



Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 8, WEBISODE 10

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



Segment Overview

The election of 1896 was one of the most critical in our nation's history. No controls on the nation's economic system existed. Until the 1890s, rapid industrialization, growth of big business and financial houses, and massive speculation were unknown.

For ordinary citizens, as well as for government officials, the economic situation was confusing and often incomprehensible. In spite of the growth of industrialized America, hard times stalked the land: economic depression, massive unemployment, farm foreclosures, low gold reserves, and bank closings. For voters and politicians alike, economic stability was of paramount importance, and they looked for a financial solution that they could understand and support. Thus, very complex and volatile economic issues were overly simplified in the presidential election of 1896, which focused on the highly charged question of backing the nation's paper currency with gold or silver or a combination of the two.

Farmers and laborers, hardest hit by the depression and often victimized by industrial growth, turned to William Jennings Bryan. Bryan fervently believed in the free coinage of silver, tariff reform, and an income tax.

At their national convention in 1896, the Republicans nominated William McKinley, who in his long career in the House of Representatives had supported a high protective tariff. McKinley firmly believed that high taxes on foreign goods protected American industry from competition and were good for both business and workers. Businessmen and workers in the East gave him their support, and a good farm crop in the West helped restore prosperity. McKinley won the election of 1896, which clearly decided the nation's future course.

Teacher Directions

1. Ask the students.

- What are some famous speeches or speakers with which you are familiar? (*Gettysburg Address* by Abraham Lincoln, *I Have A Dream* by Martin Luther King, Jr., state of the Union and inaugural speeches of United States presidents, and others)
- On what occasions are speeches given? (campaigning for public office, religious services, dedication of buildings and other structures, graduation ceremonies, national days of remembrance and dedication, national holidays)



Let's Discuss

Let's Discuss, Cont.

- What makes a speech noteworthy? (power of ideas, beauty of language, delivery of speaker)
2. Tell the students that this lesson is the story of a speech that was so powerful it moved an entire political party to choose the orator as its presidential candidate; and that, even today, the speech is remembered. In fact, the speech itself is more memorable than its subject, and the man who gave the speech remains more famous for it than for what he accomplished as a politician.
 3. Discuss the following questions with the students.
 - Who gave the famous Cross of Gold speech?
 - Who was his audience?
 - List three characteristics about the speaker that made people listen to him.

Teacher Directions

1. Distribute the Student Sheet: *That All Important Election: 1896*. Students work in partnerships in their small learning teams. Using Chapter 13, "A Cross of Gold" in Joy Hakim's *An Age of Extremes* and other library and Internet resources, partners find the facts about the 1896 election and complete the work sheets.
2. Students share the information they have gathered about the 1896 election in a class discussion.
3. Working in their small teams, each team chooses a political party (or assign parties to the teams) and some important issues and creates a campaign poster for either William Jennings Bryan or William McKinley. Display the campaign posters in the classroom.

Teacher Directions

Students consider the following quotation from William Jennings Bryan and write a brief journal entry stating why they agree or disagree with Bryan's opinion. Encourage the students to give examples from their own lives to illustrate their agreement or disagreement with Bryan's statement.

Destiny is not a matter of chance; it's a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved.



History Sleuth



What do you Think?



Moving Toward Freedom



Connections

Teacher Directions

1. Students use Chapter 13 in Joy Hakim's *An Age of Extremes*, other library sources, and the Internet to gather information and consider the issues and outcome of the 1896 presidential election. What citizens would believe that the election of McKinley moved the country toward freedom? What citizens would disagree.
2. Students take sides and organize a classroom debate on the question, "How did the outcome of the 1896 election move the country toward freedom?"

Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

Technology/Library — Students listen to Bryan's "Cross of Gold" and other famous speeches by contacting The Vincent Voice Library at Michigan State University (<http://www.lib.msu.edu/vincent/>).

Math — Students research how the American currency is backed now. Students determine the value of our paper money and our coins in relationship to the backing metal: How much is a dollar bill actually worth?

That All Important Election: 1896

Republican Party	Democratic and Populist Party
Candidate -----	Candidate -----
Issues ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- -----	Issues ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- -----
Voters who supported these issues ----- ----- -----	Voters who supported these issues ----- ----- -----
Campaign method ----- ----- ----- -----	Campaign method ----- ----- ----- -----
Money spent in campaign -----	Money spent in campaign -----
Number of popular votes -----	Number of popular votes -----
Number of electoral votes -----	Number of electoral votes -----

The winner is _____!