

Virtual Capitol Lesson **DRAFT**

Lesson Created in
Partnership with



Title: William Jennings Bryan

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Grade Level	4
Class Period(s)	2

Nebraska Social Studies Standards

SS 4.2.1.b Predict how producers would react if the profits from selling a good or service changed
SS 4.2.6.a Identify the costs and benefits of saving, interest and borrowing
SS 4.1.2.e Identify state leaders and the impact of their decisions that effect public policy
SS 4.4.2.a Describe and explain the relationships among historical people, events, ideas, and symbols

Nebraska Science Standards

Nebraska Language Arts Standards

Nebraska Fine and Performing Art Standards

FA 2.3.c Interpret the message communicated by a work of art, using knowledge of visual elements, subject matter and mood.

Overview

The lesson plan features: A game so students will understand early homesteaders production costs. Exploration of original historical documents, modified, to understand William Jennings Bryan's thinking and attempts to assist farmers by introducing the bimetallic standard (silver and gold instead of just the gold standard) and the desire to regulate railroads, resulting in his national fame.

Big Idea or Theme

Famous Nebraskan, William Jennings Bryan, was committed to increasing the profit of farmers.

Essential Question/s:

High: What would have been more important to the success of farmers, railroad fee regulation or increasing the supply of money by adoption of the bimetallic standard?

Middle: What made William Jennings Bryan more famous, his opinions about the bimetallic standard for currency or his determination to regulate railroads? Why?

Low: How did government control of railroad pricing benefit early farmers of Nebraska?

Purpose/Rationale

To introduce the concept of cost and profit. To understand the fame of William Jennings Bryan.

Key Concepts/Vocabulary

Costs: Something given up to obtain something else (time, money, etc)

Profit: Money left after paying all expenses

Regulate: To control or supervise as in government regulation of businesses

Gold Standard: A country's stored gold that represents the value of their money

Bimetallic Standard: System in which gold and silver are used as legal tender (money)

Money Supply: Total amount of money in circulation in a country

Materials

- Student Documents A, B, C (attached)
- Toothpicks (one per farmer)
- One Dice
- Popcorn or beans and a measuring spoon
- Slips of paper for each farmer
- Stamp for banker
- Scale / weights in grams
- Characters: 2 Bankers, Equipment salesperson, Seed salesperson, Railroad Freight Manager, Fritos Purchasing Agent, Farmers

Objectives

Students will understand agricultural producers play a great part in Nebraska economics, balancing costs and profit. William Jennings Bryan wanted farmers to be able to pay their debts and get paid fairly for their crops.

Understand money is not just paper and coins; it represents gold bars that belong to the government – what was called the gold standard.

Procedures

- Day One: Financial Farmer Game
- Day Two: William Jennings Bryan's Fight for Justice

Historical Background:

Manifest Destiny included settlement and development of the railroad to connect the United States from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. Homesteaders improved upon their land and began greater production beyond what met their personal needs. By 1896 many Nebraska farmers were in this early production phase and were relying on railroads to transport their produce to eastern markets, but railroads did not always have fair pricing practices.

Visit <http://www.history.com/topics/william-jennings-bryan> for a good overview of William Jennings Bryan.

Lesson: Financial Farmer Game (45 minutes)

Anticipatory: Virtual Capitol Tour - <http://nebraskavirtualcapitol.org/>

- Students will have already learned about settlers, pioneers, and homesteaders.
- Examine James Penney's three murals, "The Homesteader's Campfire," "The First Furrow," and "The House Raising." (North vestibule, second floor)
 - Hand out Student Document A
- Have students review the Student Atlas of Nebraska, by Dr. Randy Bertolas, page 24, Railroads.

Description of Game and Lesson

Prerequisite to this lesson: Students have already learned about the westward movement of pioneers and settlers. They should understand that this lesson takes place when homesteaders have begun to harvest enough crops that they now can sell some to make money.

Students are introduced to the fact that our money was based on the gold standard. Teachers will represent this by having a box and modeling the pretend gold, coins that represent gold dollars with pennies, gold paper, or gold colored plastic money. Explain that “currency” is paper and coin money that represents the gold wealth stored by a country. This was called the “gold standard.”

Students will have many roles to play that will give hands-on experience with farmers’ savings, spending, costs of doing business, and profits. A problem with variable shipping costs associated with unregulated prices will be demonstrated when farmers have to pay different fees for shipping crops to markets, which is an unfair practice.

Students will have savings to begin the game. They will have to buy seed and one piece of machinery. They will receive another group of seeds to show their crop growth. Upon shipping their harvest they will roll the dice, which will represent how much they have to pay the railroad to take their crop to the buyer, Frito Company will pay each farmer the same amount for their crop.

When students begin with the same funds (savings), 5 gold dollars, and spend 2 gold dollars for machinery and seeds (business costs), they are equal. However, when students pay variable fees (costs), only the student who happens to roll a one will be able to show profit. All others must go to the bank to get a loan (debt), which is a set fee of 5 gold dollars (borrowing leads to debt). The next growing season all farmers must buy seeds for 1 gold dollar (costs). Farmers who took a loan must make a payment to the bank of 2 gold dollar. Again, all students work, crops grow, and they again roll the dice to determine the cost of shipping. They pay if they have enough in their savings, otherwise they keep their crops. After this round, stop the game. Class discussion should focus on how the students feel about their work and the railroad fees. They should feel all work was fair but the railroad fees were not.

Students will connect the game to Nebraska’s Congressman William Jennings Bryan, who believed very strongly that he was representing the farmers’ needs to make a decent living and be charged fairly and equally to ship their goods to markets where people will buy their crops and cattle.

Tell Students: Farmers own land, a sod house, and 2 horses, but each needs one more piece of equipment and the seed to grow next year’s crop. Farmers will need to interact with other business people in order to ship and sell their crops. Each farmer has 5 pennies savings. This money is based on the gold standard. Play game for two growing seasons.

Quick Guide to Game

We need to understand money is not just paper and coins. The money in our pockets represents the amount of gold bar wealth that belonged to the United States government. This was called the gold standard.

- Have a box or rock represent gold of government.

Bring out the pennies and tell students the coins represent gold.

- Teacher announces that its spring and gives each farmer 5 pennies to begin game.
 - Pennies / gold
- Equipment Salesperson (Student)
 - Machinery: Harvester = 1 toothpick
 - Cost: 2 pennies
 - Each farmer will purchase one
- Seed Salesperson (student)
 - Popcorn kernels (about one spoonful)
 - Cost: 1 penny
 - Each farmer will purchase seeds.

Farmers now plant by making an array of their seeds. (Example: 14 seeds: 3 x 4 = 12 with a remainder of 2)

Teachers announces summer and gives each farmer another spoonful of seeds to add to their array representing crop growth.

Teachers announces it is fall and its time to harvest

- Farmers go to the Railroad Freight Masters and put the seeds on the scale. Measure in grams.

- Railroad Freight Masters (student with teacher guidance)
 - Transporting crops costs money
 - Weigh crop on scale in grams and record weight on slip of paper
 - Farmers must pay the Railroad to ship their crops to Chicago. Freight costs are calculated (Inconsistent and unfair)
 - Roll the dice for cost to farmers to ship freight
 - Farmers pay 1 – 6 pennies depending on roll
 - After purchaing machinery and seeds farmers only have 2 pennies left. Rolls of 3 or more must go to the bank and borrow in order to ship their corn. Take their weight slip of paper showing how much they produced as proof to the bank they have value.
- Bankers (2 students)
 - Get a loan of 5 pennies only.
 - Banker will hand out 5 pennies
 - Second Banker will sign or stamp the weight slip and note that interest of 1 penny is due with the payback of the 5 borrowed pennies.
- Farmers will sell their crops to the Frito company. Delivery of crops takes place at the Frito plant.
- Fritos Purchasing Agent (student)
 - Pays 2 pennies to each farmer for their crops.

Students should realize they paid more to produce and ship than they got paid, except for those who got the roll of one or two.

Teacher announces second spring, summer, and fall cycles distribute seeds again and farmers buy, grow and harvest again.

- Farmers who took a loan make partial payment to bank – 2 pennies
- Farmers buy seed – 1 penny
- Railroad Freight Masters roll the dice to determine shipping costs. Those that have enough get to pay and ship their crops. Have the others hold onto their crops rather than getting another loan.

Announce end of game and ready the group for discussion.

Model / Share / Guide in small groups with farmers and at least one business person. Describe the financial life of a farmer? What was the problem farmers were having? Predict how much money farmers would have had at the end 3 more growing seasons? Help students realize the railroad was unfair in how they charged farmers.

DAY TWO

Lesson: William Jennings Bryan's Fight for Justice (45+ minutes)

Anticipatory

Capitol Virtual Tour of William Jennings Bryan's bust in the SW Hall of Fame

<http://nebraskavirtualcapitol.org/>

William Jennings Bryan believed he is representing the farming families of Nebraska that we represented in our Financial Farmer Game we played yesterday. Today we are going to be History Detectives and examine historical documents regarding William Jennings Bryan and the political party he represented, The Populist Party.

Background:

- Bryan makes his speech to increase the supply of money by having the supply based on gold *and* silver, bimetallism. (Bi- prefix, two) That would have allowed everyone to have more currency, which Bryan argued would have helped many people have more money to spend and save. The bimetallism standard wasn't adopted. Bryan was not elected President but later became Secretary of State under President Wilson.
- He also fought to have Railroad prices be the same for everyone to make it fair. Many believed the U.S. government needed to get involved to make this law. This did eventually happen.

Close reading of historical documents show us portions of William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech he gave in 1867 and his political party's stand on the issues of bimetallism standard for currency (money) and railroad regulations. William Jennings Bryan skyrocketed to national fame after giving his "Cross of Gold" speech at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1897.

Model

Hand out document B, then C.

For each document, B then C, guide students through:

- Title (highlight)
- Sourcing (highlight)
- Historical background
- Vocabulary (highlight)
- First reading of Document, inserting the definition for each vocabulary word
- Second reading, highlight most important words for close reading

Share

- Discuss Document B

Guide: Answers to discussion questions in parenthesis

- What do you think that the "People's Party" meant by "the amount of circulating medium be speedily increased"? What did they want to happen (introduce silver reserves to back more printing of money)? What happens to the price of goods and services that people want when all of a sudden there is much more money available (inflation)?
 - Farmers thought that inflation would help them in TWO ways. Thinking of prices and the amount of money circulating...how would the farmers be helped by inflation (higher price for their crops; more dollars available to pay down their debt)
 - Inflation means ALL prices increase. What costs for the farmers would also increase (costs of transporting crops to market via railroad) How did the farmers expect to solve the problem of higher railroad costs (government would take ownership, or nationalize the railroad)
 - Connect to today: "What happens to business people and consumers when prices go up? Which groups of people might benefit (borrowers or people with debt;)? Why? (more dollars circulating makes it easier to pay off their original debt). Which groups of people would not benefit from inflation? (consumers who want to purchase goods and services). Why? (Higher prices might mean lower purchasing power of their money?)

Assessments

Day One

Farmer Game Independent Assessment: Quick Write: What solutions can you think of to help all of the farming community with their cost issues? Cost of seed, machinery, and shipping.

Day Two

Assessment Group Work: Answering Guiding Questions (Verbal discussion)

High: How did William Jennings Bryan think increasing the supply of money and government control of railroad pricing would benefit early farmers of Nebraska?

- They would have fair pricing from the railroad that would help them control their overall cost to profit ratio.
- Since silver costs less than gold, more people could have currency flowing through their households.

Middle: What made William Jennings Bryan more famous, his opinions about the bimetallic standard for currency or his determination to regulate railroads? Why?

- Bryan was a gifted speaker with great charisma.
- His message about the railroads needing government control was something that farmers had annual experience with and believed would help them.
- Those that went to hear him were not the New York merchants about which he was comparing, they were often the everyday agricultural people.

Low: How did government control of railroad pricing benefit early farmers of Nebraska?

- It made pricing uniform and fair for all of the farmers
- They would know in advance how much it would cost them to ship their produce to market.

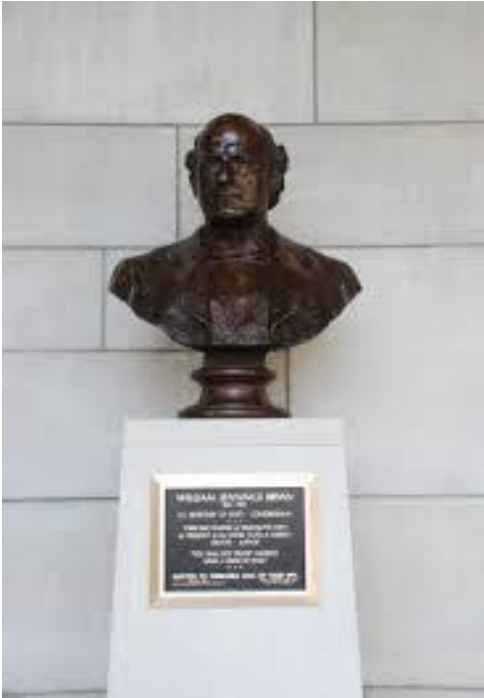
Rubric Proficient: In paragraph response, use 2 facts from each of document B and C. Conventions should meet teacher expectations at the time of the lesson with correct spelling of quotes and names when taken from the text.

Extensions

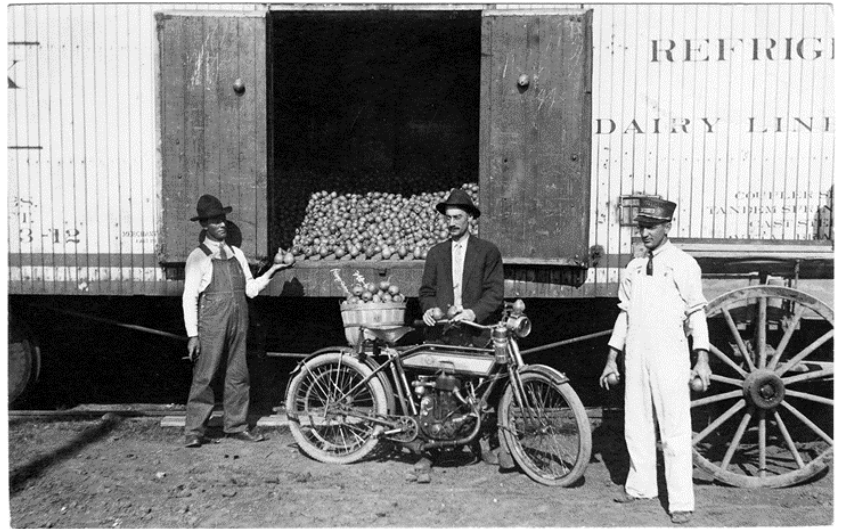
Sources

Listed in Documents A, B, C

STUDENT DOCUMENTS BELOW



Bust of William Jennings Bryan in the SW Hall of Fame of the Nebraska State Capitol. He became the U.S. Secretary of State after three unsuccessful attempts to be elected the U.S. President.



Trains became a vital link between the farming producers and the merchants and consumers. Source: Nebraska State Historical Society, Image RG3372.PH000013-000019, selling pears from train, Collection name RG3372 Gage County (Nebraska)



Murals installed in the north vestibule of the Nebraska State Capitol in 1964 by artist James Penney, remind us that the homesteaders and pioneers of Nebraska worked hard to break the soil of the Great Plains. They built their homes and eventually made Nebraska a leader in agriculture.

Top: "The First Furrow"

Bottom: "The House Raising"

Lesson: William Jennings Bryan

Name: _____

Date: _____

Document B (Modified)

Historical Background

William Jennings Bryan was a spokesperson for the Populist Party, a popular political party meant to represent the common people in Nebraska. They fought for the rights of farmers and people to have more cash, which the party believed would happen if the government's money supply was based on silver and gold, not just the gold standard. The group put together a document stating their demands.

"People's Party Platform," Omaha Morning World-Herald, July 5, 1892

"We declare, therefore:

Wealth belongs to him who creates it, and every dollar taken from industry without an equivalent is robbery.... The interests of rural and civil labor are the same, their enemies identical....

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....

We believe the time has come when the railroad corporations will either own the people or the people must own the railroads.... The government [should] enter upon the work of owning and managing all the railroads....

Transportation being a means of exchange and a public necessity, the government should own and operate the railroads in the interest of the people."

Vocabulary

Industry – Businesses that produce goods

Rural labor – Work, such as farming, that takes place in the countryside

Civil labor – Work that is taking place in cities, such as really big businesses

Currency – Paper and coin money

Circulating medium – Currency that is available for people to use, paper and coins

Source

"People's Party Platform," Omaha Morning World-Herald, July 5, 1892

Excerpt from University of Wisconsin – Lacrosse collection; 5/25/16

http://www.uwlax.edu/catl/lsp/obj/thomask/06_2008/TGA_zpopulist_party_platform_1892.pdf

Document C (Modified)

Historical Background

William Jennings Bryan was the Congressman from Nebraska attending the Democratic National convention in 1896 when he gave his famous *Cross of Gold* speech, which brought the crowd to a frenzy of excitement.

“Cross of Gold” Speech by William Jennings Bryan, 1896

The merchant at the crossroads store is as much a businessman as the merchant of New York. The farmer who goes forth in the morning and toils all day, begins in the spring and toils all summer, and by the application of brain and muscle to the natural resources of this country [also] creates wealth...

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....

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.

Vocabulary

Merchant – Salesperson

Crossroads Store – A small community store located where two roads cross

Toils – Works

Gold Standard – A country’s stored gold that represents their wealth

Rest upon – depend on

Commercial interests – Businesses that sell things

Laboring interests – People who are working and producing products

Toiling masses – A gigantic group working very hard

Crown of thorns – A painful crown made of a plant with sharp thorns

Crucify – To kill a person up on a cross

Source

William Jennings Bryan, “Cross of Gold” Speech; 1896 (ORIGINAL)

Excerpt taken from Stanford History Education Group; 5/25/1

Discussion Questions:

1. What two groups of people is William Jennings Bryan comparing?
2. Who is benefiting more by the United States having their money based on the gold standard?