

America in the Gilded Age (1870—1900): The Populists

Directions: Examine the documents provided, determine what major problems farmers faced in the Gilded Age, & write your response in the matrix below. When finished, generate a plan that provides a solution to meet the needs of farmers

Document A	Document B
Document C	Document D
My Plan to Meet the Needs of Western Farmers	

I. The Problems of Farmers

A. In the 1870s & 1880s, _____ faced serious problems:

1. _____ for their crops were falling due to _____ of grains
2. Banks were charging high _____ on mortgages & were _____ on debtors
3. _____ charged high rates for shipping & storing their crops

B. Government policies hurt farmers:

1. The gov't reduced the paper money (_____) & relied on _____-backed currency;
This led to deflation making it harder for farmers to _____
2. When westerners appealed to their politicians, _____ was done

II. Reform Attempts by Farmers

A. Farmers attempted to organize & fight back through groups like the _____ & the Farmers' Alliance:

1. These groups attacked abusive _____ & _____ companies
2. They called on farmers to form their own _____ stores, banks, & storage silos to avoid exploitation
3. Both groups _____ to gain improvements for farmers

B. The Populist Party

1. In 1890, the _____ was formed & demand reforms:
 - a. Government _____ of railroads in order to lower rates
 - b. A national _____ to take the burden of taxation off farmers
 - c. Direct-election of _____ to make politicians more responsive
 - d. _____: Using gold & _____ to inflate the money supply
2. From 1890 to 1896, the Populist Party emerged as an influential _____ & began to challenge the Democrats & Republicans
3. In the 1896 presidential election, _____ embraced Populist ideas & was _____ by the Democrat & Populist Parties:
 - a. Bryan made bimetallism the issue of the campaign as a result of his " _____ " speech
 - b. Republican William McKinley argued for the _____
4. _____ defeat of Bryan in the election of 1896 _____ the Populist Party...
- 5...but key Populist ideas such as the income tax, _____ of Senators, & regulation of railroads will be enacted by the _____ from 1890 to 1920

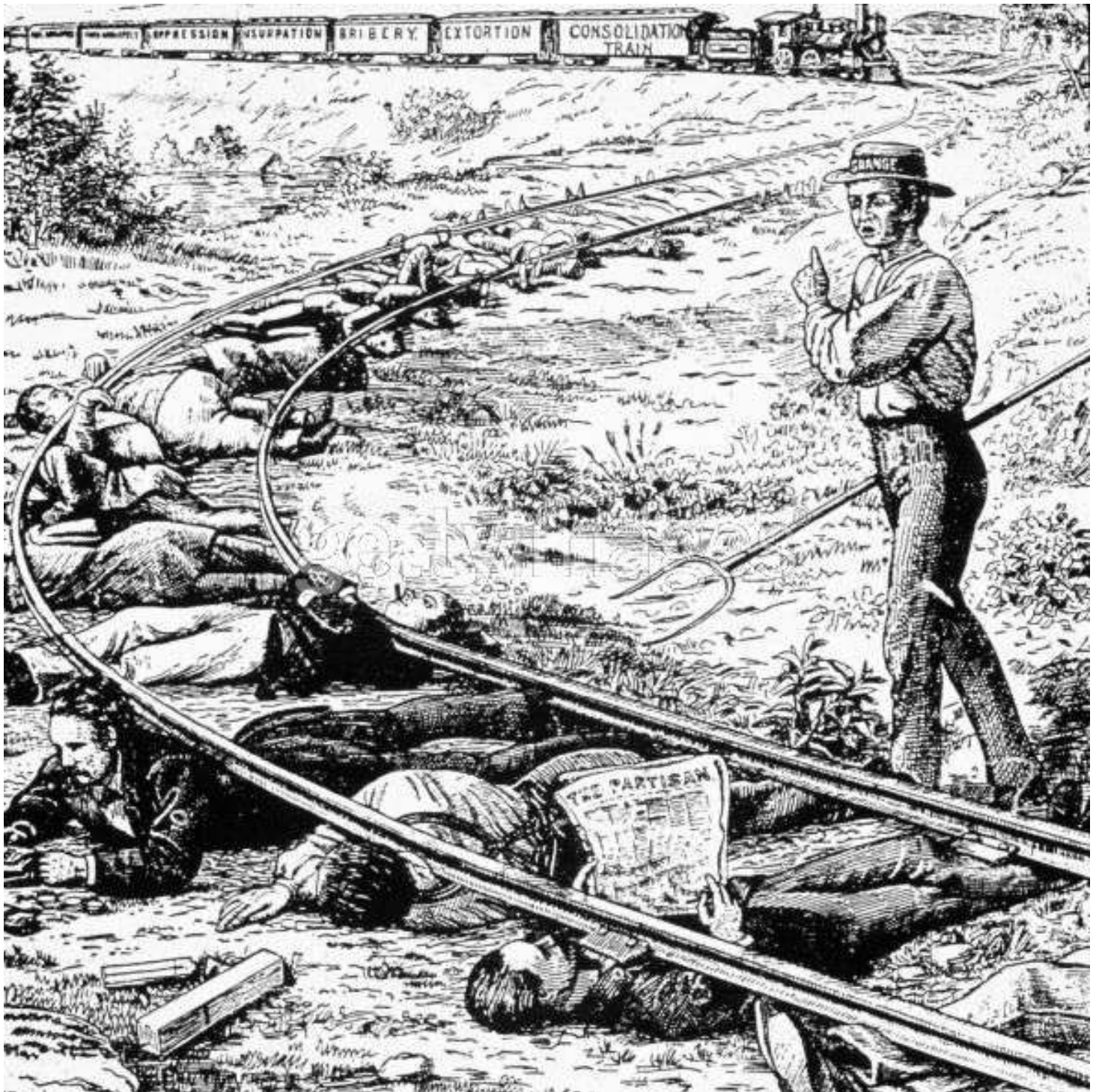
Gold Bugs and Silverites		
	Gold Bugs	Silverites
Who They Were	bankers and businessmen	farmers and laborers
What They Wanted	gold standard less money in circulation	bimetallism more money in circulation
Why	Loans would be repaid in stable money.	Products would be sold at higher prices.
Effects	DEFLATION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prices fall.• Value of money increases.• Fewer people have money.	INFLATION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prices rise.• Value of money decreases.• More people have money.

Document A

Average Market Prices of Three Crops, 1870-1897

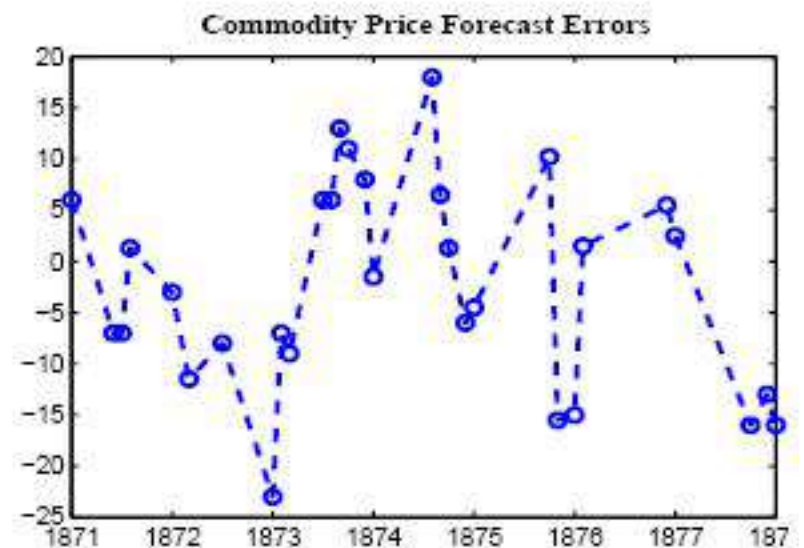
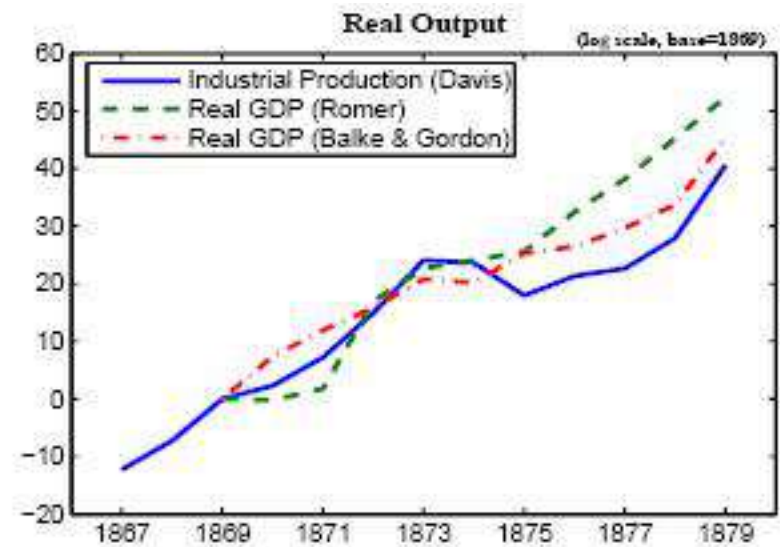
Years	Wheat (\$ per bushel)	Corn (\$ per bushel)	Cotton (\$ per pound)
1870-1873	106.7	43.1	15.1
1874-1877	94.4	40.9	11.1
1878-1881	100.6	43.1	9.5
1882-1885	80.2	39.8	9.1
1886-1889	74.8	35.9	8.3
1890-1893	70.9	41.7	7.8
1894-1897	63.3	29.7	5.8

Document B



Document C

Economic Indicators Due to President Grant's Deflationary Policies



Document D

“As one hard season succeeded another, the empty handed farmer found his back debts and unpaid interest [to the bank] becoming an intolerable burden. In the West...[interest rates from banks] of seven or eight percent on real estate were now regarded as extremely low; ten or twelve percent was considered very liberal, from eighteen to twenty-four percent was not uncommon, and forty percent or above was not unknown. Naturally, the number of real estate mortgages placed dropped off precipitately.

John Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*, 1931

Note: Interest rates in 2009 are around 4-5%