

## **The Gilded Age and Liberty**

### **The Basics**

#### **Time Required**

1 class period

#### **Subject Areas**

10<sup>th</sup> Grade US History

Development of the Industrialist U.S., 1870-1900

#### **Common Core Standards Addressed:**

Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12

#### **Author**

Theone Sexauer (2004)

### **The Lesson**

#### **Introduction**

Mark Twain coined the phrase “Gilded Age” to reflect the opulence of the wealthy while hiding the underlining poverty resulting from the exploitation of the workers by American corporations in the late 1800s.

With the expansion of the railroads the nation became stitched together, thus creating new markets for farmers and new jobs for laborers. Corporations, such as Carnegie Steel Company and Rockefeller’s Standard Oil, helped America grow from the fourth largest manufacturer in 1860 to the first by 1894.

Two groups that first benefited then were adversely affected by the growth of corporations and railroads were farmers and laborers. Farmers responded by this adverse effect by creating the Farmers Alliance and the Grange. These two socioeconomic organizations gave rise to the Populist Party.

Leopold Vincent, along with his father and brother published the *Winfield American Nonconformist*, a radical paper that condemned many of the unfair practices that were inflicted on immigrants, workers and farmers. Vincent published a farm-labor solidarity booklet in 1891 called *The Alliance and Labor Songster*. The book was a compilation of songs using familiar tunes and was written mostly by farmers and workers who believed in the cause of solidarity. The song *Future America* (author unknown) uses the tune of “My Country ‘tis of Thee,” and attacks the idea of corporations and monopolies.

“A New American Anthem” was written by Thomas Nicol and also appeared in *The Alliance and Labor Songster*. Also using the tune of “My Country ‘tis of Thee,” this parody reflects the plight of the farmers.

#### **Guiding Questions**

What does it mean to be gilded?

When was the Gilded Age in America?

How should one read political cartoons?

### **Learning Objectives**

- To identify the economic and social implications of the Gilded Age.
- To recognize the Populist movement and their philosophies.
- To compare and contrast music and to understand its impact on society.
- To analyze political cartoons and their meaning.
- To research and develop a campaign platform.

### **Preparation Instructions**

#### **Song used:**

- “Future America”
- “New American Anthem”

### **Lesson Activities**

This lesson would be used to introduce the growth of the Populist Party and the growing class division that occurred during the Gilded Age.

#### **Introductory learning activities**

- Have students read the lyrics of *New American Anthem* in the class.

### **Assessment**

- Have students sing the Anthem (no recording) twice. The first time students will sing the song as it is written. The second time the students sing will be a reflection of their discussion.
- Repeat that first two activities using *Future America*.
- Compare and contrast the two songs using graphic organizer.
- Break the class into four groups, giving each student a political cartoon. Have the students link their cartoon to one of the songs.
- Break the students into groups of three. Each group will have an identity either farmers, laborers, or industrialists.
- Students will read the Gilded Age material in their textbook. After brainstorming as a group students will identify the attitudes of their assigned roles. .
- Individually write a journal entry explaining why they advocate their political position.
- For homework, all students will be given an excerpt from the [\*Gospel of Wealth\*](#) to read. After the reading students will write a response as a 21<sup>st</sup> century historian analyzing the person’s bias.

## **Resources**

### **Lyrics**

“Future of America”

My country, 'tis of thee  
Land of lost liberty,  
Of thee we sing.

Land which the millionaires,  
Who govern our affairs,  
Own for themselves and heirs-  
Hail to thy king.

Land once of noble braves  
But now of wretched slaves-  
Alas! too late

We saw sweet Freedom die,  
From letting bribers nigh,  
Our unprized suffrage buy;  
And mourn thy fate.

Land where the wealthy few  
Can make the many do  
Their royal will,

And tax for selfish greed  
The toilers till they bleed,  
And those not yet weal-kneed  
Crash down and kill.

Land where a rogue is raised  
On high and loudly praised  
For worst of crimes

Of which the end, must be  
A hell of cruelty,  
As proved by history  
Of ancient times.

My country, 'tis of thee,  
Betrayed by bribery,  
Of thee we sing.

We might have saved thee long  
Had we, when proud and strong,  
Put down the cursed wrong  
That makes a king.

“A New American Anthem”

My country, 'tis of thee,  
Once land of liberty,  
Of thee I sing.  
Land of the Millionaire;  
Farmers with pockets bare;  
Caused by the cursed snare –  
The Money Ring.

My native country, thee,  
Thou wert so pure and free,  
Long, long ago.  
Yet still I love thy rills,  
But hate thy usury mills,  
That fill the bankers' tills  
Till they overflow.

So when my country, thee,  
Which should be noble, free,  
I'll love thee still;  
I'll love thy Greenback men,  
Who strive with tongue and pen,  
For liberty again,  
With right good will.

And then my country, thee,  
Thou wilt again be free;  
And Freedom's tower.  
Stand by your fireside then,  
And show that you are men,  
Whom they can't fool again,  
And crush their power.