**POPULISM: HISTORY AND IMPACT**

**BACKROUND** - The Populist movement originates in the rural depression following the Civil War. Southern and Western farmers worked together to combat financial hardships blamed on high freight rates from railroads, high interest loans from bankers and merchants (crop-lien system), and diminishing commodity prices. Cotton declined in value due to other suppliers in the world market. This put millions of small Southern farmers into debt and many lost their land. Farmers in the West defaulted on loans used to buy fertilizer and equipment.

The Farmers' Alliances was formed in the 1870's by farmers wanting to help each other with financial hardships and spread to 43 states by 1890. They sought to improve conditions through cooperatives. They tried to finance each other and market their crops. Cooperatives failed due to a lack of capital in the Alliance.

In the 1890's, the Farmers' Alliance proposed a "subtreasury plan" which led them into the political world. They became the People's Party. Their "subtreasury plan" proposed that the federal government provide storage warehouses then issue low interest loans; farmers would then have a period of time to sell their crop and pay back the loan. The party eventually grew to include members from the "producing classes" (farmers, miners, urban laborers) who sought to promote government regulation of business.   
Source: [Subtreasury Plan](http://ncpedia.org/subtreasury-plan)

**DIRECTIONS** - For each question below, use the websites provide complete responses.

Use this website for numbers 1 - 3. <http://www.robinsonlibrary.com/political/unitedstates/parties/peoples.htm>

**1- What year did the Populists first have a candidate run for President?**

**Who were the candidates in the Presidential election of 18 \_ \_ ?**

**2-** **What groups made up the Populist Party?**

**3-** **In what sections of the country did the Populists gain their greatest support? Why did this party appeal to these two groups?**

**4**- **The political and economic reforms of the Populist's Platform, adopted at their 1892 Omaha, Nebraska convention are listed below. Read through each plank, view websites, and respond to the question:   
What does the Omaha platform identify as the main threats to American liberty? Identify 3 & Explain.**

**What are 2 solutions to their problems according to Populists?**  
*Populist Platform – 1892 election Sources:* <http://gildedage.lib.niu.edu/populismpolitics>

<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/eamerica/media/ch22/resources/documents/populist.htm>

a) **Labor Unions -** better work conditions and an 8 hour work day

*Workers were forced to work 12 to 14 hours a day by large corporations, preventing workers from  
taking proper care of their family and their duties as citizens. Large corporations used private security organizations like the Pinkertons to harass, beat-up, and kill Union organizers and defeat strikes. Large corporations and the government are denying workers the right to form unions and strike for higher wages.*

b) **Productive Class** (farmers & urban laborers) should have more power against large corporations.

c) **Public Ownership of Railroads, Steamship lines, telephone & telegraph systems-**

*The railroad companies are exploiting the public by charging outrageous rates to ship goods.*

d) **Free and Unlimited Coinage of Silver** - *The value of the nation's currency was pegged to gold rather than the more abundant silver, the supply of money was limited, enriching bondholders, creditors, bankers, business trusts, and wealthy industrialists at the expense of farmers and urban workingmen. Basing the value of paper money on gold and silver would increase the money supply, inflate the prices of farm products, giving farmers a larger profit.*

e. **Graduate Income Tax** - would tax progressively (% taxed on income increases as income increases), taxes overburden farmers and small business

f) **Reduce Tariff -** government should tax foreign goods less because a high tariff causes Americans to pay higher prices for goods

g) **Secret Ballot -** an open voting system allows political machines to intimidate and bribe people in order to force them to vote a certain way

h) **Direct election of Senators** - - Constitution established that state legislatures would elect Senators, but corruption and patronage led the Populists to advocate direct election via popular vote   
(Achieved with the 17th Amendment in 1913)

**5** - **What percentage of the total popular vote in 1892 did each party gain and who were their candidates?***Sources:* <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/national.php?year=1892> <http://www.270towin.com/1892_Election/> **A) Republicans:**

**B) Democrats:**

**C) Populists:**

6- **To what extent** **did earlier reform movements like the Grange, Greenbacks, and the Farmer's Alliance reflect the goals of Populism or the Populist Party?**

**A) Grange:** **(1867)** Who joined and what were their goals?  
<http://cs.stanford.edu/people/eroberts/cs181/projects/1995-96/corporate-monopolies/dangers_grangers.html>Origin:

**B) Greenbacks: (1875)** <http://historyscoop.com/2009/01/23/the-greenback-labor-party-forerunner-of-the-populists/>

Who were members of the Greenback Labor Party ?   
What reforms did they advocate in the Presidential election of 1880? (James Weaver's platform)

**C) Farmers Alliance:** Who were they and what were their political goals?  
<http://www.nebraskastudies.org/0600/frameset_reset.html?http://www.nebraskastudies.org/0600/stories/0601_0302.html>

**7- Who were the Democratic and Republican candidates in the Election of 1896 and what did they represent?**<http://www.ushistory.org/us/41e.asp>

**8- Political Cartoons: View the images and write a sentence that explains its message.**<http://www.authentichistory.com/1865-1897/4-1896election/>

**a) Gulf of Poverty - Democratic Campaign Poster -   
b) 1896 Sheet Music: "Lew Us Have Free Coinage, Boys, at Sixteen To One!" -   
c) "He Must Be Kept Out" Puck, 1896, by Joseph Keppler -**