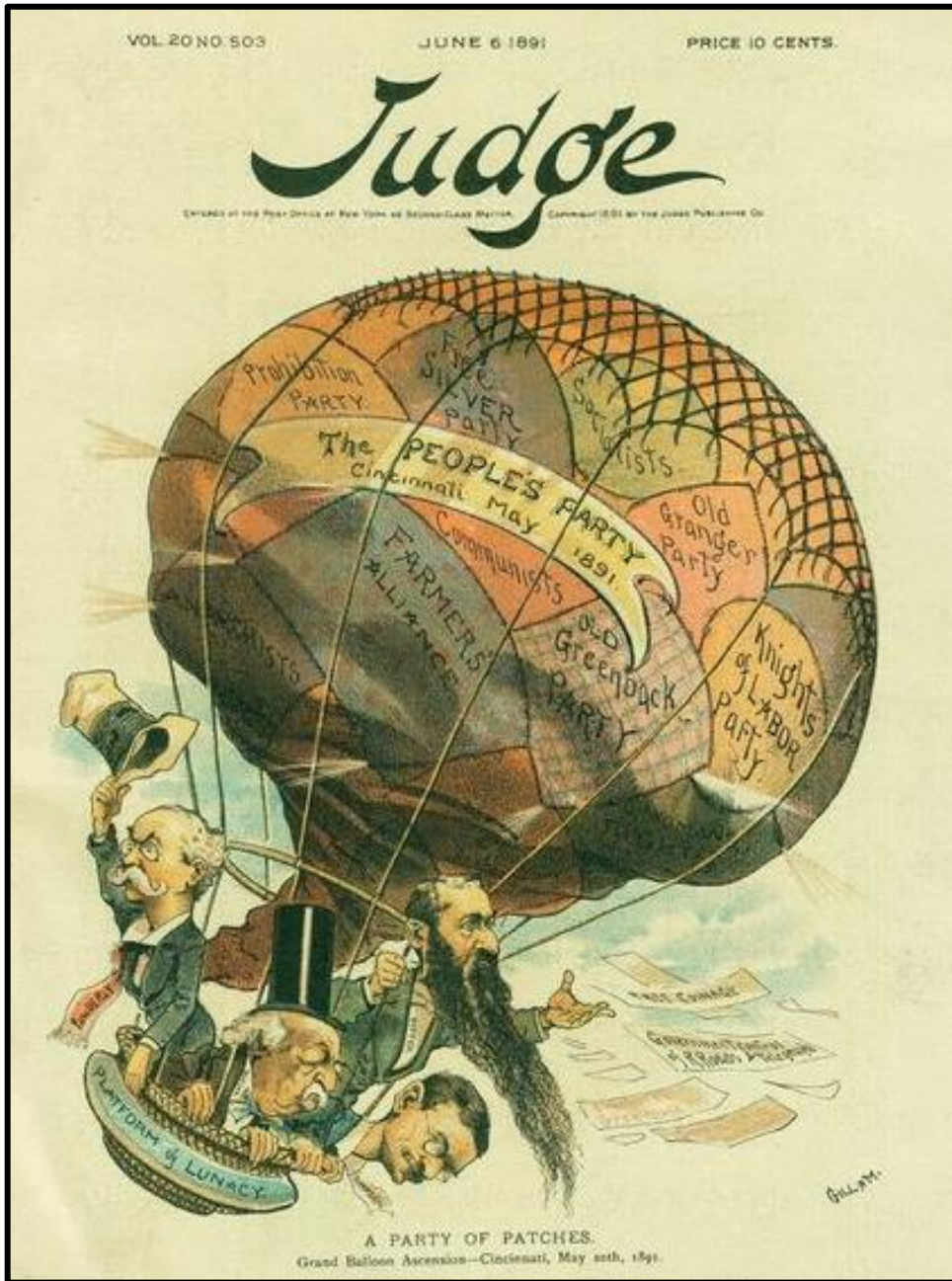


Contextualization & Interpreting Documents... Populist ("People's) Party



From the 2015 Revised Framework:

ANALYZE EVIDENCE...

Explain the relevance of the author's point of view, author's purpose, audience, format or medium, and/or historical context as well as the interaction among these features, to demonstrate understanding of the significance of a primary source.

Evaluate the usefulness, reliability, and/ or limitations of a primary source in answering particular historical questions.

INTERPRET DOCUMENTS...

Analyze a historian's argument, explain how the argument has been supported through the analysis of relevant historical evidence, and evaluate the argument's effectiveness.

Analyze diverse historical interpretations.

CONTEXTUALIZE...

Situate historical events, developments, or processes within the broader regional, national, or global context in which they occurred in order to draw conclusions about their relative significance.

Source: *Judge Magazine*, 1891, "A Party of Patches" Basket says "Platform of Lunacy," Patches on balloon include Prohibition Party, Free Silver Party, Socialists, Old Granger Party, Knights of Labor Party, Old Greenback Party, Farmers Alliance, Anarchists. Inside the balloon's basket are two leading Populists from Kansas, William Peffer (first Populist to be elected Senator – from Kansas) and "Sockless" Jerry Simpson.

Directions: Review the HIPP analysis of the political cartoon and discuss in your group how effective it is and what you could improve. Then, read the Omaha Platform notes on the next page and further assess the historical significance of the Populists.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: The context of the *Judge Magazine* cover illustrating the People's Party was the Gilded Age and rapid industrialization and urbanization of the U.S. which created new challenges for workers and farmers who united together in a Third Party in hopes of reforming this new American society.

INTENDED AUDIENCE: The intended audience was the voter as well as current or potential members of the People's Party.

AUTHOR'S PURPOSE: The "Platform of Lunacy" -as the basket reads- communicates that these third party ideas are foolish, thus the artist's purpose is to discourage support for the new party.

AUTHOR'S POINT OF VIEW: The author's point of view was in line with the two main parties who saw populists filled with "hot air." The Republican and Democrat Parties had few differences in the Gilded Age and generally saw populist and socialist ideas such as government ownership of railroads and utilities as un-American or un-democratic.

Making Inferences... Populist ("People's) Party

The Populist (or People's) Party platform (aka the Omaha Platform) resolutions with notes on short and long term accomplishments of movement

- a. **Australian (or Secret) Ballot.** Voting was still open in some states. Without a secret ballot, being manipulated by powerful politicians or machines (or even labor unions) was likely. *By 1892, the secret ballot was secure.*
- b. **Popular Election of U.S. Senators.** As provided in the Constitution (Article I, Section 3), senators were selected by the state legislatures, not by popular vote. It was believed that business lobbies exerted inordinate influence over the selection of these officials. *This plank would become part of the Constitution in 1913 when Amendment XVII was ratified.*
- c. **Protection from Monopolies.** Monopolies stifled competition. *The Sherman Anti-Trust Act passed in 1890 but not dutifully enforced until 1900s. The Clayton Anti-Trust Act in 1914 gave the government more power to break up trusts and protect workers (remember the Sherman Act was often used against labor).*
- d. **Direct Democracy.** The Populists urged the adoption of the **initiative, referendum and recall** as means to give the people a more-direct voice in government. *Some or all of these procedures became part of the constitutions of many states during the early 20th century, and the overall political impact of the Populist Party can be seen in the reforms of the later Progressives.*
- e. **Banking Reform.** The Populists believed that much of their economic hardship had been caused by bankers' unfair practices. They proposed to end the national banking system, a proposal not widely supported. They wanted a sub-treasury plan to help finance farmers at harvest time. *The Populists failed, and a Federal Reserve System was established by law in 1913. Part of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal during the Great Depression reflected sub-treasury idea. The New Deal also provided insurance for depositors (FDIC) which addressed some of this concern.*
- f. **Government Ownership of the Railroads.** Anger against the railroads for alleged price discrimination was so intense that the Populists advocated for federal appropriation. Opponents charged the Populists with socialist leanings, and little public support existed for this plank. *However, during the Theodore Roosevelt administration, steps were taken toward reform of the railroads (led to increased regulation of railroads but not public ownership).* They also wanted the government to own all telegraphs and telephones.
- g. **Graduated Income Tax.** The Populists viewed the graduated income tax as a means to pry loose a portion of the tremendous wealth of the nation's most prosperous citizens. A "graduated" tax meant that the rate of taxation would increase as one's income increased. A step was made in this direction in the Wilson-Gorman Tariff of 1894 when a uniform tax was imposed to compensate for lost revenue from reduced tariffs (response/repeal - McKinley Tariff of 1890), but that portion of the law was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court the following year. *Authority to impose such taxation was granted to Congress under Amendment XVI in 1913.*

- h. **Free and Unlimited Coinage of Silver.** The Populists in 1892 raised the silver issue, but not with the same fervor that would emerge four years later. *The free-silver crusade would peter out in the years following 1896, as prosperity returned and the world's gold supply increased. Their proposal was free and unlimited coinage of silver at 16:1 with gold. They wanted more money in circulation. So this never happened, and we also later go completely off gold in the 1970s*
- i. **8 hour workday** In the 1860s and 70s, government jobs increasingly became 40HPW jobs. Many labor strikes fought for it. *In 1937 the Fair Labor Standards Act set it for about 20% of jobs (44 hour week).*
- j. **Immigration restrictions.** Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 only one step of many to reduce foreigners. *The 1920s saw dramatic increases in restrictions.*
- k. **Single term for the Presidency.** *In 1951, the 22nd Amendment limited the president to two terms.*

Source: summarized from platform published in *The World Almanac*, 1893 with notes on later events adapted from u.s.history.com article "Populist Party Platform: Policies for the common man."

Discuss the items in your group, then record your inferences and conclusions below.

In what ways did this platform illustrate politics, economics, and culture during the Gilded Age? Explain five examples.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Food For Thought: Which goals were never reached? Do you think they every will be?

Drawing Conclusions... Populist ("People's) Party

Notes on THIRD PARTIES

The American system is commonly called a "two-party system" because there have historically been only two major political parties with candidates competing for offices (especially in federal elections). The first two political parties had their origins in the debate over the ratification of the Constitution—the Federalists and Antifederalists which bled into the first official two-party system, Democratic-Republicans and the Federalists. Today, the Republican and Democratic Parties dominate electoral politics. Almost every federal or state-level elected official in the United States is either a Republican or Democrat. When third parties have emerged in American political history, their successes have been short-lived. In most cases, the issues or ideas championed by third parties have been "stolen" by the candidates of one of the two major parties. Sometimes the issue position taken by the third party is even incorporated into the platform of one of the existing parties. By doing so, the existing party generally wins the support of the voters that had been the support base of the third party. With no unique issues to stand on and depleted voter support, third parties generally fade away.

Source: notes adapted from article, "What is the history of "third parties" in the United States?" at thisnation.com

Directions:

Review the third party showings in the chart below and on the next page. Consider the notes above as well as the other sections of this activity when drawing conclusions as to the historical significance of the Populist Party. Record your conclusion below the chart on the next page.

YEAR	PARTY	CANDIDATE	VOTE%	ELECTORAL VOTE	OUTCOME
1832	Anti-Masonic/ American	William Wirt	7.8%	7	Carried one state but didn't impact election of Andrew Jackson (D), absorbed into new party... Whigs
1848	Free Soil	Martin Van Buren	10.1	0	Zach Taylor (W) defeated Lewis Cass by 138,625 votes. Martin Van Buren received 291,263 votes 5% of the vote, if he hadn't run... possible Cass would have won... later absorbed by Republican Party
1856	American/ Know-Nothings	Millard Fillmore	21.5	8	No impact on outcome. Buchanan won (D). Dissolved
1860	Southern Democrat	John C. Breckinridge	18.1	72	Had the democrats not splintered, they would have likely won presidency. Instead, Lincoln won, a Republican. Dissolved
1860	Constitutional Union	John Bell	12.6	39	Carried border states, probably wouldn't have changed outcome if he hadn't run. Dissolved
1892	Populist	James B. Weaver	8.5	22	Good showing, but Cleveland won this election easily regardless. Absorbed by Democratic Party (mostly) in 1896
1912	Progressive	Teddy Roosevelt	27.5	88	Roosevelt ran in order to prevent his hand-picked successor, Taft, from being re-elected. Instead he split the republican vote and gave the win to Wilson, a Democrat. Returned to Republican Party.
1912	Socialist	Eugene V. Debbs	3.0	0	Won 3% of the vote, no significant impact on election. He ran again in 1916 and 1920 (from his jail cell), then Red Scare killed the Socialist Party in U.S.
1924	Progressive	Robert M. LaFollette	16.6	13	Carried Wisconsin, but didn't impact results. Coolidge won (R) Returned to Republican Party
1948	States' Rights/ Dixiecrat	Strom Thurmond	2.4	39	Possible votes for Thurmond would have gone to Dewey, which would have caused a tie and sent decision to the HOR. Truman (D) won. Dissolved
1948	Progressive	Henry Wallace	2.4	0	No impact on election, but did impact social reform and future support for Civil Rights legislation. Returned to Republicans.

Continued on next page...

Drawing Conclusions... *Populist ("People's) Party*

YEAR	PARTY	CANDIDATE	VOTE%	ELECTORAL VOTE	OUTCOME
1968	American Independent	George Wallace	13.5	46	Carried the south. Represented split in Democrats for the most part... (those against civil rights reform and desegregation) without that split Nixon (R) wouldn't have won. Mostly absorbed into Republicans afterward, although the racist parts of their platform were not embraced by the Republicans.
1980	Independent	John Anderson	6.6	0	Reagan won easily. No impact. Dissolved
1992	Reform	H. Ross Perot	18.9	0	Possibly spoiled Election for George H.W. Bush by taking Republican votes; giving Clinton the win. Because this party pulled mainly from Republicans and he won a significant-historical- amount of votes this is likely, however the state-wide spread makes this conclusion hard to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt.
1996	Reform	H. Ross Perot	8.4	0	8% of vote but no impact on results.
2000	Reform	Pat Buchanan	2.7	0	No impact, although possibility Florida would not have been close without them, as they pulled mainly from the Republican Party. This would have prevented the election fiasco and <i>Bush v Gore</i> . Party faded, changed names.
1996-2008	Green, New Reform, Ind.	Ralph Nader	1.0	0	Very little political impact. Green Party in 96 & 00, New Reform in 2004, and Independent in 2008. Although, since he pulled mainly from Democrats, it is possible that it could have made a difference in Florida possibly giving 2000 win to Gore had he not run.

Explain the significance of Third Parties, and summarize the Populist Party impact on the election of 1892.