

19th Century United States History
Unit 9 – Transforming American Society
Populist Party Platform Analysis

Name

Date

Directions: We are going to explore the Populist Party's goals and platform in the late 19th century. As you read their party platform, please write your responses to the following questions. Be sure to fully answer all parts of each question to receive credit. You can get to the website that by clicking [here](#), or go to <http://tinyurl.com/androstic4>.

1. Who was the Populist Party created to represent?
2. What examples can you think of of “moral, political, and material ruin” in the country at this time? Do you think this depiction of the U.S. was accurate in 1892? Why/why not?
3. Who is the “imported pauperized labor” that “beats down their wages?” What issue is being addressed with that statement?
4. The remainder of the second/third paragraph seems to suggest class struggle between rich/poor (“two great classes – tramps and millionaires”). Does this sound Marxist to you? Why?
5. What criticisms does the Populist preamble have of the two major existing political parties?
6. How do Populists plan to restore the Republic to the hands of the “plain people”?
7. What party do you think the populists would side with if they were alive in 1800 – Democratic Republicans or Federalists? Why?
8. Populists claim that “wealth belongs to him who creates it” – in other words, the workers. Do you agree with that assessment? Why? If yes, then what role do capitalists play?

9. In the third declaration, populists call for an amendment required government workers to be placed under civil-service regulations. What do you think this means?

10. Populists called for currency to be backed by gold AND silver. What effect might this have on money/prices in the United States? Think Hard!

11. Populists argued that railroad, telegraph, and telephone companies should be owned and controlled by the government in the interest of the people. Which system is better – government ownership of these services or private ownership? Are there exceptions to your opinion?

12. “The land, including all the natural sources of wealth, is the heritage of the people.” What is ironic about this statement in the Populist Party platform?

13. Do these declarations sound like positive steps for the country to take? Why/why not?

14. Do the populists represent a form of socialism in the country? What evidence is there to suggest that they do?

15. If the Populist Party existed today, would they be more likely to support the Democratic or Republican Party? Why do you think?