for an increase in crop prices or larger harvests to pay off their debt. Increasing harvests continued to drive crop prices down instead.

Facing these struggles weighed heavy upon farmers and their families. Support could usually be found in a neighbor or friend in a similar situation. As the situation worsened, the need for support became even more pressing. Farmers banded together for survival starting in the 1870's under the banner of the Northern or Southern Farmers Alliances', the Greenback party, and the Colored Farmers' National Alliance. Alliances created a shared educational, economic, and social cooperative.⁷ Economically, they shared resources such as grain elevators, cooperative stores, and insurance plans. Educational activities of the alliances related to agricultural techniques and information, and discussion of political or economic reforms.

As a natural result of these activities, political action committees formed to support sympathetic candidates to the cause of farmers. The Green back party supported a continuation of the paper money issued during the Civil War as a way to increase the money supply and help inflate crop prices. Total circulating currency in 1865 was \$30 per capita, including gold, silver, and paper money, but had dwindled to \$23 per capita by 1880.⁸ Greenbackers wanted not only to increase the money supply, but advocated a graduated income tax, eight-hour work day for wage earners, abolition of child labor, regulation of freight rates, and woman suffrage. Some advocated other reforms, such as government

⁶ Cherney, Robert. *A righteous cause: the life of William Jennings Bryan*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1985, 30.

⁷ Cherney, Robert. *A righteous cause: the life of William Jennings Bryan*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1985, 32.

⁸ Cherney, Robert. *A righteous cause: the life of William Jennings Bryan*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1985, 31.

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ownership of railroads and prohibition. The Green back party failed to win a Presidential race in 1876, 1880, & 1884, and political success in supporting farmers was very limited.

Despite the plight of farmers and many common Americans, most remained true to traditional Republican or Democratic loyalties based on family, ethnicity, and religious belief. Republicans dominated rural and Protestant politics, while Democrats remained strong in urban areas and among both immigrants and Catholics. Republicans had become known as the party most associated with wealth and privilege, and with their support of the gold standard, held no attraction for struggling farmers embittered against wealth and power. Democrats, on the other hand, having only won one Presidential election since the Civil War, had taken a stand against wealth and corruption, and held some appeal for those that would join the Populist movement. Since no political party had provided the desired relief, farmers longed for a political party to take up their cause with conviction and success.

The social and economic grievances of Midwestern farmers eventually led to a movement known as Populism, which “erupted like a volcano in 1890, forever changing the political landscape of Nebraska and surrounding states.”⁹ Embittered farmers paraded their wagons down city streets, attended rallies, and ate picnic lunches while singing songs like the following: *Worm or beetle, drought or tempest/On a farmer’s land may fall/But for first-class ruination/Trust a mortgage against them all.* Disillusionment with current political parties was evident as well. Farmers longed for a political party or movement that might affect positive change for their situations, for the Alliances had failed to yield any significant political change on a national level. One song went: *I was a party man one-time/The party would not mind me/So now I’m working for myself/The party’s left behind me.* Rallies featured speakers who attacked the policies of Wall Street, international bankers, monopolies, and railroads. One Kansas

⁹ Cherney, Robert. *A righteous cause: the life of William Jennings Bryan*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1985, 29.

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woman described the rallies as “a religious revival, a crusade, a Pentecost of politics,” while a Nebraska Democrat called it a composite of “the French Revolution and a western religious revival.”¹⁰

During this time, a young lawyer named William Jennings Bryan rose to fame with his homespun values, oratory skills, and timely political posturing. Always a passionate figure, Bryan carried a set of “values, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations bred during his childhood...Bryan had grown up in the America of farms and small towns, of religious revivals and church socials, and Civil War and its aftermath.”¹¹ Born a few months before Abraham’s Lincoln’s election in 1860’, young Willy Bryan seemed destined to be a man of his times. Born into a family of Virginian Democrats who relocated to the Midwest, his childhood exposed him to both religious and political action as a normal part of life. His father Silas served as a lawyer, Baptist deacon, circuit judge, superintendent of schools, state senator, and delegate to the state constitutional convention in 1869. William attended Baptist church, Methodist meetings and schools, and inherited his family affinity for the Democratic Party, as most white southerners did during this time. Democrats hailed back to Jefferson and Jackson, both advocates of smaller government. Bryan, a successful lawyer, famed orator, and politician, was more than that to his Populist followers: “they believed him to be a godly hero who preached that the duty of a true Christian was to transform a nation and world plagued by the arrogance of wealth and the pain of inequality.”¹²

William Jennings Bryan began his foray into national politics with his decision to run for Congress in 1890. Bryan had spent the 1888 campaign season giving hard-hitting speeches for the Democratic Party in his home state. He campaigned for J. Sterling Morton for Congress and for Grover Cleveland for President. Though his speeches were well received and he made a large impact upon the people of Nebraska, both candidates lost that fall. Yet Bryan was encouraged by his speeches, and asked to run for office by his political elders. According to one listener, Bryan used no “high-sounding phrases,

¹⁰ Cherney,Robert. *A righteous cause: the life of William Jennings Bryan*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1985, 34-35.

¹¹ Cherney,Robert. *A righteous cause: the life of William Jennings Bryan*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1985, 16.

¹² Kazin,Michael. *A godly hero: the life of William Jennings Bryan*. New York: Random House, 2006, 24.

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demagogic appeals to passion or prejudice, or...tragic gestures...he thoroughly believes what he says and his entire lack of artfulness makes him invincible.¹³ Bryan became known for his personal magnetism, and even confided to his wife that he found he had “power over the audience,” for which he thanked God and asked for wisdom to use this power wisely.¹⁴

Bryan’s timing was perfect. Farmer’s alliance members had formed an independent party in Colorado, Kansas, the Dakotas, and Nebraska. Nebraska’s party was called the People’s Independent Party, and appealed to those who had traditionally affiliated with the Republican Party but were now under such financial duress that they demanded reform. Bryan’s attack on tariffs, support of free silver, and proposed ban on land speculation lined up nicely with the Independents. He was also careful not to alienate members of the Democratic base, and although his mother was a Temperance Worker and Bryan himself “loathed” the liquor traffic, he did not take a stand against alcohol, while the Republicans placed a prohibition amendment on the ballot that year. His opponent, William Cornell, toted the Republican party line in favor of tariffs and against alcohol, while Bryan spoke eloquently in favor of the rights of workers and commoners, spent less than \$200 dollars, and won the election by 10 percent of the vote, becoming the 2nd ever Democratic Congressman in Nebraska. Bryan went on to run for President in 1896, 1900, and 1908, holding the distinction of being the youngest ever Presidential candidate (he was two months too young to run in March of 1895) and the candidate to lose the Presidency the most times. In spite of his failures, few of his supporters abandoned him, hoping that William Jennings Bryan, the “Great Commoner,” would continue to speak out against injustice and corporate predators, and to champion the demands of small farmers and wage earners. Only Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson had a greater impact on politics and political culture in the reform era of 1890 to 1920.¹⁵ According to historian Richard Hofstadter, “other leading progressives sensed popular feelings; Bryan embodied them.” After his death, a reporter remarked “...he was to the world of news what Babe Ruth is

¹³ Kazin, Michael. *A godly hero: the life of William Jennings Bryan*. New York: Random House, 2006, 24.

¹⁴ Kazin, Michael. *A godly hero: the life of William Jennings Bryan*. New York: Random House, 2006, 25.

¹⁵ Kazin, Michael. *A godly hero: the life of William Jennings Bryan*. New York: Random House, 2006, xiv.

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to baseball-the real drawing card.” Although his only election victory was his 1890 election to Congress, William Jennings Bryan relentlessly and passionately embodied the values, hopes, and dreams of the 6,502,685 white males who voted for him for President in 1896, along with the countless minorities, women, and children they represented. Like the Populists themselves, Bryan experienced few victories in his lifetime. He would go on to represent their causes in a variety of ways until his death, and live to see many of these progressive ideas and reforms implemented in American government and society over time.

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SOURCE 1: Mary Lease Raises Hell Among the Farmers

1. According to Lease, who owns the country?
2. What role do politicians play in this process?
3. Whom do you believe Lease thinks should be running the country?
4. What historical evidence does she use to support her cause?
5. What occupation would you guess Lease favors the most and why?
6. What occupation would you guess Lease favors the least and why?

Source Note: Women are not often thought of in association with the Populists, but the best-known orator of the movement in the early 1890s was a woman, Mary Elizabeth Lease. Born in Pennsylvania in 1850 to Irish parents, Lease became a school teacher in Kansas in 1870. She and her husband, a pharmacist, spent ten years trying to make a living farming, but finally gave up in 1883 and settled in Wichita. Lease entered political life as a speaker for the Irish National League, and later emerged as a leader of both the Knights of Labor and the Populists. Lease mesmerized audiences in Kansas, Missouri, the Far West, and the South with her powerful voice and charismatic speaking style. In hundreds of speeches, she apparently never said the one phrase most often associated with her name—the injunction that farmers should “raise less corn and more hell.” Regardless of who called explicitly for more hell-raising, Lease was a powerful voice of the agrarian crusade.

This is a nation of inconsistencies. The Puritans fleeing from oppression became oppressors. We fought England for our liberty and put chains on four million of blacks. We wiped out slavery and our tariff laws and national banks began a system of white wage slavery worse than the first.

Wall Street owns the country. It is no longer a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, but a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street, and for Wall Street.

The great common people of this country are slaves, and monopoly is the master. The West and South are bound and prostrate before the manufacturing East.

Money rules, and our Vice-President is a London banker. Our laws are the output of a system which clothes rascals in robes and honesty in rags.

The [political] parties lie to us and the political speakers mislead us. . . . The politicians said we suffered from overproduction. Overproduction, when 10,000 little children, so statistics tell us, starve to death every year in the United States, and over 100,000 shop girls in New York are forced to sell their virtue for the bread their niggardly wages deny them. . . .

We will stand by our homes and stay by our fireside by force if necessary, and we will not pay our debts to the loan-shark companies until the government pays its debts to us. The people are at bay; let the bloodhounds of money who dogged us thus far beware.

Source: W.E. Connelley, ed., *History of Kansas, State and People 2*, (1928), 1167.

(found at <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5304>)

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SOURCE 2: THE SILVER DOG WITH THE GOLDEN TAIL

Based on the document, answer the following multiple choice questions:

1. Based on the cartoon, which type of currency has the most support?
 - a. Silver
 - b. Gold
 - c. Doubtful
 - d. None of the above
2. Which states produce the most wealth in terms of farm production?
 - a. Gold
 - b. Silver
 - c. Doubtful
 - d. None of the above
3. Based on the cartoon, which political party would you predict to win the 1896 Presidential election?
 - a. The Republican party with the support of the gold states
 - b. The Democratic party with the support of the silver states
 - c. A third party supported by neither gold nor silver states
 - d. None of the above
4. Which occupation do you believe the author of this cartoon would support the most?
 - a. Stock broker
 - b. Politician
 - c. Farmer
 - d. Factory worker

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SOURCE 3: Differing views of the Populist Movement 1896

Answer the following questions based on the quotes listed below:

1. After reading the first quote, briefly describe how the author views the average member of the Populist gathering.
2. According to the second quote, would women be better or worse off with the addition of silver as a currency standard?
3. According to the last quote, how seriously should the Populist movement be taken?

The Populist gathering of this year lacked the drill and distinction and wealth of the Republican convention held the month before in the same building. It had not the ebullient aggressiveness of the revolutionary Democratic assembly at Chicago, nor the brilliant drivers who rode the storm there. Every one commented on the number of gray heads--heads many of them grown white in previous independent party movements. The delegates were poor men.... Cases are well known of delegates who walked because too poor to pay their railroad fare. It was one day discovered that certain members of one of the most important delegations were actually suffering for food. They had no regular sleeping place, having had to save what money they had for their nickel meals at the lunch counter.

--Henry Demorest Lloyd, [Review of Reviews](#), September 1896

**WOULD AFFECT WOMEN.
Free Silver of Vital Import
to Wives and Mothers of Wage-Earners.**

While the value of the wages earned by everyone who works for a living will be greatly reduced by the free coinage of silver, the working women will be far worse off than the men. Their wages will not probably be reduced in a greater ratio than the wages of the men, but they will stand a poorer chance of securing an advance to meet the increased cost of living. They will have to submit to the hardship of high prices and low wages with less hope of remedying their condition.

One principle cause of this disadvantage is that the women employed in productive industries have not the organized unions with which to sustain their interests.... The lack of organizations of their own will leave the thousands of women workers in our manufacturing industries at a marked disadvantage if their wages should be cut down in value by the free coinage of silver and the consequent depreciation of the money in which they were paid.

--[National Register](#), October 10 1896 (reprinted from Boston Post)

The Populist platform is almost too absurd to merit serious discussion.--The Detroit Tribune, in [Public Opinion](#), 6 August 1896

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SOURCE 4: "Double Double, Toil and Trouble, Fire Burn and Cauldron Bubble." LA Times, August 20th, 1896.

1. Describe the scene in the cartoon below.
2. Why do you think the author choose this image to represent Populism?
3. What type of "fuel" is being used to boil the Populist pot?
4. Do you believe this cartoon was an effective advertisement against Populism in 1896?
5. Why or why not?

Popocratic: Of the people; Populistic

Anarchy: A state of society without order; chaos; confusion; disorder

Demagogueism: Using passion or prejudice to distort the issues



SOURCE: Harper's Weekly, 25 July, 1896

(found at <http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/0820lat.html>)

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SOURCE 5: Gold Standard Poem

1. Generally, what type of consequences does the author connect to the gold standard?
2. Specifically, list two that you feel are the most impactful.
3. What class of society would be the most impacted if this poem is correct?
4. What members of society by age and gender might suffer the most?
5. What class of society would feel the impact least? Why?
6. Based on this poem, describe someone whom you think would not support the gold standard.

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The continuance of the "present gold standard" means:

Ruin;
Rage;
Riots;
Debts;
Crime;
Strikes;
Tramps;
Poverty;
Mortgages;
Hard times;
Sheriff sales;
More panics;
Less churches;
Close factories;
Business failures;
Fewer preachers;
More soup houses;
Homeless families;
A debauched ballot;
Twenty-cent wheat;
Less improvements;
Uneducated children;
Suffering and misery;
Crowded alms houses;
A dearth of marriages;
Two-dollars-a-ton hay;
Idleness and stagnation;
Two-cent-a-pound hogs;
Five-cent-a-pound butter;
Ten-dollars-a-head mules;
Falling prices for all product;
Hungry women and children;
Ten-cent-a-bushel potatoes;
Pauper prices for vegetables;
Two-dollars-and-a-half horses;
A contraction of the currency;
A dear dollar and a cheap man;
Twenty-five-cents-a-day labor;
Half clothed women and children;

Coxey armies marching through the land.

SOURCE: --[People's Party Paper](#), 16 October 1896 (reprinted from Times-Democrat, Idaho)

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SOURCE 6: Populist Party Platform, 1892.

Precedent: any act, decision, or case that serves as a guide or justification for subsequent situations.

Commodity: an article of trade or commerce, especially a product as distinguished from a service, such as grain, fruits, vegetables, or precious metals.

1. According to the Populist platform, why was 1892 such an important time in history?
2. By what means did the Populists seek to correct what they believed to be wrong in the country?
3. What goal(s) did the Populists have by making these corrections?

Our country finds itself confronted by conditions for which there is no precedent in the history of the world; our annual agricultural productions amount to billions of dollars in value, which must, within a few weeks or months, be exchanged for billions of dollars' worth of commodities consumed in their production; the existing currency supply is wholly inadequate to make this exchange; the results are falling prices, the formation of combines and rings, the impoverishment of the producing class. We pledge ourselves that if given power we will labor to correct these evils by wise and reasonable legislation, in accordance with the terms of our platform.

We believe that the power of government—in other words, of the people—should be expanded as rapidly and as far as the good sense of an intelligent people and the teachings of experience shall justify, to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land.

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SOURCE 7: William Jennings Bryan “Cross of Gold” speech excerpts from Democratic National Presidential Convention 1896

Bimetallism: the use of two metals, ordinarily gold and silver, at a fixed relative value, as the monetary standard.

Answer the following multiple choice questions based on the source.

1. Whom does the speaker claim to represent?
 - a. Humanity
 - b. Himself
 - c. The rich
 - d. The government
2. Which does the speaker believe is most vital in America:
 - a. Cities & urban areas
 - b. Farms & rural areas
 - c. City parks
 - d. National parks
3. According to the speaker, what is to be feared the most?
 - a. Tyranny
 - b. The wealthy elite
 - c. The poor
 - d. A failed economy
4. According to the speaker, national wealth is best obtained by:
 - a. Allowing only the rich to prosper
 - b. Allowing only the masses to prosper
 - c. Legislating to support the masses
 - d. Having no restrictions at all on wealth
5. In his concluding sentence, why did the speaker choose to say “You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold?”
 - a. His desire to avoid persecution at all costs
 - b. His desire to pursue death for his cause
 - c. To appeal to the religious understanding of his audience
 - d. His desire to pursue a national religion

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SOURCE 7: William Jennings Bryan “Cross of Gold” speech excerpts from Democratic National Presidential Convention 1896

...You come to us and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard; we reply that the great cities rest upon our 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 the country....

My friends, we declare that this nation is able to legislate for its own people on every question, without waiting for the aid or consent of any other nation on earth; and upon that issue we expect to carry every state in the Union. I shall not slander the inhabitants of the fair state of Massachusetts nor the inhabitants of the state of New York by saying that, when they are confronted with the proposition, they will declare that this nation is not able to attend to its own business. It is the issue of 1776 over again. Our ancestors, when but three million in number, had the courage to declare their political independence of every other nation; shall we, their descendants, when we have grown to seventy millions, declare that we are less independent than our forefathers?

No, my friends, that will never be the verdict of our people. Therefore, we care not upon what lines the battle is fought. If they say bimetallism is good, but that we cannot have it until other nations help us, we reply, that instead of having a gold standard because England has, we will restore bimetallism, and then let England have bimetallism because the United States has it. If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we will fight them to the uttermost. Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand 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.

(found at <http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/crossofgold.html>)

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SOURCE 8: “The Farmer Is the Man”, a popular rallying song during the great farmers’ revolt of the 1890s.

1. According to the song, who is the man?
2. What other occupations are mentioned in relationship to your answer to question 1?
3. Write a different title for this song that has the same meaning as the original.

When the farmer comes to town
With his wagon broken down,
Oh, the farmer is the man who feeds them all.
If you’ll only look and see
I think you will agree
That the farmer is the man who feeds them all.
The farmer is the man,
The farmer is the man,
Lives on credit till the fall;
Then they take him by the hand
And they lead him from the land,
The middleman’s the one who gets it all.
When the banker says he’s broke,
And the merchant’s up in smoke,
They forget that it’s the farmer feeds them all.
It would put them to the test
If the farmer took a rest,
Then they’d know that it’s the farmer feeds them all.

Document Based Question: What are the three most important issues of the Populist Movement?

SOURCE 9: Results of the 1896 Presidential Election

1. Who won? What was the closest, the popular or the electoral vote?
2. Are you surprised by these results? Why or why not?
3. Which candidate would you have voted for in 1896? Why?

Candidate	Party	Popular Votes	Electoral Votes
Bryan	Silver Democratic, Populist, Silver	6,502,685	176
McKinley	Republican	7,106,199	276
Palmer	Gold Democratic	132,871	---
Levering	Prohibitionist	131,757	---
Matchett	Socialist Labor	36,258	---

POPULAR AND ELECTORAL VOTE FOR PRESIDENT IN 1896

From **The World Almanac Encyclopedia, 1897** NY: Press Publishing Company, Volume IV, No. 40

(found at <http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/electionresults.html>)

Document Based Question: What are the three most important issues of the Populist Movement?

SOURCE 10: William Jennings Bryan political cartoon from 1896

Sacrilegious: impious or unreligious

1. After looking at the cartoon, do you believe the author favors or disfavors William Jennings Bryan? Give 3 reasons why.
2. Does the author appear to share the same religious convictions with his subject? Explain your reasoning.
3. Give one present day example of how religious beliefs affect how Americans view their President.

Document Based Question: What are the three most important issues of the Populist Movement?

SOURCE 10: William Jennings Bryan political cartoon from 1896

SOURCE NOTE: [Judge](#), 19 September, 1896. Text on bottom of picture reads: THE SACRILEGIOUS CANDIDATE. "No man who drags into the dust the most sacred symbols of the Christian world is fit to be president of the United States."

