Decision Making in U.S. History

The Gilded Age

By Kevin O’Reilly

Kerry Gordonson, Editor
Dr. Aaron Willis, Project Coordinator
Justin Coffey, Editorial Assistant
Christina Trejo, Editorial Assistant

Social Studies School Service
10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802
Culver City, CA 90232
http://socialstudies.com
access@socialstudies.com
(800) 421-4246
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kevin O’Reilly is History Department Chair at Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School, where he has taught for 29 years. He was National Council for the Social Studies/Time Magazine Secondary Teacher of the Year, Kidger Award Recipient, Richard Farrell National Teacher of the Year, NASDAQ/National Council on Economic Education National Grand Prize Winner, and American Historical Association Beveridge Teaching Prize Winner. He has authored six other books, over 30 articles in professional journals, a history videotape, and two Internet-based simulations. He has conducted more than 100 professional workshops on critical thinking and decision making in history.
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This book is dedicated to the memory of Alice Schlossberg, an inspiring, devoted, and creative teacher. She was and is an inspiration to all the teachers at Hamilton-Wenham.
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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Think of this book, and the other books in this series, not as a text, but as a menu. As a teacher, you select lessons from the menu. It was never intended that you would have everything on the menu—that would be overeating. [Take a look at the table of contents.] When choosing a lesson, look first at the problems on the student handout(s), and then at the student handout describing these problems’ historical outcomes. If you like what you see, take a look at the lesson plan for ideas on using the handouts. You can teach all of the lessons by giving students a problem handout, having them discuss what they would do, and finally distributing the outcomes handout. You may also consult the “Quick Motivator” section of a lesson plan to use the handouts as a short introduction to class.

On the other hand, you can think of this book as a “how-to” guide for teaching specific decision-making skills while also covering significant events in United States history. The book posits a general guideline of ten distinct skills, organized under the acronym P-A-G-E to help students remember these skills. Take a look at the explanation of P-A-G-E in the introduction to this book, under the section titled “Guide to Thoughtful Decision Making.” This section explains each of the ten skills and includes examples.

Every lesson in this series analyzes the historical topic in terms of P-A-G-E. Each lesson targets specific skills, letting the content and the actual decision in history determine the skills emphasized in the lesson. Take a look at the skills grid for each lesson on page 1 of this book. Handouts are frequently used to focus students on using specific skills. For example, many lessons include a list of questions designed to provoke more questions from students, as well as to give them ideas of the types of questions to ask. Other lessons give students a list of assumptions and ask which they assumed in making their decisions. The other skills have similar handouts.

Whether you try the problem-discussion-outcome approach or concentrate more on specific decision-making skills, I hope these books will help make you a more effective teacher and help your students learn United States history in a way that will help prepare them to make more thoughtful decisions as citizens.

Kevin O’Reilly
INTRODUCTION

RATIONALE: Hindsight versus Foresight

When we study history, it is all too easy to sit in judgment of those who came before us. We read it after the fact; we see it in hindsight. Given the benefit of such 20/20 hindsight, some historical figures seem to have been very misguided or downright silly in their decisions. Why didn’t they anticipate the consequences of their choices? How could they have been so shortsighted? Sports enthusiasts call this sort of analysis “Monday morning quarterbacking.”

However, it’s not so easy to laugh at the follies of past decision makers if we are confronted with decisions in history before we learn the actual results. In such a situation, we find ourselves making some of the same mistakes that historical characters made, and we sometimes commit new errors they did not make. This method of studying history, which we might call “foresight history,” is far more challenging—and engaging—than the traditional retroactive method to which we are inured.

In short, when we learn history by hindsight we risk becoming more arrogant and complacent. If, on the other hand, we learn history by foresight, by casting ourselves in the role of those historical figures and making decisions as they did—without knowing the outcome—we can learn humility and gain a great deal of empathy for them. Students in my classes constantly exclaim, “This is hard!” as opposed to, “This is boring!”

Foresight history also helps students improve key decision-making skills they will use again and again as citizens. Schools of law, medicine, business, and nursing, along with the military and many other institutions, use case-study methods, where students are forced to make decisions about a particular case and then analyze their thinking. If each of these varied disciplines values decision making so much, shouldn’t we be training all our future citizens how to make good decisions?

History provides many benefits for those who study it. Historical knowledge can be liberating all by itself, letting us draw back the veil of ignorance and see the present with eyes enlightened by the past. The more knowledge of history we possess, the better we understand our societies and ourselves. Study and evaluation of primary sources, discussions of motives, debates about significance, analyzing causes and effects, and many other strategies are vital to history courses. The lessons here on decision making are meant to support and enhance these other methods of studying history, not replace them with a more “practical” type of history.
OVERVIEW

The lessons in *Decision Making in U. S. History* are to be used independently within a standard U.S. history course in middle school, high school, or college. Each book in this series comprises between eight and thirteen lessons. Each lesson includes the following:

1. Introduction: includes an overview of the topic, content vocabulary, and decision-making skills emphasized in the lesson.
2. Lesson plan: includes suggestions for how to use the handouts, how to focus on decision-making skills, how to connect the decision to the larger historical context, how to use video and other supplementary sources, and how to troubleshoot problems, should any arise.
3. Suggested answers: this section features teacher notes about outcomes (student versions of the outcomes are also provided—see number 6 below), references to historians’ interpretations of the topic, decision-making analysis, and suggestions for further research.
4. Sources: includes the specific sources used in the lesson.
5. Problem(s): reproducible handouts used by students to read and analyze the problem.
6. Historical outcome of the problem: what people in history actually did and the consequences thereof.
7. Primary sources and visuals (if any): these are integrated into the lesson itself and are not included merely as window dressing.

Each individual decision-making challenge is referred to as a “problem.” Some lessons have one problem to challenge students, while others contain numerous problems. The handouts for each lesson are reproducible; teachers can also decide to use only selected parts of the handouts, if so desired.

While decision making is the main point of the books, historical content is also very important. These lessons focus on real historical problems that convey powerful lessons about U.S. history. The problems involve important issues relevant both to America’s past and its present: taxation, foreign intervention, regulation of businesses and individuals, immigration, welfare, war, and so forth. In addition, not all of the problems come from the perspective of political leaders: many ask students to consider the perspectives of ordinary Americans such as workers, voters, farmers, African Americans, business owners, Native Americans, and women. Including problems from the perspectives of ordinary people prepares students for their roles as citizens in a democracy and encourages empathy for unfamiliar groups.

Most of the problems are brief—some as short as one paragraph—and can be used as class warm-ups lasting no more than ten minutes. Even with the shorter problems, however, the outcomes can often be quite complex, running on for several pages. The problems may appear deceptively simple, but analyzing them can be complicated. You
can best judge how much analysis to include for each problem, and for how long to run
each problem and discussion.

On the other hand, some problems are more complicated. These problems deal with
crucial turning points in the nation’s history. Students will almost certainly need more
background information before making decisions, and analysis of these problems could
take several class periods. These more involved problems could form the organization for
an entire unit of study. For example, in my classes the problem on the New Deal provides
me with the bulk of the time and activities on my unit concerning the New Deal. Students
learn about the basic New Deal programs, including their advantages and disadvantages,
while simultaneously working to improve their decision-making skills.

**DECISION MAKING**

**What is Decision Making?**

As explained in Student Handout 1, decision making involves making a choice when
there is no clearly correct answer. Students can derive important lessons about decision
making from encountering “messy” problems like these. Even where outcomes do not
show a particular choice to be clearly right or wrong, students will still be surprised by
some aspects of the outcomes and thereby gain insight into decision making.

**Decision Making as Experience**

As argued in Student Handout 1, the most powerful way to teach good decision making is
through experience. People learn to make good decisions just by making decisions,
period. Bad decisions are more instructive, perhaps, in making us more skeptical decision
makers, but that isn’t stressed in Student Handout 1. Examples from the teaching
profession illustrate this negative-reinforcement aspect of decision making. Teachers who
just put students into groups without giving specific directions quickly learn not to do it
again. Lessons that don’t work well are dropped or modified the next time around. Good
teaching is basically good decision making, and good decision making is shaped rapidly
by previous decisions.

Ordinary people, including students, have an optimistic tendency simply to assume their
decisions will result in positive outcomes, rather than making an estimate of the
probabilities of certain outcomes. Decision-making experts, on the other hand, have a
much more realistic view of these probabilities, due in part to their greater experience
with the types of problem with which they often deal. Experience teaches us to be more
realistic about outcomes.

Just encountering the problems and outcomes in these books, therefore, can help students
improve their decision-making skills in general.
Targeting Decision-Making Skills

As mentioned in Student Handout 1, these books go beyond just decision-making problems and their outcomes. They also provide teachers with a decision-making model and strategies for teaching the skills involved in decision making. Students learn a simple model that provides basic guidelines for making decisions. This model goes by the acronym P-A-G-E (as explained below and in Student Handouts 2 and 3), and it gives support and guidance for student decisions, allows for communication built around specific skills and a common vocabulary, and provides specific criteria for teachers to evaluate student progress on those skills.

It’s crucial for the teacher to act as a coach and guide students as they encounter the decision-making problems, in what Reuven Feuerstein refers to as “mediated learning.” The teacher’s guidance and questions can help students make sense of what they are thinking when they make decisions about historical situations.

The debate among researchers about the relative power of experience versus instruction on decision making is not crucial to these books. Rather, the problems and lessons in these books allow teachers to combine experience and instruction in the form of mediated learning (coaching).

Repetition in Order to Master Skills

These books are based on the hypothesis that several repetitions of decision-making problems and outcomes help improve decision making. That is, a person who has tried 50 problems will most likely have improved his/her decision-making skills more than a person who has tried only ten problems, simply because he or she has had more experience making decisions. There are many problems included in these books, and teachers are encouraged to use them regularly (once or twice per week, perhaps) as warm-ups to start classes or units. It isn’t expected, however, that teachers will necessarily use all the problems.

Having experience with a large number of problems also provides students with more historical analogies upon which they can draw. It is striking how often decision makers base their thinking on an analogy (usually a recent one) in looking for ideas to help decide a problem. Having a broader range of analogies allows students to be more skeptical of any analogy suggested, since students are more likely to think of different analogies than the ones offered.

Though many experiences with decision making will help, it is essential that teachers coach students (mediated learning) and have time to reflect on their thinking during decision-making problems. Metacognition (thinking about our own thinking) is vital for improving thinking skills, according to numerous writers. Teachers should therefore allow “postmortem” time after each experience for students to reflect on their thinking, either verbally or in writing (see the section on evaluation for ideas). Teachers are also encouraged to use some of the lessons for lengthier (1–3 class periods), more in-depth
analysis of student thinking and the historical topics involved; perhaps two or three
lessons could be used for in-depth analysis per semester.

**Individual Choice Versus Historical Context**

Research indicates that students generally view the role of individual choices as critical to
historical events (for example, viewing Rosa Parks as an important catalyst for the civil
rights movement), while professional historians stress the importance of underlying
forces (for example, African Americans fighting in World War II, the Cold War, etc. as
important causes of the civil rights movement). Students often miss the significance of
these underlying forces and do not always recognize the extent to which historical
context has constrained the actions of people in the past.

By focusing on decisions by individuals and by groups, the books in this series may seem
to perpetuate an overemphasis on the individual vs. historical forces. However, the
lessons in these books help students see more historical context, not less. In order to
make good decisions, students need to learn a great deal of historical context. All lessons
in this book require students to ask questions about context. Each lesson includes a short
outcome and a question about why students think that option was tried (e.g., “The
Congress rejected the 1790 petition to end slavery. Why do you think it was rejected?
Which historical forces at the time led to this outcome?”). Each problem also asks
students to think about the historical forces that made it difficult for the individual to
make a good decision. In addition, many problems include multiple points of view, which
enrich student understanding of context. Finally, students discuss the ways in which the
actual historic decision was similar to or different from the decision they made; this
emphasizes the role of context in shaping individual choices.

**STRATEGIES**

The basic format of the lessons, as explained in the overview, is problem, decision,
outcome, discussion. However, many of the subskills of decision making are difficult for
students to master. In order to assist students, many lessons put these subskills in a sort of
multiple-choice format. For example, to improve the “asking for more information” skill,
some lessons include a list of questions from which students can select the ones they wish
to ask. To improve “identifying underlying problems,” some lessons list possible
underlying problems. To improve “considering other points of view,” some lessons
include handouts that put students into different roles (for example, not just looking at
labor strike problems from the point of view of the workers, but from the point of view of
the owners as well).
GOALS

The books in this series have four main goals:

1. **Make history more interesting:**
   Simply giving students the problems, having them make decisions, and then telling them what the people involved actually did will keep student interest high. It’s exciting to make decisions before you know what the historical figures actually did. It’s dynamic, open-ended learning. Students enjoy comparing their decisions to those of their classmates and to the decisions actually made by the historical figures. Even if you decide to use the lessons without giving instruction on how to perform the skills involved in decision making, students will still enjoy learning history this way.

   This increased interest should also lead to increased reading comprehension. After all, when students read their texts they will actively search for what actually happened and will want to compare it with what they chose.

2. **Improve decision making through experience:**
   The primary way people learn to make better decisions is through the process of making decisions, both good and bad. Students therefore become more sophisticated decision makers with every choice they make. By giving students many chances to make decisions where they can learn from mistakes and surprises, we can speed up the process of making them savvy decision makers. For example, students who decide to have a foreign government overthrown and see many negative consequences will think twice before trying that again, and will be skeptical of such a plan if proposed in the present day. Experience itself becomes the teacher.

3. **More complex ethical thinking:**
   Ethical questions will arise regularly, and by discussing their positions students will develop more complex ethical arguments and understandings. Please note, however, that these lessons are not aimed primarily at ethical reasoning. Teachers who want to focus primarily on this should consult *Reasoning with Democratic Values* (2 volumes; by Alan Lockwood and David Harris, New York: Teacher’s College Press, 1985).

4. **Improve the use of decision-making skills and reflection on those skills:**
   As much as students can improve their decision making through experience, they will develop it that much more if they learn specific subskills, which can then become guidelines for thinking through decision-making problems more carefully. The instruction in these books is based on the skills of the P-A-G-E model. The specific elements of P-A-G-E are described in the section “Guide to Better Decision Making,” and the strategies for teaching those skills are explained below in the section “Teaching Specific Decision-Making Skills.”
One of the teaching strategies emphasizes journal writing, in which students reflect on the problems they encounter, including how they could improve their own decision making. If teachers can get them to reflect on how to improve upon decisions they’ve just made, students will learn to be more reflective in general.

Ideally, we want to train future citizens to approach decision-making problems by asking insightful questions, carefully probing for underlying problems, seeing a problem from a variety of perspectives, setting clear and realistic goals, and imagining consequences.

**EXPLANATION OF P-A-G-E FOR TEACHERS**

(See Student Handouts 1–3)

Good decision making involves a number of subskills. The more students can use the subskills, the more complex their thinking will be when they make decisions. In order to help students recall the subskills involved in decision making, these books offer a simple acronym—P-A-G-E. The acronym is only meant to help students recollect the subskills rather than provide an actual formula for making decisions; decision-making problems are too complex and varied for step-by-step formulas. For instance, in one problem, students will need to focus on envisioning unintended consequences, while in another, historical context will be more important. Research indicates that expert decision makers don’t follow step-by-step models. The P-A-G-E acronym consists of guidelines only, not specific steps or points that must be followed.

**PROBLEM**

Student Handout 3, “P-A-G-E Explanations and Examples,” discusses the specific parts of P-A-G-E. The first section focuses on analyzing the problem, explaining what some experts call “framing.” Framing seems to have a variety of meanings for different people. The handout emphasizes finding the underlying problem in an attempt to keep things simple for students. It also asks, “What’s really going on here?” in order to help students uncover underlying problems.

According to Gary Klein, experts (people with a great deal of experience in a particular field, such as nursing, firefighting, or chess) “recognize” particular problems as being of one type or another. Once they make this recognition (i.e., once they frame it or represent it a particular way), experts can make very quick and successful decisions—that’s why they’re experts! In making these recognitions, experts draw upon analogies they’ve learned through experience. Thus, the section of the handout that discusses framing is related to the section on analogies. Experiments with expert chess players have shown that recognition is extremely important. When pieces were placed on a board in completely random fashion, experts could remember the placement no better than novices. But when the pieces were arranged in a way similar to placements in a game, experts could remember the placements with a single glance and project ahead several possible moves.
How students see or frame a problem depends partly on how the problem is worded. To help students become more aware of wording, some problems are phrased in two different ways: for example, half the class could get the problem worded using positive language, while the other half gets it worded with negative language. After students make their decisions, the class can discuss the effects of different wording on their decisions. Was it a big factor?

Political Scientist James Voss believes that the way people perceive problems in foreign policy acts as a key variable in the decisions they make. He believes that problem representation (which is similar to framing) constrains what we do thereafter. For example, if we see a problem as a case of communist aggression, we will make different choices than if we see it as a typical boundary dispute between neighboring countries. Questions included with some problems help students become more attuned to problem representation.

The section on assumptions is greatly simplified compared to the literature on assumptions, which delineates several different types of assumptions (presuppositions, working assumptions, etc.). The primary method used in these books to teach students to recognize their own assumptions is by asking them to identify which of a specific menu of assumptions they made. When they see a list of possible assumptions, they can better recognize which ones they’ve made. This strategy seems more effective than having students read a lengthy explanation on types of assumptions.

**ASK FOR INFORMATION**

Asking questions is crucial in good decision making. The more people know about background sources and context, the better they will understand the real problem.

The “Guide to Thoughtful Decision Making” also emphasizes asking questions about analogies (“How is the historical case different from this decision-making problem?”), but you should also encourage students to think of historical analogies in the first place. Students will often think about a problem in terms of a personal analogy: for example, “I don’t like it when people criticize me, so it’s wrong for a country to make a harsh speech against another country.” Probing for personal or historical analogies, teachers should ask students where they got their ideas about what is really going on in a problem.

**GOALS**

The section on goals includes setting clear, realistic goals and generating numerous options for accomplishing those goals. Questions about ethicality have also been included in this section, since ethics are related to setting goals.
EFFECTS

The section on effects/consequences includes both long-term, unintended consequences and short-term possibilities of what could go wrong. Gary Kline argues that the ability to run mental simulations—that is, to envision what could go wrong and to imagine positive and negative consequences—is a vital skill in decision making. Every decision-making problem in this series emphasizes unintended consequences and things that could go wrong.

EVALUATING STUDENTS

There are numerous ways to evaluate student progress in both content and decision-making skills. Here are a few examples:

- Quiz students on the vocabulary included in the relevant lesson(s)
- Have each student keep a decision-making log, as outlined in Student Handout 3. It’s a good idea to copy the handout onto colored paper: you can then tell students after analyzing the outcome of a problem to turn to their green (for example) decision-making log sheet and record their thoughts. The right column requires students to reflect on their thinking.
- Have students keep a journal in which they comment on:
  - the decision actually made in history
  - what the actual decision makers did well or poorly
  - historical constraints on the decision makers
  - what the outcome of the decision reveals about that time period
  - the decision made by the student and what he/she did well or poorly
  - the “lessons” of this decision-making problem
- Have students write a “history” of an event after the class has participated in a decision-making problem on that event and has discussed the outcome. I’ve required students to include at least two elements of P-A-G-E in their historical analysis.
- As a test question, have students make a decision about a problem you haven’t used in class. Give them the problem and instruct them to make a decision and explain their thinking according to P-A-G-E. You have criteria in the suggested answers for grading their work.
EVALUATION TIPS FOR
STUDENT HANDOUT 5

Have students complete Student Handout 5, in which they must evaluate a sample historical decision. Below are eight elements of P-A-G-E to consider when grading student responses to this question. Students need only address four out of the eight, and they only need to suggest ideas for the ones they do address. For example, I give full credit to students who suggest any possible underlying problem or ask any reasonable question.

- **Underlying problem**: Students should consider that as industrialization continued, owners increasingly used machinery. The machines made many skilled workers obsolete, thus turning them into unskilled workers. This might not have been fair, but it didn’t mean that the worker described in the problem should go on strike either. A strike might stop or slow down the trend toward “de-skilling” workers at this factory, but if other textile companies employed more unskilled workers at lower pay, this business would find it difficult to compete while employing higher-paid, skilled workers. It takes practice for students to figure out underlying problems rather than just how to restate the problem.

- **Point of view**: Students should see the problem from both the owner’s and the consumer’s points of view. If they were the owner, what might they do? (Bring in strikebreakers, circulate rumors to divide workers, etc.)

- **Ask about context**: Students often ask questions about outcomes, rather than context. For this problem, students should ask at least one context-related question. For example: How much of a profit does this company make? (We need to know whether profits are high or low in order to decide if the company is being fair and to determine how long the company can hold out in a strike.) What’s happening to prices in general? (If they are dropping also, maybe the company’s justified in cutting pay.) Have strikes in the textile industry succeeded in the past? Have workers gone on strike against this company before, and have these strikes succeeded? Do people in the town or state view unions or owners more favorably?

- **Ask about analogies**: Important differences may exist between the railroad industry and the textile industry that would allow a railroad strike to succeed, but would cause a textile strike to fail.

- **Goal**: The problem clearly lays out the goals the union leader has, but are these goals realistic, given the changes due to industrialization? Give no credit if the student doesn’t ask whether the goals are realistic.

- **Options**: Students could ask if any other options exist besides going on strike. Should unions try negotiating in a different way? What about arbitration?
• **Unintended consequences:** Students should consider the long-term consequences for the union if it loses the strike. What could happen to the influence of labor in this industry?

• **Play out the option:** Students should consider what could go wrong if workers strike. Could some of the strikers become violent? Will unions be able to keep all the workers from giving in and accepting the factory’s terms? What if the owner brings in strikebreakers?
SOURCES


GUIDE TO
THOUGHTFUL DECISION MAKING

Student Handout 1

Welcome to “Foresight” History!

The problems in the Decision Making in U. S. History series will challenge you to make choices about events in United States history before you know what actually happened in those events. This is learning history in a foresighted way—first you decide, then you find out what really happened—rather than as hindsight history, where you just find out what happened. You will get at least two benefits from this method of learning history: First, you will improve your decision-making skills. Someday, when you avoid buying a “lemon” used car that would have wasted thousands of dollars, you can thank your history teacher for helping you build up your decision-making skills. Second, it’s fun to learn history as though it’s a cliffhanger mystery, where you’re eager to find out if your decision worked or ended in disaster. But don’t forget to concentrate on the actual historical decision that was made and how it turned out. You can learn a lot about your own decision making through these problems, but you’re mainly in class to learn history and to understand what really happened, not what could have happened.

What is Decision Making?

You’ve learned about problem solving in other courses such as math and science, and you’ve encountered problem solving when you’ve tried to build something or fix something. Decision making resembles problem solving in some ways (for example, it involves defining a problem and thinking of alternatives), but it’s different from problem solving in that there is no one right answer. The lessons in this book involve “messy” problems: even long after the event, people often disagree about what the best decision was or should have been.

Decision Making as Experience

Experience teaches you how to make good decisions. Every decision that you make—whether good or bad—better equips you to make good decisions in the future. For example, you would probably feel safer being treated by a doctor who had a lot of experience than by a brand new doctor. The historical problems your teacher gives you will provide you with experience in making decisions in general, and will help you become a better decision maker in your role as a citizen. You won’t just have learned about history, you will have experienced it! For some of these lessons, you will feel that you made good decisions; for others, you may feel that you’ve made errors in judgment. As you go along, try to reflect on your experiences as well as on your thinking about decision making.
**P-A-G-E Guide to Decision Making**

While experience is the most important way to learn to make better decisions, it’s also helpful to learn some basic decision-making skills so that you know what areas to target in order to improve your overall decision making. Handout 2 contains an acronym, **P-A-G-E**, that provides you with guidelines for making better decisions. These aren’t rules you have to follow; they are just meant as helpful tips you can use to improve your thinking about decision making.

Handout 3 explains and gives examples for each part of the **P-A-G-E** guide to decision making. Keep it in your notebook for reference as you make decisions about situations in U.S. history. Every single **P-A-G-E** guideline will not necessarily apply to each decision-making problem you encounter. You (with the assistance of your teacher) will have to determine which guidelines will work best with which problems.
P-A-G-E ANALYSIS FOR DECISION MAKING

Student Handout 2

Decision-Making Analysis

P=Problem:
- Identify any underlying problem: What’s really going on here?
- Consider other points of view: How do others see this situation?
- What are my assumptions? Emotions?

A=Ask for information (about):
- Historical context: What is the history and context of this issue?
- Reliability of sources: Does my information come from experts on this topic? Do the sources have a reason to lie? Is the information supported by evidence?
- Historical analogies: What has been done in the past about situations like this? In what ways do these other situations differ from this situation?

G=Goals:
- What are my main goals? Are they realistic?
- Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical?

E=Effects:
- Predict unintended consequences. What are some long-term effects?
- Play out the options. What could go wrong?
P-A-G-E EXPLANATIONS
AND EXAMPLES

Student Handout 3

PROBLEM

Underlying problem:

Sometimes a decision-making situation will seem very difficult until you recognize that an underlying problem exists. For example, suppose two people come in for marriage counseling because they have been arguing a lot about money. The counselor is going to look for an underlying problem (such as unfulfilled needs) that might have led to spending more money. A student doing poorly in school might turn things around by discovering she needs glasses—the underlying problem. Please remember that you should not just repeat or rephrase the problem: instead, you need to look for what’s behind it, for what’s causing it. Underlying problems are not openly given as part of the decision-making situation—you have to figure them out on your own.

Another way to think of this skill is “the ability to see what is really going on.” Some people call this “framing” the problem: in other words, by putting a “frame” around the heart of the problem and excluding unimportant parts, you discover what’s really important. You need to call on your own personal experiences in order to see what’s really significant. In history, you do this by making analogies. In a sense, you need to say, “The problem we are facing now is like a problem people faced before [this is an analogy], so I’d better do this.” The way you see (or frame, or represent) a problem influences the decision you eventually make.

Example:

Bob’s grades have been much lower for the last three months in history class. He says he’s bored in class, and that he’ll improve his grades when he really needs to.

List at least two possible underlying problems for Bob’s lower grades. What’s really causing his problems?

Other points of view:

Other people are always involved in decisions in history. We need to consider their points of view as we make decisions about history, just as we need to consider other points of view in our own lives today.
Example:
My brother Mark is angry with me for borrowing his car three times. But he’s wrong to be angry. I needed to get to work each time I borrowed the car.

Rewrite this problem from Mark’s point of view.

What are my assumptions? Emotions?

Sometimes after we make a decision, we realize that we had made an assumption that we didn’t even know we were making until it was too late.

Emotions are part of being human, so they represent a legitimate part of the decision-making process. We do, however, need to be aware of our emotions during the decision-making process. Emotions, especially frustration and anger, can sometimes lead us to make irrational choices. People frequently become frustrated and say, “I’ve had enough of this situation. Let’s just do something!” But they often come to regret the rushed choices they made under such circumstances. They would have benefited from saying to themselves, “Okay. I’m getting frustrated, but I still need to take the time necessary to make a good decision.”

Studies have shown that when people feel pessimistic or are in a bad mood, they exaggerate the possible negative consequences of decisions; similarly, when they feel optimistic or are in a good mood, they overestimate positive consequences.

Emotions and gut feelings are unavoidable and natural, but thinking the situation through is crucial to making good decisions. We wouldn’t want the President to decide about nuclear missiles in Cuba based solely on his gut feeling—we’d want him to gather information, consider several options, predict the possible consequences for millions of people, and so forth. As decision makers, we need to account for the role of emotion and gut feelings in our decisions and be aware of them as we choose.

Example for assumptions:
Player to teammate: “We’ll have no trouble beating Central. After all, Central lost to Suburban, and we beat Suburban the first game of the year.”

What is this player assuming?

Example for emotions:
Suppose you have two children and are trying to decide whether to buy life insurance. An insurance ad shows a boy who can’t go to college because his father died and had no life insurance.

To what emotion does the ad appeal?
**ASK**

**Ask about historical context (history of the issue; context in the world):**

Asking questions about both the historical background and the present context of a problem are both essential for getting the information necessary to make a good decision. If you don’t know the background, you will have difficulty deciding on the best solution. Every problem has a backstory, and we need to find out what that story is. The key is to ask questions that will help you obtain the necessary information.

**Example:**
You are 17 years old, and you have been thinking about buying a car. You work part time after school, about ten hours per week. Your parents have told you that you’ll have to pay for the car yourself. You go to a used car dealership and the salesman shows you a used car that costs $2000.

What questions should you ask before you buy it?

**Ask about reliability of sources:**

Information is crucial to making good decisions, but we need know what the sources of our information are and consider the reliability of those sources. Basing a decision on bad information from questionable sources is a recipe for disaster. You can evaluate sources by asking if the person giving the information has a reason to lie, if the person is a primary source, if other sources support this information, if the person is an expert on the topic, what the person’s bias is on the topic, or if the person has been reliable in the past.

You should always be probing for disagreements among sources. Be wary if no disagreements seem to exist. It might mean your advisers are engaging in “groupthink,” where they all get pulled to the same option without thoroughly thinking through other options or considering what could go wrong. Always try to find people who disagree with a proposed option. If you can’t find one, ask tough questions yourself.

**Example:**
The car salesman says this used car is in perfect condition.

How reliable is the salesman? What reasons might you have to distrust him?

**Ask about historical analogies:**

It’s natural to compare the problems we encounter to other, similar situations that have occurred in the past. In fact, one reason we study history in the first place is to build a deeper understanding of our world today through learning about historical events/analogies. You should try to think of analogies to the problems you encounter. As mentioned above in the section on underlying problems, you derive your understanding of what is important in a problem (framing) from analogies. (Example: “This problem is
like that situation George Washington was in at Trenton during the American Revolution.”) The more you draw on your knowledge of history, the more likely you are to fully understand a decision-making problem.

However, analogies are tricky because important differences often exist between the problems we encounter now and the historical cases we use to guide our decisions. We should always evaluate analogies by asking, “How do the two cases differ? In what ways are they similar? Are they similar enough to justify the conclusion?” We should also consider whether other, more appropriate analogies exist that could provide us with better guidance.

Example:
Suppose you drove in a race at a parking lot near a mall a month ago. You raced your five-year old Toyota Corolla, and your time was 36.8 seconds. Margaret told you that she drove in a race last Sunday and her time was 28.2 seconds. She says this proves she is a better race driver than you are.

What are two questions you could ask to determine whether Margaret is really a better driver?

GOALS

What are my main goals? Are they realistic?

We can’t make good decisions if we are unclear about our goals. Once we establish goals, we can more easily set priorities and use them as a basis for choosing between options.

However, establishing goals isn’t enough. The goals we set need to be realistic. Some decisions in history have been catastrophic because the decision makers didn’t notice that they had unrealistic goals. It didn’t matter how carefully they exercised their other decision-making skills—because their goals were unrealistic, they would never achieve them.

Example:
You’re out of school and need a job, since you live on your own and have expenses (rent, car payments, food, heat, insurance, etc.). You’ve got two offers. The first one is close to where you live and pays a lot more money, but it’s doing work you wouldn’t like. The second job is farther away and pays less money (but enough to cover your expenses), but it’s doing something that you really like.

What do you do? After you decide, list your goals and ask how realistic they are.

Generate options to help achieve my goals. Are they ethical?
After you’ve made a decision, you don’t want to be stuck thinking, “Oh, I wish I’d thought of that option before I decided!” At the same time, though, you don’t want to become paralyzed trying to think of every possible option, no matter how remote. Nevertheless, important decisions should spur us to take the time to consider a number of options. We should also consider whether the options we come up with are ethical.

Example:
You are 25 years old, single, work full-time ten miles from where you live, and drive your compact car to work. In recent months, gas prices have risen to very high levels. Your main goal at this point is to save money.

What options do you have for coping with these price increases?

**EFFECTS**

**Predict unintended consequences:**

Most of the time, predicting unintended consequences will be more important than any other thinking you do about a problem. For some problems, it may be enough just to see the situation from other points of view or to ask questions about background or context. However, considering consequences will do more to help you avoid that awful feeling you get when you’ve made a bad decision.

Example:
Suppose you are 35 years old and have a son and a daughter, ages five and two. The company you work for is asking you to move to a different state. You can refuse and take a pay cut.

If you make the move, what unintended consequences might it have on you and your family in ten years? Guess at what the effects of the move might be.

**Play out the option. What could go wrong?**

Here, you need to think about short-term effects, as opposed to predicting unintended consequences, which focuses more on long-term effects. For example, say you’re playing the role of president and decide to get a law passed to help solve a problem. You have to take into account the fact that Congress has the constitutional power to pass laws, and thus to get your law enacted you need to convince Congress to approve it. By noticing that the approval of Congress is vital to the success or failure of your decision, you’ve identified something that could go wrong, and need to plan accordingly (overcoming opposition by talking to individual members of Congress, thinking of another option as backup, etc.).

Example:
Suppose you are 30 years old and working at a job you like pretty well. You get an offer to work at a job for higher pay that is further away.

If you take the job, what might happen? List two or more things that could go wrong.
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EVALUATING DECISION MAKING

Student Handout 5

The following paragraph shows the thinking of a union leader of textile workers in 1890:

“The company has cut wages twice in the last two years. People can’t live on these wages! Also, the company keeps making skilled workers into unskilled workers. They just tell a skilled worker, for example, that his job is being eliminated. But he isn’t being fired—he can take an unskilled job at lower pay. That’s outrageous! Our union needs to go on strike to stop the pay cuts and stop the change of jobs from skilled to unskilled. Just in the past two years, the Knights of Labor have had two successful strikes against railroads in the Northwest. When we win the strike, we’ll have better pay and more job security.”

Evaluate the thinking of this union leader according to four criteria of P-A-G-E. Choose the most important aspects of P-A-G-E for this problem. List things that are parts of P-A-G-E, not P-A-G-E itself. For example, under “P” you could write down “Other points of view”; you could not write down “Problem.”

P:

A:

G:

E:
THE GILDED AGE

Introduction

OVERVIEW
This volume on the Gilded Age consists of 13 lessons arranged in mostly chronological order, although the lesson on business (Lesson 1) is not limited to any particular point during the Gilded Age. The lessons in this volume deal with business, labor, government policies, farmers, taxes, and elections. Questions of race are not dealt with except as they come up incidentally as parts of the problems here; other volumes in the Decision Making in U.S. History series will discuss race-related issues in greater depth.

SKILLS GRID FOR THIS VOLUME

X = part of lesson
E = emphasized in the lesson

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LESSON 1: ETHICS, BUSINESS, AND GOLD, 1870–1905

Teacher Page

OVERVIEW
Some view industrial leaders in the Gilded Age as innovative businessmen, while others regard them as “robber barons.” Will students engage in the unethical practices of the robber barons? Will they make sound business decisions?

VOCABULARY
- Gilded Age—The time period from about 1870 to 1900; implies a layer of gold on the surface, but rotten underneath
- Pool agreement/cartel—Businessmen agree to divide up an area, with each company taking control of a different part. With less competition, prices go up.
- Laissez-faire—French for “let things alone”; refers to a policy of keeping the government out of the economy
- Rebate—Money back on a purchase or service. The rebates Rockefeller got were secret, which is what made them different.
- John D. Rockefeller—Wealthy oil industrialist
- Cornelius Vanderbilt—Wealthy railroad industrialist
- Stocks/dividends—Stock is partial ownership of a company. When the company makes a profit, the stockholders are paid dividends, and the value of the stock generally goes up.
- Fixed costs—Costs that do not change with changing prices or changing production. For example, farmland is a fixed cost.
- Andrew Carnegie—Wealthy steel industrialist
- Robber barons—Ultra-wealthy industrialists who acquired their fortunes through unethical means
- Philanthropy—The practice of giving large amounts of money to charity

DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED
- Consider effects/consequences—anticipate problems
- Look for the underlying problem
- Consider ethicality
- Ask questions
LESSON PLAN

A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (two 40-minute class periods)

Procedure:

Explain to students that the time period from 1870 to 1905 is known as the “Gilded Age.” Ask students if they know what “gilded” means, then ask them why they think this period was referred to as “gilded.” After a short discussion, tell students that the focus of today’s lesson is on the reasons why this time period is called the Gilded Age. Distribute Handout 1 and have students pair up. Assign each pair to discuss a particular problem from the list below and make a decision on it. Students who finish early can discuss the other problems. Bring the class back together and ask groups to explain their choices. The whole class discusses and then votes on each problem.

When all six problems have been discussed and voted on, distribute Handout 2 (outcomes). Ask students how ethical they feel these choices are. Explain that the term “Gilded Age” implies something of low quality that is being concealed underneath a layer of gold. Do they now see how the term implies a time that seemed attractive on the surface but was unethical underneath? Mark Twain coined the term; he meant to highlight the greed and unethical business practices of the time—practices that some of the students may also have adopted in this lesson.

You can teach a good amount of specific content in discussing the responses to the six problems. The specific content is included below in the suggested answers to each problem. This may appear to be a simple, short lesson, but students always want to discuss the issues, which takes a long time!

Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what they would have done differently, if anything, now that they know the outcomes. Ask them which decision-making skills were especially important in making decisions about these issues. Which of the letters of P-A-G-E did they feel were particularly relevant to this problem? (See the “Decision-Making Analysis” section below for ideas.) Since there are so many problems in this lesson, all the decision-making skills are grouped together at the end of the problem analysis. The description of each skill also notes to which problems it applies. Ask students what they think they did well or poorly in terms of P-A-G-E. Discuss their answers or have students write their answers in their journals or in their decision-making logs.

Putting the Actual Decisions into Historical Context:

Ask students: Did certain historical factors cause the high level of corruption in the Gilded Age? What might these historical factors have been? (Possible causes: rapid industrialization created more places/opportunities to make money and more people
looking for quick money who could be more easily cheated; the high value American society placed on individualism; a laissez-faire economic philosophy prevented government from intervening and preventing corruption, so it was “every man for himself.”

Troubleshooting:

Some students may have difficulty understanding the difference between pool agreements (illegal) and trusts (legal). The following concrete example may help: Suppose you and I cheated someone at poker and then agreed to divide the money 50/50. I’d have a tough time suing you in court if you didn’t give me my share of the money, since we couldn’t have made a legal agreement concerning money we gained by cheating during an illegal activity (gambling). Pool agreements are in the same vein.

Some students may have trouble understanding why Gould decided to print more stock. The best way I’ve found to get students to understand is to role-play it. Have the student be Vanderbilt, buying the stock, while you play Gould, who just keeps printing more stock and making more money. Students will ask a lot of questions, and gradually more and more of them will say, “Oh, I get it.”

B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (10–20 minutes)

Only do one or two of the problems instead of all six. Another way to keep it short is to have students make their choices as homework. For each item, ask them to vote on their choices to see how many would make each decision. After problem 6, distribute Handout 2 and have them read and comment on it for homework. In the next class, you could discuss key points. I have found, however, that students have a strong desire to discuss these decisions and issues!
TEACHER NOTES FOR
EXPANDING DISCUSSION
(For outcomes for students, see Handout 2)

PROBLEM 1—RAILROADS

How many students support the idea of *laissez-faire* (letting the market run without interference)? Would someone who set up pool agreements be considered a *laissez-faire* advocate? (No—pool agreements interfere with the process of supply and demand, and thus affect prices as well.)

PROBLEM 2—OIL REFINERY

John D. Rockefeller demanded and got the secret rebates and then used them to drive out almost all his competitors in the oil refining business.

PROBLEM 3—STEEL

The decision whether to adopt the new machine depends on how much steel the company produces. If little is being produced, the machine is too expensive. The machine represents a high fixed cost, so you need a high level of production in order to pay for it. Andrew Carnegie brought in new machinery because his factories produced large quantities of steel. Did students ask questions about the company’s production level? (They should have.)

Ask students what industries today use machinery to cut costs. (Possible answers: toll booths, post offices, auto plants, etc.)

PROBLEM 4—SELL OIL REFINERY?

This is a good example for showing that people are not just economic beings. Attitudes about right and wrong, prejudices, and many other beliefs make people act in more complicated ways than just to make money.

PROBLEM 5—ERIE RAILROAD

The problem and outcome descriptions are oversimplified in order to aid student understanding. Gould and his friends on the Erie actually issued bonds for expansion of the railroad that could be converted into stock. They got around the first injunction through a technicality; they then bribed a different judge to allow them to float more bonds (to convert to stocks).
When Gould bribed New York State legislators the first time, Vanderbilt paid higher bribes and defeated the bill. The second time, Gould paid higher bribes. The legislators were hoping for this kind of competitive bribing so they could make some money.

After Gould went to New Jersey, Vanderbilt hired thugs to drag him back to New York and get his money back. Gould responded by hiring men to protect him. This problem is meant to give students an idea of how common unethical business practices were in the Gilded Age, not to teach them the finer points of investment banking and stock manipulation.

**PROBLEM 6—PHILANTHROPY**

What does philanthropy show about the U.S.? Andrew Carnegie believed that people should not pass on their wealth to their children. Basically, he felt that rather than receiving inheritances, people should have to earn the money on their own. How do students feel about this view? Is there still philanthropy today? (Yes, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, for example.)

**DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:**

P = Problem

* - Identify any underlying problem
  - Consider other points of view
  - What are my assumptions? Emotions?

A = Ask for information (about)

* - Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)
  - Reliability of sources
  - Historical analogies

G = Goals

- What are my main goals? Are they realistic?
  * - Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical?

E = Effects

* - Predict unintended consequences
  - Play out the options. What could go wrong?

* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

**Identify the underlying problem:** Students should consider that the action proposed as a solution might not resolve the underlying problem. This is a factor in Problem 1. The underlying problem for businessmen is too much competition. There may be better solutions to this problem than informal pool agreements that can be easily broken. A better solution may be for businesses to merge. Legal trusts were also set up so that companies appeared to be separate but were actually working together legally.
**Ask questions:** In Problem 4, students need to ask how much steel was being produced at the time or at least what the market was like for steel. Without this crucial information, students cannot make a reasonable decision.

**Consider ethicality:** Problems 1, 2, and 5 involve ethical questions that may generate discussion from students: Is it right to swindle people when your actions are legal? In other words, does legal equal ethical?

**Predict unintended consequences:** Students should consider what they would do in Problem 1 if the other person were to break the agreement. Did they envision this possible consequence? Did students consider how Vanderbilt would react in Problem 5?
SOURCES


Henretta, James, David Brody, Susan Ware, Marilyn Johnson. *America’s History*. Boston: Bedford, 2000, Volume 2, Chapter 17.


LESSON 1: ETHICS, BUSINESS, AND GOLD, 1870–1905

**Vocabulary**

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- **Philanthropy**—The practice of giving large amounts of money to charity
LESSON 1: ETHICS, BUSINESS, AND GOLD, 1870–1905

You are a businessman (or possibly a businesswoman, but there were very few at the time) in the Gilded Age. What choices would you make in each of the following cases? Make a decision, and then explain why you made it.

1. Competition has been fierce in the railroad business in the 1870s in your area (Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey, and New York). Companies have been cutting prices all over the place. Many have gone bankrupt because they can’t make a profit. You, a railroad company owner, could make a secret agreement with other railroad companies in the area to keep prices from falling too low. You could agree to divide the area up so that on each route (say, Philadelphia to Pittsburgh) only one or two railroads operate, meaning that prices could be set a little higher. Would you make such an agreement? Explain.

2. You run an oil refinery in Cleveland in the 1870s, competing with 15 other oil companies in the area. Every barrel of oil costs about $1.10 to ship by rail at this time. You could go to the railroad company you use and ask for a secret rebate of 15 cents per barrel (you’ll get back 15 cents, so your real shipping cost will be 95 cents). The railroad owner will be afraid that you’ll switch to a different railroad if they don’t agree to your price. If you’re paying less to ship your oil, you’ll be able to drive some of the other oil companies out of business without them even knowing why you’re selling so cheaply. Then there will be less competition and you’ll be able to make more money. Would you ask for secret rebates? Explain.

3. There’s a new machine for cutting and forming steel. Buying it costs $100,000 (in 1870 dollars, when a worker made about $500 per year). Would you buy it for your steel business? Explain.
4. You own a small oil refining company in Cleveland. John D. Rockefeller has offered to buy your company for $25,000. He says that if you don’t sell, he’ll undercut your prices and drive you out of business. You estimate your company is worth $40,000. But no one else will buy your company because of Rockefeller’s cutthroat reputation. Will you sell out to Rocky? Explain.

5. You own the Erie Railroad in the 1870s. You’re involved in a business war with the owner of the New York Central Railroad, Cornelius Vanderbilt. Which of the following would you do:
   A. Vanderbilt wants to buy your company out by purchasing more than half of all the stock in the Erie Railroad. When he has more than 50% of the stock, he’ll control the company. You could just print more stock so that no matter how much Vanderbilt buys, he’ll never have more than 50% of the stock, and thus he’ll never have control. You could also make millions of dollars by printing more stock because Vanderbilt will likely buy all the stock you print.
   B. You could pay off legislators to pass a law allowing you to use tactics that might be unethical, such as printing more stock. No one could prosecute
you if you can get the law passed because printing more stock would then be legal.

C. One of the companies that ships on your railroad is U.S. Express. They depend on your business, so if you don’t renew their shipping contract they’ll be in big trouble financially: their stock would likely drop by over 70%, from $60.00 per share to $16.00 per share. You could buy all the stock at the very low price of $16.00 and then change your mind and renew the U.S. Express contract after all. The price of U.S. Express would return to its original level of around $60.00 per share. You’d be buying thousands of shares at $16.00 and reselling them for $60.00. You’ll make millions of dollars in a couple of weeks—not bad!

6. If you make a fortune from your company, would you engage in philanthropy (giving to charity)? If so, to which charities would you donate, and how much would you give? Would you pass your millions on to your children?
LESSON 1: ETHICS, BUSINESS, AND GOLD, 1870–1905

Student Handout 2

OUTCOMES

PROBLEM 1—RAILROADS

What Actually Happened:

Many railroads formed pool agreements or cartels to keep profits up. Unfortunately for these businesses, since these agreements were not legal contracts and thus were unenforceable, they were regularly broken. Here’s what often happened: Companies would sign pool agreements to each charge a certain price. As soon as they left the meeting, one of them would drop their price below the one specified in the agreement in order to steal customers from the other businesses.

PROBLEM 2—OIL REFINERY

What Actually Happened:

John D. Rockefeller demanded and got the secret rebates, then used them to drive out almost all his competitors from the oil-refining business.

PROBLEM 3—STEEL

What Actually Happened:

Andrew Carnegie brought in new machinery because he was producing so much steel that almost any machine tended to save him much more in production costs than it cost him to buy it. However, the problem didn’t say that you were Andrew Carnegie and it didn’t specify how much steel your company manufactured. If you only produced a small amount, the new machinery would bankrupt you. You should have asked about production quantity. For example, if you made 100 tons of steel per year and the machine saved you $1.00 on each ton, it would take you 1000 years to get your money back! If you did ask, nice going! If you didn’t ask, your decision could have lost your company a lot of money.
PROBLEM 4—SELL OIL REFINERY?

What Actually Happened:

All the companies eventually sold out to Rockefeller or went out of business. The ones that sold out earlier got a better deal. Some people didn’t sell out because they felt what Rockefeller was doing was wrong. They preferred to lose money rather than to give in to such a cutthroat businessman.

PROBLEM 5—ERIE RAILROAD

What Actually Happened:

The Erie Railroad leaders, especially the notorious Jay Gould (shown at right), did all three of these things. Gould printed more stock, even though a judge ruled it illegal. Since selling this extra stock was only illegal at the time in New York, Gould simply hopped a ferry to New Jersey, carrying with him $10 million of Vanderbilt’s money! Later, he paid bribes to New York state congressmen, who passed a law making the stock printing legal. This law allowed Gould to come back to New York to run the Erie Railroad.

Gould made approximately $3 million by driving down the price of U.S. Express stock to $16, buying thousands of shares, then deciding to renew the contract (which brought the price back up to $60 per share), and selling his shares. Remember, however, that the original shareholders of U.S. Express, who sold their declining stock, lost the $3 million that Gould made.

Another time, Gould tried to buy up all the gold in the United States (a practice known as “cornering” the market; it would have allowed him to charge exorbitant prices for the gold), which caused a financial panic in the country, throwing thousands of people out of work.

One of Gould’s most creative strategies occurred when Cornelius Vanderbilt was trying to drive the Erie Railroad out of business by dropping the shipping price for cattle on the New York Central (Vanderbilt’s competing railroad) from $125 to just $1. Vanderbilt was satisfied when he saw that Erie cattle cars were empty. What he didn’t know was Gould had bought up all the cattle available and shipped them on Vanderbilt’s railroad for the tiny shipping cost, thereby making a huge profit!

The actions of Jay Gould and his friends at the Erie Railroad, as much as any other events of the Gilded Age, led to the term “robber baron,” which describes an ultra-wealthy industrialist who acquired his fortune through unethical business practices.
PROBLEM 6—PHILANTHROPY

What Actually Happened:

Many industrial leaders engaged in philanthropy for various causes. Here are some of the institutions they established: Carnegie-Mellon University, Carnegie libraries, Rockefeller Center, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Vanderbilt University. Read Student Handout 3 to get an idea of what Andrew Carnegie thought about philanthropy and inheritance. How do your views compare to his?
LESSON 1: ETHICS, BUSINESS, AND GOLD, 1870–1905

Student Handout 3

Primary Source: The Gospel of Wealth (excerpt)
By Andrew Carnegie

We start, then, with a condition of affairs under which the best interests of the race are promoted, but which inevitably gives wealth to the few…What is the proper mode of administering wealth after the laws upon which civilization is founded have thrown it into the hands of the few? And it is of this great question that I believe I offer the true solution. It will be understood that fortunes are here spoken of, not moderate sums saved by many years of effort, the returns from which are required for the comfortable maintenance and education of families. This is not wealth but only competence, which it should be the aim of all to acquire.

There are but three modes in which surplus wealth can be disposed of. It can be left to the families of the decedents; or it can be bequeathed for public purposes; or, finally, it can be administered during their lives by its possessors. Under the first and second modes most of the wealth of the world that has reached the few has hitherto been applied. Let us in turn consider each of these modes.

The first is the most injudicious. In monarchical countries, the estates and the greatest portion of the wealth are left to the first son that the vanity of the parent may be gratified by the thought that his name and title are to descend to succeeding generations unimpaired. The condition of this class in Europe today teaches the futility of such hopes or ambitions. The successors have become impoverished through their follies or from the fall in the value of land…Why should men leave great fortunes to their children? If this is done from affection, is it not misguided affection?…

As to the second mode, that of leaving wealth at death for public uses, it may be said that this is only a means for the disposal of wealth, provided a man is content to wait until he is dead before it becomes of much good in the world. Knowledge of the results of legacies bequeathed is not calculated to inspire the brightest hopes of much posthumous good being accomplished. The cases are not few in which the real object sought by the testator is not attained, nor are they few in which his real wishes are thwarted. In many cases the bequests are so used as to become only monuments of his folly…

The growing disposition to tax more and more heavily large estates left at death is a cheering indication of the growth of a salutary change in public opinion. The state of Pennsylvania now takes—subject to some exceptions—one-tenth of the property left by its citizens. The budget presented in the British Parliament the other day proposes to increase the death duties; and, most significant of all, the new tax is to be a graduated one. Of all forms of taxation, this seems the wisest. Men who continue hoarding great
sums all their lives, the proper use of which for public ends would work good to the community, should be made to feel that the community, in the form of the state, cannot thus be deprived of its proper share. By taxing estates heavily at death the state marks its condemnation of the selfish millionaire’s unworthy life…

There remains, then, only one mode of using great fortunes; but in this we have the true antidote for the temporary unequal distribution of wealth, the reconciliation of the rich and the poor—a reign of harmony—another ideal, differing, indeed, from that of the Communist in requiring only the further evolution of existing conditions, not the total overthrow of our civilization. It is founded upon the present most intense individualism, and the race is prepared to put it in practice by degrees whenever it pleases. Under its sway we shall have an ideal state in which the surplus wealth of the few will become, in the best sense, the property of the many, because administered for the common good; and this wealth, passing through the hands of the few, can be made a much more potent force for the elevation of our race than if it had been distributed in small sums to the people themselves. Even the poorest can be made to see this and to agree that great sums gathered by some of their fellow citizens and spent for public purposes, from which the masses reap the principal benefit, are more valuable to them than if scattered among them through the course of many years in trifling amounts…

This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of wealth: first, to set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and after doing so to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds which he is called upon to administer, and strictly bound as a matter of duty to administer in the manner which, in his judgment, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community—the man of wealth thus becoming the mere agent and trustee for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves…

In bestowing charity, the main consideration should be to help those who will help themselves; to provide part of the means by which those who desire to improve may do so; to give those who desire to rise the aids by which they may rise; to assist, but rarely or never to do all. Neither the individual nor the race is improved by almsgiving. Those worthy of assistance, except in rare cases, seldom require assistance. The really valuable men of the race never do, except in cases of accident or sudden change. Everyone has, of course, cases of individuals brought to his own knowledge where temporary assistance can do genuine good, and these he will not overlook. But the amount which can be wisely given by the individual for individuals is necessarily limited by his lack of knowledge of the circumstances connected with each. He is the only true reformer who is as careful and as anxious not to aid the unworthy as he is to aid the worthy, and, perhaps, even more so, for in almsgiving more injury is probably done by rewarding vice than by relieving virtue…

Thus is the problem of rich and poor to be solved. The laws of accumulation will be left free; the laws of distribution free. Individualism will continue, but the millionaire will be
but a trustee for the poor; entrusted for a season with a great part of the increased wealth of the community, but administering it for the community far better than it could or would have done for itself. The best minds will thus have reached a stage in the development of the race in which it is clearly seen that there is no mode of disposing of surplus wealth creditable to thoughtful and earnest men into whose hands it flows save by using it year by year for the general good.

This day already dawns. But a little while, and although, without incurring the pity of their fellows, men may die sharers in great business enterprises from which their capital cannot be or has not been withdrawn, and is left chiefly at death for public uses, yet the man who dies leaving behind him millions of available wealth, which was his to administer during life, will pass away “unwept, unhonored, and unsung,” no matter to what uses he leaves the dross which he cannot take with him. Of such as these the public verdict will then be: “The man who dies thus rich dies disgraced.”

Such, in my opinion, is the true gospel concerning wealth, obedience to which is destined some day to solve the problem of the rich and the poor, and to bring “Peace on earth, among men goodwill.”

**QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS**

1. How do your views on wealth, philanthropy, and inheritance compare to Carnegie’s?
2. What do Carnegie’s views reveal about the time period?
3. What if all wealthy industrialists held these views? How would society be different?
LESSON 2: BUSINESS AND LABOR POLICIES, 1870–1905

Teacher Page

OVERVIEW
This lesson focuses student attention on the owner/management perspective on labor relations in the Gilded Age. It only explores large businesses (over 100 employees), which certainly had different policies and experiences with labor than did small businesses. As with the other lessons in this series, it makes no effort to be comprehensive. Instead, it offers several interesting decision-making problems for students to ponder. I have oversimplified the complex scientific management system, since all students basically need to know is that it was about efficiency. This lesson provides students with the owner’s perspective; the worker’s perspective is analyzed in Lessons 3, 4, and 5.

The problems in this lesson are related to workers and unions in general, as opposed to strikes in particular, since business decisions about how to handle strikes (strikebreakers, using thugs to provoke violence, hiring guards, or negotiating) are part of Lesson 4.

VOCABULARY
- **Gilded Age**—Time period from about 1870 to 1900; implies gold on the surface, but rotten underneath
- **Productivity**—Output per worker per hour
- **Soldiering**—Slacking off; not working hard
- **Skilled/unskilled workers**—Skilled workers have knowledge and skills necessary to do a specific job and get paid more than unskilled workers.
- **Foremen**—Managers/supervisors who know the overall job, not just one part of it.
- **Piecework**—Workers are paid by how much they produce, not by the hour.
- **Stock**—Partial ownership of a company
- **Pension**—Workers pay into it for retirement benefits
- **“Yellow dog” contract**—A job applicant must sign a pledge that he/she will not join a union.
- **Scrip**—Wages paid in currency that can be used only at a company store
- **Company store**—Offers goods, generally at inflated prices and often on credit that must be paid back before the workers can quit the company
- **Frederick Taylor**—The father of scientific management
- **Scientific management**—Finding the best way to perform each specific task and getting workers to do it that way
- **Pullman Palace Car Company**—Maker of luxury railroad passenger cars
DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED

- Consider ethicality
- Ask questions
- Consider other points of view
- Predict unintended consequences
LESSON PLAN

A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (one to two 40-minute class periods)

Procedure:

Tell students that as the country industrialized during the Gilded Age, business owners tried different approaches for dealing with their workers. The decisions in this lesson involve only large businesses. Students need to remember that while the number of big businesses steadily increased, most companies were still small, and the majority of urban workers were employed by smaller businesses.

Have students answer the decision-making problems on Handout 1 as homework. In class, divide them into small groups, with each group responsible for deciding one of the problems (wages, unions, working conditions, Taylorism, Pullman). If a group finishes early, those students should discuss another problem from the handout. Bring the class back together and discuss the first problem: wages. The group assigned this problem should then explain its decision to the class, with students giving reasons for their choice. The class should then vote on which alternatives it would pursue in terms of wages. Repeat this process for the other four problems. At the end, distribute Handout 2, which explains what owners actually did.

Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what they think they did well or poorly in terms of P-A-G-E. Have students comment on their decision making in their journals or in their decision log. Since there are so many problems in this lesson, all the decision-making skills are grouped together at the end of the analysis of the five areas (17 individual problems). The description of each skill notes to which problems it applies.

Putting the Actual Decisions into Historical Context:

Ask students what they see as trends in the ways large companies treated their workers toward the end of the Gilded Age and in the early 20th century (more scientific approaches based on gathering information, using stopwatches, etc.; more improvements in working conditions). Why do they think businesses made these changes? (Possible answers: public opinion was becoming more sympathetic to workers; government was more favorable towards regulating business; workers fought for their rights; the influence of scientific attitudes due to industrialization; a more educated workforce; World War I.)

Troubleshooting:

Students have great difficulty differentiating between productivity and production. Reinforce the concept of productivity after students have read it in the introduction to Problem 1 simply by asking what it means and how it differs from production.
B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (10–20 minutes)

Only do Part A (wages/benefits) from Handout 1, or just focus on Problem 2 (hire Frederick Taylor?). Follow the procedure above for groups and discussion, or simply get a show of hands and then reveal the actual decisions (Handout 2).
TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION
(For outcomes for students, see Handout 2)

PROBLEM 1—STEEL FACTORY

What Actually Happened:

Some companies paid far above the going wage for skilled workers. In 1914 (after the Gilded Age) Ford Motor Company paid above the going wage for both skilled and unskilled workers. The experiment worked out well for Ford. Companies that pay more get more applicants. If companies hire carefully, they can get a better, more highly motivated workforce.

Numerous companies tried welfare work (represented in this lesson by numbers 5–8, 14, and 15), including National Cash Register, Filene’s, Proctor & Gamble, H.J. Heinz, Solvay Process Company, U.S. Steel, Goodyear Tire, and United Shoe Machinery Company.

In the section on unions (numbers 9–10), companies also used scabs (strikebreakers) and blacklisting. However, the lesson does not focus on this. (See Lesson 4 for more about such methods.)

Company unions (number 12) became popular in the 1920s. Since they increased communication between management and workers, they often worked well to resolve issues. However, since owners sponsored company unions, workers often felt a lack of independence. Company unions fell apart during the Great Depression.

Welfare work (numbers 14–15) had very little effect on strikes and other labor problems, much to the disappointment of owners who tried it. Interestingly, companies that employed more women were more likely to implement welfare work. Most steel companies did not do much with welfare work, but the largest, U.S. Steel, did so extensively and remained profitable.

PROBLEM 2—FREDERICK TAYLOR

Tell students who have this problem that they can get the answer to one of the three questions listed on Handout 1, but they must decide as a group which one they want answered.

Answers to Questions:

1. Who is this Taylor guy, anyway? What’s his background?
Taylor had already demonstrated the effectiveness of using bent handles when he won the United States doubles championship in tennis, using a bent-handle racket of his own design! He had an engineering degree and worked for years at the Midvale Steel Company (another large steel company), where he made numerous suggestions for improving worker productivity. He had been a consultant for the last six years, during which he has had five companies hire his consulting services.

2. What’s the damage? How much money is he asking for?

Taylor is asking for a few thousand dollars. Each year, hundreds of employees shovel millions of tons of different types of coal into your furnaces and railroad cars. It’s one of your largest expenses. Also, Taylor will be looking at your whole factory for ways to improve efficiency.

3. Has anyone else adopted the Taylor method? How did it work out?

Yes, others have. His methods worked well at a large bearing factory, as well as at four other companies. The bearing factory increased production from 5 million bearings to 17 million bearings per month. Costs were much lower, efficiency was much higher, and wages rose 80% for many workers. Unfortunately, the market for bearings became unfavorable, so the company went out of business despite the lower costs and increased output.

What Actually Happened:

Numerous articles appeared in the 1890s in business journals about making factories more efficient, so Frederick Taylor wasn’t alone in seeking improved management techniques. Rather, he represented a general desire for a more systematic approach to managing workers in large factories.

The gains in production were impressive at companies which adopted Taylor’s methods: Midvale rose 100%, Bethlehem 50–75%, Santa Fe Railroad 50–75%, Tabor 250%, and Link Belt 200%.

Debate exists as to the possible negative effects of the Taylor method, as outlined in Handout 2, Problem 2. Taylor’s supporters say the negative effects of his method were almost all due to the excesses of followers who misapplied his goals and strategies. They claim that Taylor genuinely wanted a better workplace for workers, in which there would be open communication between workers and managers, managers would serve the interests of workers, and workers would receive higher pay—for less stressful work.

On the other hand, Taylor often told an anecdote about a worker named Schmidt (not the worker’s real name) in which he revealed great prejudice, referring to Schmidt as little more than an “intelligent gorilla.”
The primary source provided gives students a chance to read Frederick Taylor’s own words. The two questions will help students reflect on their decisions.

**PROBLEM 3—RAILROAD CARS**

What Actually Happened:

The workers resented the cut in pay, especially considering the fact that the rents in the company town of Pullman remained the same (not described in this lesson; see Lesson 4 on strikes for more information). The workers pointed out that dividends paid to stockholders continued at 8%, while workers’ pay was cut. Why, the workers asked, didn’t the stockholders have to share in the cuts to some extent?

**DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>P = Problem</th>
<th>- Identify any underlying problem</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* - Consider other points of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What are my assumptions? Emotions?</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>A = Ask for information (about)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* - Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Reliability of sources</td>
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<td>- Historical analogies</td>
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<tr>
<th>G = Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- What are my main goals? Are they realistic?</td>
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<tr>
<td>* - Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical?</td>
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<table>
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<th>E = Effects</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>* - Predict unintended consequences</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Play out the options. What could go wrong?</td>
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* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Predict unintended consequences:** Consequences are noted in the outcomes described in Handout 2.
- **Consider ethicality:** Is there an ethical problem with using yellow dog contracts, spies, company stores, and/or scrip? Do these methods violate worker rights? Students will disagree, but the important point is to be conscious of the ethical choices involved.
- **Point of view:** Students should consider the point of view of the workers. Some workers will see welfare work as a way to control workers and coax them away from unions.
- **Ask questions:** Questions are given for Problem 2 (Frederick Taylor), so students don’t need to think of questions for that one. Instead, they should think of
questions to help make good decisions for Problems 1 and 3, about wages (for example, how easy is it to train new unskilled and skilled workers? Are immigration rates high? Are pensions important to workers?), unions (Have unions caused too much trouble for businesses? Are unions that bad to work with?), working/living conditions (Do workers respond to better conditions by working faster?), and the railroad car company (What’s going to happen if dividends are cut? How have cuts in dividends affected businesses in the past?).
SOURCES


LESSON 2: WORKIN’ FOR THE MAN—
BUSINESS AND LABOR POLICIES,
1870–1905

Vocabulary

- Gilded Age—Time period from about 1870 to 1900; implies gold on the surface, but rotten underneath
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- Scientific management—Finding the best way to perform each specific task and getting workers to do it that way
- Pullman Palace Car Company—Maker of luxury railroad passenger cars
LESSON 2: WORKIN’ FOR THE MAN—
BUSINESS AND LABOR POLICIES,
1870–1905

Student Handout 1

PROBLEM 1—STEEL FACTORY

You are the owner of a large steel factory in 1890, employing over 3000 workers. You are concerned about the cost and productivity (output per worker per hour) of labor. If you can raise productivity, you can cut your costs. For example, if a worker makes $1.00 per hour and produces ten units of steel each hour, then your cost is 10 cents per unit ($1.00/10 = 10¢). If worker productivity increases to 20 units per hour, your cost drops by half to five cents per unit ($1.00/20 = 5¢). If you can increase productivity, you can then increase wages (for example, to $1.20 per hour) and still lower your costs. Of course, you could also keep wages the same and increase your profits even more.

A number of labor problems exist in your factory. First, many workers engage in “soldiering”—that is, deliberately working at a slower pace. Second, there is a shortage of skilled workers, which slows down production and increases wage rates. Third, there are unions and strikes. Some skilled workers have joined unions, but few unskilled workers are in unions. Naturally, unions fight for higher pay and better working conditions. This has led to numerous strikes in the steel industry, including two at your factory, both of which ended up leading to small improvements for workers. Working conditions are a concern at your factory. Many workers get injured and some die each year in accidents.

The managers of workers are called foremen. Each foreman is responsible for hiring workers and for making sure they complete all the jobs. Most foremen are former laborers who have worked their way up to
management. They know the working aspects of steel production. They tend to use “rule-of-thumb” thinking, rather than strict rules.

Put a checkmark next to each option you would implement at your factory, and explain why.

A. Wages/benefits:

____ 1. Raise wages above those of other steel factories for SKILLED workers.

____ 2. Raise wages above those of other steel factories for UNSKILLED workers.

____ 3. Pay workers by how much they produce per hour, a practice called “piecework.” For example, a worker would be paid two cents per piece or three cents per pound, rather than $2.00 per hour. In other words, the faster they work, the more they are paid.

____ 4. Pay workers the lowest wage offered by other steel factories, and make them work as hard as possible. When they leave, simply hire new workers.

____ 5. Allow workers to buy stock in the company so that they have an incentive to see the company prosper. A stockholder is part owner of the company. If the company does well, the value of the stock goes up. Therefore, workers who own stock would have motivation to work harder to make the company do better.

____ 6. Pay people to develop new machinery for performing simple tasks, thus replacing many skilled and unskilled workers.
7. Offer pension (retirement) benefits for those workers who stay with the company for a long time (say, 30 years). Give workers insurance coverage so that they will still have money if they get injured on the job.

8. Offer paid vacations—for example, one week of vacation after an employee has worked at your factory for two years.

B. Unions:

9. Make job applicants sign a contract pledging that they won’t join a union before they can work at your company.

10. Hire spies to pose as workers so that they can keep you informed on union activity. When you discover who the union organizers are, fire them.

11. Pay workers in scrip rather than in cash. Scrip can only be used to buy goods at the company store that you set up for your workers.

12. Create company unions, in which elected representatives of the workers meet with management and work towards agreement on issues.
C. Working and living conditions:

___ 13. Set up a town for your workers. The housing would be better than the housing in neighboring towns, and you could put in a church, a library, and other services that would provide a decent quality of life. You could even name it after yourself!

___ 14. Provide lunchrooms, lockers, latrines, dressing rooms, and clean workspaces for workers (including good lighting, safety equipment, and exhaust fans for clean air).

___ 15. Provide social clubs, recreational facilities (for example, tennis courts), and special holiday events (parades, children’s games) for workers.

PROBLEM 2—SHOULD WE HIRE FREDERICK TAYLOR?

It’s 1899; you’re still the owner of the steel factory described in Problem 1, called Bethlehem Steel. A man named Frederick Taylor comes to you and claims that he can increase the efficiency of your workers, thereby lowering your costs. He argues that for every job in the factory, there must be one way to do it that works better than any other way. For example, there are many ways to shovel coal into railroad cars, but only one way is the most efficient. By using scientific management, he can determine the best way and adopt it throughout the Bethlehem factories. For example, you can try shovels with handles at different angles, or you can experiment with placing the coal piles at different places in relation to the railroad cars. All the while, you will time the different methods to see which works the fastest.

Taylor asks a high fee for his consulting services to increase the efficiency of your workers, and he will require that you hire some new people, such as clerks for recording information and teachers for training workers to move more efficiently. He says he can complete the job in two years. Will you hire Taylor? Explain your choice.
To assist you in making your decision, your teacher will provide you with the answer to one of the questions below:

1. Who is this Taylor guy, anyway? What’s his background?
2. What’s the damage? How much money is he asking?
3. Has anyone else adopted the Taylor method? How did it work out?

**PROBLEM 3—RAILROAD CAR FACTORY**

It is 1894. You run a company that makes railroad cars in Illinois. Since a depression started last year, the demand for railroad cars has dropped a great deal. Your company has lost almost half its sales of railroad cars due to lower bids by other companies. You’ve had to cut the price of your railroad cars by more than 10% to keep selling them. Which of the following will you do? Explain.

A. Cut back on production of cars and lay off (fire) some workers.
B. Cut the amount of dividends you pay to stockholders from 8% to 4% or 2%.
C. Cut workers’ wages by 20%.
LESSON 2: WORKIN’ FOR THE MAN—BUSINESS AND LABOR POLICIES, 1870–1905

Student Handout 2

OUTCOMES

PROBLEM 1—STEEL FACTORY

What Actually Happened:

Different companies and industries experimented with various methods to raise productivity and lower costs.

A. Wages/benefits:

#1–4, 6: Most companies offered the lowest wages possible, but it was hard to keep skilled workers at these salaries because there was a shortage of skilled workers. Cutting wages to the lowest level in the industry leads to higher worker turnover (low pay means more workers quit sooner). Although this made it more difficult for workers to organize into unions, companies that tried this encountered the unintended consequence of a slowdown in production due both to the time needed to train new workers and to the time lost because these new workers made more mistakes. Some companies concluded that they would save money in the long run if they paid higher wages in order to attract better workers and reduce turnover.

Workers didn’t like piecework. They felt that if they produced an increased number of pieces per hour, management would just cut the pay per piece.

Using machinery to replace workers provided the main method for cutting labor costs in factories at this time. Companies needed to install new machinery in order to stay competitive with other businesses. They assumed that the machinery would actually cut overall costs enough to pay for its purchase and installation.

#5, 7, 8: Very few companies offered stocks, paid vacations, pension plans, or insurance. All these programs increased costs without giving much incentive to work harder. Both hard workers and lazy ones would benefit equally from the stock plans, paid vacations, and pensions. However, the incentives did help reduce turnover. As explained earlier, companies eventually realized that keeping workers longer helped avoid the costs of training new workers while helping the factory function more efficiently.
B. Unions:

#9–10: Many companies effectively used spies and “yellow dog” contracts (meaning that as a condition of employment, workers had to sign a pledge not to join a union) against unions. These methods kept union activity down, but caused a great deal of resentment against those owners who used them.

#11: In rural areas, where other stores were not available, many businesses (especially mining companies) set up company stores and issued scrip. Company stores could charge exorbitant prices for their goods because they had no competition and scrip couldn’t be used anywhere else. Workers had no choice but to shop there; however, they quickly realized that company stores were ripping them off, which led to massive resentment.

#12: Only a few businesses offered company unions during the Gilded Age. Most companies felt that even though such unions could lead to happier, more productive workers, it cost too much to create and maintain them.

C. Working and living conditions:

#13: A few wealthy business owners set up company towns as a way to help existing workers and recruit better ones. In good economic times, these model towns provided better living conditions than many workers could find otherwise. However, when the economy declined or when conflict arose between workers and management, most workers saw the owner more as a tyrant who controlled all aspects of their lives, rather than as a kind-hearted benefactor. The following quote from an unknown resident of the company town of Pullman, Illinois, illustrates this resentment: “We are born in a Pullman house, fed from the Pullman shop, taught in the Pullman school, catechized in the Pullman church, and when we die, we shall be buried in the Pullman cemetery and go to Pullman hell.”

#14–15: These improvements were referred to as “welfare work.” Some improvements cost companies very little, while others were expensive. Most companies in the Gilded Age did not make these improvements, but businesses that did try welfare work often saw it produce a healthier, more productive workforce. The question was whether the increased production by workers could offset the cost of the improvements. Results varied from business to business.

**PROBLEM 2—FREDERICK TAYLOR**

**What Actually Happened:**

Bethlehem Steel hired Taylor, sparking a significant change in the steel industry. Taylor’s ideas of scientific management saved thousands of dollars for Bethlehem Steel. The number of men needed to shovel coal, for example, dropped from 600 to 140. Costs for handling material dropped from eight cents to four cents. If you hired Taylor, you increased wages by 60% while saving Bethlehem Steel $71,000 in 1901!
Unintended consequences:

- Other steel companies quickly adopted Taylor’s methods in order to stay competitive. As word spread of the efficiency of Taylor’s methods, companies across the country adopted them. His ideas then spread to Germany, Italy, France, Russia, and Japan, among other countries. Taylor’s methods were implemented not just in factories, but also in offices, schools, kitchens, and hospitals.
- The effects of scientific management were profound. Many more white-collar (skilled) jobs were generated. Productivity increased by as much as an extra 1% per year, according to some economists. This resulted in higher wages and lower prices, and therefore created an increase in average per capita income. Societies that adopted “Taylorism” benefited overall. A strong case can be made that Frederick Taylor was one of the most influential people of his time.
- Some workers hated scientific management. Many lost their jobs (an intended consequence for some companies), while others resented the greater regimentation and control that Taylorism brought and felt pressured having someone hovering over them with a stopwatch. To some workers, scientific management took the individuality out of work. Everyone had to do the job the same way—the “right” way. Workers became part of an efficiency machine, not creative individuals. (See Handout 3, which is from a book by Frederick Taylor. Does this primary source show that Taylor was trying to help workers, control them, or both?) However, many other workers liked Taylor’s methods. These workers made more money and often had more breaks on the job.
- Taylor’s idea—to simplify tasks down to their smallest part—led to the use of more machinery, which reduced the number of skilled workers (an intended consequence for most businesses, but did you intend for this to happen in the case of Bethlehem Steel?).
- Many foremen also opposed Taylor because they felt that his methods lessened the value of their expertise. The rule-of-thumb knowledge that had made them valuable employees was now threatened by the scientific management system, which placed a greater value on clerks keeping statistics. In other words, who would need a foreman when the details of how to do things were already laid out by the Taylor system?

PROBLEM 3—RAILROAD CARS

What Actually Happened:

The actual company, the Pullman Palace Car Company, fired some workers and cut the wages of the rest.

Unintended consequence:

These actions led to the famous Pullman Strike. The workers complained that the company hadn’t reduced dividends, and thus had unfairly placed the bulk of the problem on labor. If you fired workers and cut wages, you lost money in the strike, but you may have made it back after the strike, since the workers lost and had to accept lower wages.
LESSON 2: WORKIN’ FOR THE MAN—
BUSINESS AND LABOR POLICIES,
1870–1905

Student Handout 3

Primary Source: *The Principles of Scientific Management* (excerpt)
By Frederick Taylor

**CHAPTER I—FUNDAMENTALS OF SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT**

The principal object of management should be to secure the maximum prosperity for the employer, coupled with the maximum prosperity for each employee…

In the same way maximum prosperity for each employee, means not only higher wages than are usually received by men of his class, but, of more importance still, it also means the development of each man to his state of maximum efficiency, so that he may be able to do, generally speaking, the highest grade of work for which his natural abilities fit him, and it further means giving him, when possible, this class of work to do…

The truth of this fact is also perfectly clear in the case of two men working together. To illustrate: if you and your workman have become so skillful that you and he together are making two pairs of shoes in a day, while your competitor and his workman are making only one pair, it is clear that after selling your two pairs of shoes you can pay your workman much higher wages than your competitor who produces only one pair of shoes is able to pay his man, and that there will still be enough money left over for you to have a larger profit than your competitor…

The elimination of “soldiering” and of the several causes of slow working would so lower the cost of production that both our home and foreign markets would be greatly enlarged, and we could compete on more than even terms with our rivals. It would remove one of the fundamental causes for dull times, for lack of employment, and for poverty, and therefore would have a more permanent and far-reaching effect upon these misfortunes than any of the curative remedies that are now being used to soften their consequences. It would insure higher wages and make shorter working hours and better working and home conditions possible…

Under the best day work of the ordinary type, when accurate records are kept of the amount of work done by each man and of his efficiency, and then each man’s wages are raised as he improves, and those who fail to rise to a certain standard are discharged and a fresh supply of carefully selected men are given work in their places, both the natural loafing and systematic soldiering can be largely broken up…
The body of this paper will make it clear that, to work according to scientific laws, the management must take over and perform much of the work which is now left to the men; almost every act of the workman should be preceded by one or more preparatory acts of the management which enable him to do his work better and quicker than he otherwise could. And each man should daily be taught by and receive the most friendly help from those who are over him, instead of being, at the one extreme, driven or coerced by his bosses, and at the other left to his own unaided devices.

This close, intimate, personal cooperation between the management and the men is of the essence of modern scientific or task management...

At least 50,000 workmen in the United States are now employed under this system; and they are receiving from 30 per cent to 100 per cent higher wages daily than are paid to men of similar caliber with whom they are surrounded, while the companies employing them are more prosperous than ever before. In these companies the output, per man and per machine, has on an average been doubled. During all these years there has never been a single strike among the men working under this system. In place of the suspicious watchfulness and the more or less open warfare which characterizes the ordinary types of management, there is universally friendly cooperation between the management and the men.

**QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS**

1. Does this excerpt show that Taylor wants to help workers, control them, or both?
2. Now that you have read Taylor’s own words, would it have changed your decision whether to hire him?
LESSON 3: UNIONS, 1867–1900

Teacher Page

OVERVIEW
This lesson focuses on the ideas and strategies behind unions in the late 1800s, rather than on the unions themselves. It makes students consider questions like whom to recruit, what issues to emphasize, and what tactics to adopt in order to achieve their goals. Students then compare their decisions in each of these areas to the actual decisions of the three major unions in the late 1800s.

VOCABULARY
- National Labor Union—Existed from 1866 to the mid-1870s; focused on idealistic goals such as worker cooperatives
- Knights of Labor—Idealistic national union that existed from about 1869 to 1886; included both skilled and unskilled workers; led by Terence V. Powderly
- American Federation of Labor—Union for skilled workers; led by Samuel Gompers
- Skilled and unskilled workers—Skilled workers have a skill which is not easily taught to a new worker
- Graduated income tax—Plan which taxes higher-income people at a higher percentage
- Strike—Laborers refuse to work until their demands are met
- Arbitration—Workers and owners agree that another person or persons will hear both sides of the dispute and make an impartial decision

DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED
- Identify underlying problem
- Identify assumptions
- Generate options
- Predict unintended consequences
LESSON PLAN

IN-DEPTH LESSON (one class period, 40–50 minutes)

Procedure:

Give students Handout 1 and have them work in small groups to list the types of workers they would recruit, as well as the issues and strategies they would adopt. Next have each group report its decisions to the class.

Handout 2 contains a list of actual groups, issues, and strategies for students to consider, almost all of which come from the three major unions. You can see which items correspond with which unions by looking at the suggested answers section. It’s possible to skip the first handout and just teach from Handout 2; however, if you do this you would miss the chance for students to list union groups, issues, and strategies without knowing what the unions actually tried. Students would lose the opportunity to generate their own options and to examine their own assumptions about the underlying problems for workers.

Give students the second handout and instruct them to work in groups to make their choices. Bring students back together as a class and ask each group to explain their choices.

Decision-Making Strategies:

**Handout 1:** When you have them explain the reasons for their choices, underlying problems, assumptions, and preconceptions will emerge. Focus attention by asking about these directly. For example, suppose students say they would focus on education. You could ask, “So if education is an issue, what does that mean the underlying problem is here?” (Possible response: Uneducated workers can be paid less and are more likely to remain poor.) Some suggestions for what the three major labor unions considered underlying problems are listed on the “Suggested Answers for Teachers” page.

**Handout 2:** At some point, ask what the effects/consequences would be for particular decisions. Some possible consequences are noted on the “Suggested Answers for Teachers” page. You could also assign students to read about the successes and failures of the major unions. You wouldn’t want to give that assignment, however, before you teach Lesson 4 on strikes, since the outcome of strikes is one of the keys to the success or failure of the unions. You don’t want students to already know how the strikes turned out before they have to make decisions about what to do in those strikes.

Reflecting on Decision Making:

Hand out or tell the class the outcomes, then ask students what they’ve learned from hearing about these results and consequences. Next, ask what decision-making skills they
found especially important in deciding these issues. Which of the letters of **P-A-G-E** were particularly relevant to this problem? (See the Decision-Making Analysis section on the “Suggested Answers for Teachers” page for ideas.) Discuss students’ answers, or have them write their answers in their journals. Compare the students’ proposals (Handout 1) or decisions on the proposals (Handout 2) to what the unions actually did (Handout 3).

**Putting the Actual Decisions into Historical Context:**

Ask students to what extent they think the goals and strategies of the unions were realistic. How successful were unions in improving the lives of workers? To what extent did the successes and failures of unions reflect historical trends in the United States in the Gilded Age? (For example, rapid industrialization led to workers becoming less skilled; social Darwinist philosophy; the Social Gospel movement; *laissez-faire* philosophy; urbanization; immigration; the high value American society placed on individualism—the Horatio Alger myth, etc.)

Historians have observed that the United States was the only western industrializing society in the 19th century that did not develop an independent working class movement (like the labor or socialist parties in Europe). What do the experiences of these unions show us about why that happened?

**Troubleshooting:**

Ask how many students have jobs. Categorizing their jobs as skilled and unskilled will help them better understand these concepts.

**B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (15–30 minutes)**

Only use Handout 2. The best way to keep the lesson short is to give students the handout and instruct them to work in groups to make their choices. Bring students back together as a class and ask groups to briefly explain their choices. Unlike the in-depth lesson above, do not discuss possible consequences or other decision-making skills. Instead, give students the handout showing the outcomes in each area and instruct them to read about the three major unions at the time (the NLU, the Knights, and the AFL). After students have read about the unions, you could discuss how and why student choices differed from those of the actual unions, as well as how and why they were sometimes similar (assuming they were).

Alternatively, you could distribute Handout 2 and have students make their choices as homework. In the next class, ask how many voted for each item. Discuss a few of their choices. Give students Handout 3 (which lists the outcomes) and ask them why they think their choices were similar and/or different. Which goals and strategies worked well and which didn’t? What lessons did students learn from this unit?
TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

(For outcomes for students, see Handout 3)

HANDOUT 1—HOW BEST TO HELP LABOR?

What Actually Happened:

Different unions made different choices in each of these areas. The choices of the three big unions are explained in the suggested answers to Problem 2.

DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

P = Problem
  * - Identify any underlying problem
    - Consider other points of view
  * - What are my assumptions? Emotions?

A = Ask for information (about)
  - Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)
  - Reliability of sources
  - Historical analogies

G = Goals
  - What are my main goals? Are they realistic?
  * - Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical?

E = Effects
  - Predict unintended consequences
  - Play out the option. What could go wrong?

* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- Identify underlying problems/identify assumptions: Students should consider what their choices reveal about their assumptions concerning the underlying problems of labor in the late 1800s. Correctly identifying the underlying problem was a key factor for labor unions in deciding whom they would allow to join, what to target as major issues, and which strategies to adopt. The differences in perspective on the underlying problem of labor emerge when examining the positions of the three major unions:
  - NATIONAL LABOR UNION—Saw the underlying problem as the loss of independence and dignity for labor. Laborers used to own their tools and worked independently. Now the company owned the tools and also
determined the length of the workday, the location of employment, and pace of the work. NLU leaders felt industrial labor had become “wage slavery.” They also believed that an oversupply of workers existed, so the union opposed immigration and (with some exceptions) female membership. They wanted men to make a high enough wage to provide sole support for their families; they did not want women to have to work. The **assumption** was that men should work to support the family and that women should stay home to care for the family. This is part of what historians have referred to as the “cult of domesticity.”

- **KNIGHTS OF LABOR**—Saw the **underlying problem** as the loss of independence and dignity for labor (the same as the NLU). According to the Knights, cutthroat competition and the concentration of wealth in the hands of fewer and fewer capitalists had destroyed the balance between owner and worker. The Knights also believed that men should make enough to support the family, but they allowed women into the union in order to unify all workers in the struggle against business. Their **assumption** was that Chinese immigration hurt American workers, yet they had no problem with European immigration.

- **AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR**—Saw the **underlying problems** as low wages and poor working conditions, as opposed to issues concerning the freedom and dignity of workers. Like the other two unions, the AFL felt that men should make enough to support the family; consequently (like the NLU), they generally excluded women. Their **assumption** was that an oversupply of workers existed, so they too opposed immigration.

- **Generate options:** Students should come up with a wide variety of strategies. It should be interesting to see how their strategies compare to those decided by the three major unions. Did students miss options that the unions identified? Did they identify strategies that the unions missed?

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**HANDOUT 2—HOW BEST TO HELP LABOR?**

**What Actually Happened:**

The three unions adopted positions as outlined in Handout 3, which you can distribute or read to students. Historians differ in their opinions of the Knights of Labor: some regard the Knights as impractical dreamers, while others see them as practical because of the stress the union placed on issues such as arbitration. Some historians view the Knights as backwards-looking/opposed to industrialization because the union called for a return to more traditional ways in order to restore the dignity of labor; others claim the Knights were progressive, seeing them as willing to compromise and accept the new industrial order. Historians also disagree about the extent to which the Knights adhered to a working-class agenda or were divided by ethnic and religious loyalties.

The American Federation of Labor adopted a policy of “prudential” (cautious) unionism, under which they avoided strikes unless they felt they had an excellent chance of success.
AFL president Samuel Gompers distrusted both union intellectuals who lectured about Marxist class antagonisms and ignorant workers who resorted to violence that turned public opinion against labor and often resulted in government intervention on the side of management. Gompers favored small strikes with specific, reachable goals. He believed that large-scale strikes led to disorganization, violence, and ultimately defeat.

**DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:**

| P = Problem | - Identify any underlying problem  
| | - Consider other points of view  
| | * - **What are my assumptions?** Emotions? |
| A = Ask for information (about) | - Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)  
| | - Reliability of sources  
| | - Historical analogies |
| G = Goals | - What are my main goals? Are they realistic?  
| | - Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical? |
| E = Effects | * - **Predict unintended consequences**  
| | - Play out the option. What could go wrong? |

* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Identify assumptions:** In the process of discussing choices, you can ask questions about the assumptions that students make. Some assumptions are identified in the suggested answers for Problem 1.
- **Predict unintended consequences:** Students should consider the consequences of their choices, which could include:
  - It’s easy to replace unskilled workers with strikebreakers (scabs) when conflicts occur between labor and management; bear this in mind when deciding whether to allow unskilled workers to join.
  - Violence, if it occurs, may cause the public to turn against unions.
  - Any laws the government passes may get struck down by the courts.
  - Proposing an overthrow of the wage system could also turn public opinion against the unions. The public may see such ideas as radical and too similar to “foreign” ideas of socialism or anarchism.
  - Having too many goals may confuse the situation and prevent students from achieving the most important goals.
Further Research:

The History Matters Web site has several primary sources on unions, including the text of Gompers debating Morris Hillquit on socialism and a speech on “pure and simple unionism” by an AFL leader. You may find these at http://www.historymatters.gmu.edu. Search for “American Federation of Labor.”
SOURCES


Knights of Labor Web site. Available at: www.knightsoflabor.org


“‘Pure and Simple’: Making the Case for Unionism.” History Matters. Available at: http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5037/
LESSON 3: UNIONS, 1867–1900

Vocabulary

- National Labor Union—Existed from 1866 to the mid-1870s; focused on idealistic goals such as worker cooperatives
- Knights of Labor—Idealistic national union that existed from about 1869 to 1886; included both skilled and unskilled workers; led by Terence V. Powderly
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- Skilled and unskilled workers—Skilled workers have a skill which is not easily taught to a new worker
- Graduated income tax—Plan which taxes higher-income people at a higher percentage
- Strike—Laborers refuse to work until their demands are met
- Arbitration—Workers and owners agree that another person or persons will hear both sides of the dispute and make an impartial decision
LESSON 3: UNIONS, 1867–1900

HOW BEST TO HELP LABOR?

By the late 1800s (after 1870), many workers in America—some skilled, but most unskilled—labored in factories (in industries such as steel, meatpacking, and textiles) or in coal mines. Others worked in service industries, such as banks or department stores, or as secretaries and nurses. Still others were skilled workers—carpenters and bricklayers, for example.

Suppose you are the leader of a labor union at this time.

A. Who (which groups of people or types of workers) would you allow in or recruit for your union? Who would you exclude?

B. What issues and goals would you emphasize?

C. What strategies would you use to accomplish your goals?
LESSON 3: UNIONS, 1867–1900

Student Handout 2

WHAT WILL YOU DO TO BENEFIT LABOR?

Suppose you are the leader of a labor union at this time. Below is a list of groups, issues, and strategies that your union might want to adopt. For each of these three areas (groups, issues, and strategies), decide what your union would do.

Groups:
Cross out those you would exclude.

Men       Women
African Americans        European immigrants
Chinese immigrants        Skilled workers
Unskilled workers        Farmers
Children under age 15

Issues:
Which of these would you emphasize (E)? Number your top three issues 1–3. Which would you not emphasize (N)?

- Lobby the government to create a Department of Labor
- Decrease the workday from 10 or 12 hours to 8 hours
- Establish cooperatives for workers (for example, groups of shoemakers would sell directly to stores, not to wholesalers) in order to create solidarity and to save money
- Reserve western land for settlers, not speculators
- Reform the money supply so that prices can rise, which would help farmers
- Replace “wage slavery” (i.e., the system of workers’ total dependence on owners) with a more cooperative system between owners and workers
- Stop new immigration
- Abolish child labor
- Equal pay for equal work (For example, nutritionists, who have masters degrees and responsibility for counseling patients, should be paid the same as other people with masters degrees and similar responsibilities)
- A graduated income tax, under which the rich pay a higher percentage in taxes than the poor
- Government ownership of telephone, telegraph, and railroads
- Overthrow the wage system; replace it with worker ownership of factories
- Higher wages
- Better working conditions
- Universal public education
Strategies:
Identify the top three strategies you would adopt.

- Organize a third party and run candidates for office
- Lobby legislatures to pass laws favorable to labor
- Recruit as many new members as possible through lectures, newspapers, parades, sporting clubs, and cooperatives
- Organize cooperatives to build solidarity among workers and to save money
- Push for arbitration (meaning that workers and owners agree to have another person or persons hear both sides of the dispute and make an impartial, binding decision) rather than strikes
- Focus on strikes
- Increase dues to save money for strikes (strike funds)
- Increase dues to pay for sickness, funeral, and unemployment benefits for workers
- Use violence—destroy property, and, if necessary, fight the police or soldiers
LESSON 3: UNIONS, 1867–1900

OUTCOMES: WHAT UNIONS ACTUALLY CHOSE

What Actually Happened:

The three big unions adopted the following positions regarding groups allowed in, issues, and strategies:

NATIONAL LABOR UNION
- **Allowed in:** Skilled and unskilled workers; farmers; men. Women were excluded. African Americans formed their own national union, but the NLU did not work with it because of the racist attitudes of NLU leaders and members.
- **Issues:**
  - Create a Department of Labor in government
  - Establish an eight-hour workday
  - Set up cooperatives
  - Reserve western land for settlers, not speculators
  - Reform the money supply in order to allow prices to rise
  - Overthrow the system of “wage slavery” and restore workers’ independence
- **Strategies:** Political action—they ran some third-party candidates and tried to get laws passed (eight-hour day, Department of Labor)

KNIGHTS OF LABOR
- **Allowed in:** Skilled and unskilled (except bartenders and lawyers); African Americans (as well as whites); all ethnic groups except Chinese; women (as well as men)
- **Issues:** (See the primary source on Student Handout 4, “Platform of the Knights of Labor, 1886”). Since so many different groups were included, a wide variety of issues existed:
  - Set up cooperatives
  - Reserve western land for settlers, not speculators
  - Abolish child labor
  - Equal pay for equal work
  - Graduated income tax (the rich pay a higher percentage than the poor)
  - Establish an eight-hour workday
  - Government ownership of telephone, telegraph, and railroads
  - Ideally, overthrow the wage system
- **Strategies:**
  - Never officially involved in electoral politics, but many local labor parties formed under them
- Recruited as many new members as possible through lectures, newspapers, parades, sporting clubs, and cooperatives
- Arbitration rather than strikes. Official union policy opposed strikes, but local assemblies still would sometimes choose to go on strike for better wages and hours. A split developed between the Knights’ cautious leaders (who opposed strikes) and the more confrontational regular members, called the rank and file.

**AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR**

- **Allowed in:** Only skilled workers; almost exclusively white men—very few women or African Americans. Samuel Gompers favored allowing African Americans and women in, but lost the fight.
- **Issues:** (“Pure and simple unionism,” as AFL leader Adolph Strasser put it)
  - Higher wages
  - Better working conditions
  - Shorter workday (eight hours) in order to reduce unemployment (since more workers would be needed)
  - Opposed to new immigration
  - Some members were socialists who wanted to overthrow the wage system. In 1894, the AFL narrowly rejected a socialist proposal to overthrow the capitalist system. Thereafter, it stuck to “bread and butter” issues.
- **Strategies:**
  - Focus on strikes
  - Increase dues to save money for strikes (strike funds) and to pay for sickness, funerals, and sometimes unemployment benefits.
  - No focus on getting the government to pass laws, since the courts often struck down such legislation
  - Stay out of politics as much as possible. The AFL was organized as a loose federation of craft unions. For example, those in the building trades (carpenters, bricklayers, etc.) would organize on their own and fight for higher wages, sometimes with the financial support of the general AFL.
LESSON 3: UNIONS, 1867–1900

Student Handout 4

Primary Source: *Knights of Labor Platform, 1886*

**Preamble of the Knights of Labor**

The alarming development and aggressiveness of great capitalists and corporations, unless checked, will inevitably lead to the pauperization and hopeless degradation of the toiling masses. It is imperative, if we desire to enjoy the full blessings of life, that a check be placed upon unjust accumulation, and the power for evil of aggregated wealth. This much-desired object can be accomplished only by the united efforts of those who obey the divine injunction, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”

Therefore we have formed the **Order of the Knights of Labor**, for the purpose of organizing and directing the power of the industrial masses, not as a political party, for it is more—in it are crystallized sentiments and measures for the benefit of the whole people, but it should be borne in mind, when exercising the right of suffrage, that most of the objects herein set forth can only be obtained through legislation, and that it is the duty of all to assist in nominating and supporting with their votes only such candidates as will pledge their support to these measures, regardless of party. But no one shall, however, be compelled to vote with the majority, and calling upon all who believe in securing the greatest good to the greatest number, to join and assist us.

**Declaration of Principles**

We declare to the world that our aims are:

1. To make industrial and moral worth, not wealth, the true standard of individual and national greatness.
2. To secure to the worker the full enjoyment of the wealth they create, sufficient leisure in which to develop their intellectual, moral, and social faculties; all of the benefits, recreation and pleasures of association; in a word, to enable them to share in the gains and honors of advancing civilization.

In order to secure these results we demand of the State:

3. The establishment of bureaus of labor statistics, that we may arrive at a correct knowledge of the educational, moral and financial condition of the laboring masses.
4. That the public lands, the heritage of the people, be reserved for actual settlers; not another acre for railroads or speculators, and that all lands now held for speculative purposes be taxed at their full value.
5. The abrogation of all laws that do not bear equally upon capital and labor, and the removal of unjust technicalities, delays, and discriminations in the administration of justice.

6. The adoption of measures providing for the health and safety of those engaged in mining, manufacturing, and building industries, and for indemnification to those engaged therein for injuries received through lack of necessary safeguards.

7. The recognition by incorporation of trades unions, orders, and such other associations as may be organized by the working masses to improve their condition and protect their rights.

8. The enactment of laws to compel corporations to pay their employees weekly in lawful money for the labor of the preceding week, and giving mechanics and laborers a first lien upon the product of their labor to the extent of their full wages.

9. The abolition of the contract system on national, state, and municipal works.

10. The enactment of laws providing for arbitration between employers and employed, and to enforce the decision of the arbitrators.

11. The prohibition by law of the employment of children under fifteen years of age in workshops, mines, and factories.

12. To prohibit the hiring out of convict labor.

13. That a graduated income tax be levied.

And so demand at the hands of Congress:

14. The establishment of a national monetary system, in which a circulating medium in necessary quantity shall issue direct to the people, without the intervention of banks; that all the national issue shall be full legal tender in payment of all debts, public and private; and that the government shall not guarantee or recognize any private banks, or create any banking corporations.

15. That interest-bearing bonds, bills of credit, or notes shall never be issued by the government, but that, when need arises, the emergency shall be met by issue of legal tender, non-interest-bearing money.

16. That the importation of foreign labor under contract be prohibited.

17. That, in connection with the post-office, the government shall organize financial exchanges, safe deposits, and facilities for the deposit of the savings of the people in small sums.

18. That the government shall obtain possession, by purchase, under the right of eminent domain, of all telegraphs, telephones, and railroads, and that hereafter no charter or license be issued to any corporation for construction or operation of any means of transporting intelligence, passengers or freight.

And while making the foregoing demands upon the State and national government, we will endeavor to associate our own labors to:

19. To establish co-operative institutions, such as will tend to supercede the wage system, by the introduction of a co-operative industrial system.

20. To secure for both sexes equal pay for equal work.
21. To shorten the hours of labor by a general refusal to work for more than eight hours.
22. To persuade employer to agree to arbitrate all differences which may arise between them and their employees, in order that the bonds of sympathy between them may be strengthened, and that strikes may be rendered unnecessary.

**QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS**

1. In what ways does the Knights’ platform show them to be practical? In what ways does it show them to be idealistic?
2. What does the platform reveal about the time period?
LESSON 4: STRIKES, 1877–1894

Teacher Page

OVERVIEW
This lesson focuses on labor/management conflicts—specifically, on four strikes that occurred between 1877 and 1894. It includes lists of questions that students can ask to integrate the historical context into their decisions, and handouts describing management’s point of view for three of the strikes so that students can consider other points of view. Predicting effects is important in this lesson, since all the strikes had unintended consequences.

VOCABULARY
• Great Railroad Strike of 1877—A violent, disorganized strike against the railroad companies; the workers ultimately lost
• Depression—Economic condition characterized by a large drop in the GDP and high unemployment
• Union—A worker organization that aims to improve working conditions and wages
• Strikebreaker/scab—A worker hired to take a striker’s job during a strike
• Homestead Strike—An unsuccessful strike against Carnegie steel in 1892
• Lockout—A situation in which workers are ordered out of a business factory and the business is shut down
• American Federation of Labor—Led by Samuel Gompers; believed in “bread and butter issues,” such as higher pay, better working conditions, shorter hours
• Andrew Carnegie—Industrialist who established Carnegie Steel
• Henry Frick—Manager of the Homestead factory during the 1892 strike
• Pinkertons—Private detectives often hired to break strikes; frequently acted more like soldiers than detectives and would often resort to violence
• Blacklist—A list of workers not to be hired in an industry
• Coeur d’Alene Strike—Miners in Idaho were crushed in this 1892 strike
• American Railway Union—Led by Eugene Debs; supported the Pullman workers in the 1894 strike and lost
• Injunction—An order from a judge to stop a certain action
• Attorney General Richard Olney—Issued the order to put mail cars on the trains in order to break the Pullman Strike
• Eugene Debs—Leader of the American Railway Union during the Pullman Strike
• Pullman Strike—Workers in the Pullman factories and the American Railway union were crushed in this 1894 strike
• George Pullman—Owner of the Pullman Palace Car Company and the town of Pullman; workers went on strike in 1894 when he cut wages but kept rents the same
DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED:

- Consider other points of view
- Ask questions about context
- Predict unintended consequences
LESSON PLAN

A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (one to two 40-minute class periods)

Procedure:

Give students Handout 1 and have them read all the problems, then make decisions as to what they would decide in each case. (Alternatively, have students do this as homework.) Next, divide the class into small groups, assign one of the four problems to each group, and have the group come to a decision about what to do. Bring the class back together and have each group explain its decision to the class, giving reasons why the workers should or should not go on strike. After each group explains its decision, have the whole class vote whether to strike. After the vote, read the outcome of the strike to the students and ask them what they think they did well or poorly in terms of P-A-G-E.

Decision-Making Strategies:

You can emphasize asking questions by focusing on Problems 2 (Homestead) and 4 (Pullman) from Handout 1. Have each group choose one (or two) questions to ask. When they have made their selection(s), instruct them to come to the teacher’s desk to get the printed answers to their specific questions (the answers appear below, in the “Suggested Answers” section for those three strikes; copy the answers in advance and separate them into piles by number). A different method that has worked well in my classes is to have the class vote on which two questions they’d like to hear. Read the responses for the top two vote getters.

You can focus on point of view by using Handout 2, which describes the owners’ perspective for Problems 2 (Homestead) and 4 (Pullman). For those two strikes, you can have one group of students make a decision from the workers’ point of view and a second group decide from the owners’ point of view. Have the students assigned the workers’ point of view give their decision and explain the reasons behind it. Next, have the students assigned the owners’ point of view give their decision and explain the reasons behind it. Finally, ask students if they would have made different choices had they known what the other side was thinking.

Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what, if anything, they would have done differently had they known the outcomes. Which decision-making skills were especially important in deciding these issues? Which of the letters of P-A-G-E were particularly relevant to this problem? (See the Decision-Making Analysis section below for ideas.) Since the P-A-G-E analysis is done only once for all four strikes combined, the “Suggested Answers for Teachers” pages for this lesson includes a “Key Decision-Making Skills” section for each strike. Ask students what they think they did well or poorly in terms of P-A-G-E. Discuss their
Putting the Actual Decisions into Historical Context:

This lesson may give students the impression that strikes were less successful than they actually were. Therefore, remind students that in reality about 60% of strikes during the Gilded Age succeeded. (Two of the descriptions of the problems in this lesson mention successful strikes that had occurred earlier.) However, 40% of strikes during this time did fail. Ask students what they think the underlying causes were for the failure of so many workers’ strikes. What historical forces cause strikes? Why do workers lose so often? (Possible responses: Industrialization concentrated large numbers of workers together and also often made working conditions worse, which led to strikes; Americans’ belief in private property and individualism sometimes led people to view unions and their actions negatively; American capitalists often used their wealth to control the press in order to sway public opinion, or to influence the government to aid them during a strike.)

Troubleshooting:

If students struggle to understand union-related concepts, such as the difference between skilled and unskilled workers, doing Lesson 3 (Unions) first will help. Students who have difficulty understanding the complicated circumstances of some of the strikes would benefit from a role play about the situation just prior to the strike: Have one student play the owner and give the owner’s arguments (but not the motives or strategy), and have the other student do the same for the workers.

B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (20–30 minutes)

You could make the lesson shorter by having students focus on just one of the strikes.
TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION
(For outcomes for students, see Handout 3)

PROBLEM 1—WILL YOU STRIKE IN 1877?

What Actually Happened:

The owner of the railroad, Jay Gould, is reported to have said at one point, “I’ll hire half the workers to kill the other half.” He may have been kidding, but it does illustrate the power he felt he had over his workers.

Key Decision-Making Skills:

- **Ask questions about the situation:** The key is to ask if there’s union support or any kind of coherent organization. Once students know it’s a wildcat (unorganized) strike, they should be very reluctant to join in.
- **Predict consequences:** Strikers should have considered if violence was likely to occur and how it could affect the outcome of the strike.

PROBLEM 2—WILL YOU STRIKE IN 1892 AT HOMESTEAD?

QUESTIONS

1. Is Carnegie Steel making a good profit?

Yes. Carnegie Steel has made $27 million over the past 17 years, or an average of almost $1.6 million per year. To put this figure into perspective, an unskilled steel worker in 1892 made about $500 per year, while a skilled worker made $1200 to $1700 per year. The price of steel dropped significantly in 1892, but business for Carnegie Steel has been good in general.

2. Does the public support the workers or the owner?

The public supports the workers, especially in the town of Homestead (its mayor also sympathizes with the workers) and throughout Pennsylvania.

3. Is the state government likely to get involved on the side of owners, the side of workers, or stay neutral?

It’s not clear if the governor is pro-union or pro-owners. However, should violence occur, the governor will feel great pressure to send in troops to restore order.
4. Do we (the striking workers) have a good chance of keeping strikebreakers out of the factory? Can we hold out longer than Carnegie can?

Workers might be able to keep out strikebreakers, but they need to look at the situation from Frick’s point of view. What will he do to make sure strikebreakers get into the factory? On the issue of whether workers can hold out longer than Carnegie, you should consider several points: (1) Frick sped up production before shutting down the steel plate part of the factory, (2) Frick has been very demanding in negotiations, (3) Frick built a wall around the factory (called “Fort Frick”) before the lockout, and (4) Carnegie’s other two factories are non-union, so if there is a strike here, it will only shut down one-third of Carnegie’s production. What does all this show?

5. Have strikes been successful in the past?

About 60% of strikes in the years 1888 to 1890 were successful, in that workers achieved some or all of their demands.

What Actually Happened:

The workers went on strike, which wasn’t successful, as outlined on Handout 3. It is interesting to note that Carnegie specifically told Frick to stand tough against the union (see the primary source, Handout 4), then after the strike he claimed that Frick was primarily responsible for the tragedy.

Key Decision-Making Skills:

- **Ask questions about the situation and consider the owner’s point of view:**
  The key to this strike situation involves asking about the odds of defeating Carnegie and piecing together evidence that Carnegie and Frick were trying to provoke the strike. The owners had prepared for a strike and were confident that they could hold out longer than the union could. The union leaders should also have asked if the American Federation of Labor (AFL) would support the strike. The AFL, under Samuel Gompers, did not get involved in the strike, believing the odds were against the workers. Gompers felt the owners would hire strikebreakers and could hold out longer than the workers could. The strikers had support from some unions, but didn’t have the support of the major union.

- **Numerous clues in Handout 3 point to the fact that Carnegie and Frick were preparing for a strike and expected to win that strike. The primary source (Handout 4) confirms this. The clues show that a strike would not go well:**
  - In 1889 high demand meant the price of steel was rising, so the company needed to avoid a strike so that it could fill its many orders. By 1892 the price was falling, indicating that the company was producing too much. A strike wouldn’t necessarily hurt the company, since it could provide it with an opportunity to sell off some of its excess inventory. Moreover, Abbott, who had shown a willingness to compromise, had been replaced by the
hardheaded, anti-union Frick. Thus, making an analogy between 1889 and 1892 doesn’t work, since many differences existed.
- New machinery made it easier to replace striking workers—even skilled ones.
- A surplus of workers existed, and many of these workers were ready to come in as strikebreakers.
- The company had built up a large inventory of steel plating, so it could still fill the government contract even if a strike did occur.
- The company ran several factories. If a strike broke out at one factory, the company could just move some production to the other factories. Meanwhile, the workers would lose their entire livelihood. The company therefore could hold out longer than the workers.

- **Anticipate consequences:** Strikers should have considered the likelihood that violence could occur, and how it could affect the outcome of the strike.

What Actually Happened:

Frick hired strikebreakers and guards to combat the strike. He did not compromise; no evidence exists that he hired agitators to mix in with the strikers.

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**PROBLEM 3—WILL YOU STRIKE IN 1892 AT COEUR D’ALENE?**

What Actually Happened:

Miners learned that they needed to be organized in order to have any chance to win strikes and improve their dangerous working conditions, while the owners learned that all they needed to do was wait for the miners to become violent, since violence almost always turned public opinion against unions and strikers.

Key Decision-Making Skills:

- **Ask questions about the situation:** One key to this strike was asking about organization and discipline. Since the strike involved several unions, it was important to ask, “Who would be in charge of the strike on the workers’ side?”
- **Identify any underlying problem:** The introduction of more and more industrial machinery into mines meant that an increasing number of miners would become unskilled labor, since the machines would make their skills obsolete. Understanding that problem puts the decision into perspective.

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**PROBLEM 4—WILL YOU STRIKE IN 1894 AT PULLMAN?**

**QUESTIONS**

1. Will enough railroad workers join us to bring trains to a halt?
Since the union was highly organized, it had the ability to halt a lot of rail traffic in the Midwest. On the other hand, many railway workers weren’t in the union, including African Americans (the union had voted to exclude them from membership) and some skilled workers, who were in other unions called railway brotherhoods and didn’t like the American Railway Union because it consisted mostly of unskilled workers. Thus, support of other railroad workers was not a sure thing.

2. Does the public support the workers or the owner?

The public supports the workers, largely because of articles in the newspapers that came out in favor of the workers and criticized Pullman.

3. Is the state government likely to get involved on the side of owners, the side of workers, or stay neutral?

The governor was sympathetic to the workers. It was very unlikely that the state government would become actively involved in support of the workers, but on the other hand the state almost certainly wouldn’t have intervened to crush the strike either. State politicians saw that the public in Illinois supported the strikers. However, students should consider the possibility that if violence breaks out during the strike, the public will become fearful and the state government might then intervene.

4. Is the federal government likely to get involved on the side of owners, the side of the workers, or stay neutral?

The Attorney General (the country’s top law enforcement official) used to be a lawyer for the railroads. Thus one thing is certain: the federal government would not have gotten involved on the side of the workers. However, students should again consider that, as with the state governments, an eruption of violence during the strike could also lead the federal government to intervene, but most likely on the side of the owners.

5. Are we (the striking workers) stronger or weaker than Pullman? Who can hold out longer in the strike?

The striking workers didn’t include African Americans in their union, so the potential existed to use blacks as strikebreakers. The company was making profits, so it had the resources to hold out for quite a while. Meanwhile, the workers had very low incomes; going on strike would then reduce their incomes to zero. The workers have to consider whether Pullman will get help from other companies. At the time Problem 4 takes place, Pullman hadn’t gotten much help yet, but if students decide to have the American Railway Union join the Pullman strikers, the railroad companies would have a reason to help Pullman to prevent the union from becoming too strong.

6. Have strikes been successful in the past?

About 60% of strikes in the years 1888 to 1890 were successful to some extent.
What Actually Happened:

The leader of the American Railway Union, Eugene Debs, had a bad feeling about joining the strike. Previously, he had predicted that troops would break the strike on the pretext of delivering the mail. However, since the majority of the union membership supported the strike, Debs had to follow suit. Samuel Gompers also opposed the strike, arguing that it brought labor in direct conflict with the federal government.

According to historian Bruce Laurie, the American government was the most hostile to unions and strikes of all the governments of industrializing countries in the 19th century. An intriguing question is why.

Key Decision-Making Skills:

- **Ask questions about the situation:** One key to this strike involved getting information about the odds of the workers achieving success. Excluding African Americans from the union meant that strikebreakers were available. The federal government favored business, so it was likely that the owners would appeal to the government to crush the strike.

- **Play out the options/anticipate consequences:** Strike leaders should have considered whether it was possible to prevent worker violence, or whether owners would hire thugs to start violence they could then blame on the strikers.

### DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS (for all four strikes):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P = Problem</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Identify any underlying problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Consider other points of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are my assumptions? Emotions?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A = Ask for information (about)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reliability of sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Historical analogies</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G = Goals</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* What are my main goals? Are they realistic?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Generate options to help achieve my goals. Are they ethical?</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>E = Effects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Predict unintended consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Play out the options. What could go wrong?</td>
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</table>

* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson
• **Underlying problem:** Students should think about underlying problems before they decide whether to strike. This is the Gilded Age, a time when government was supposed to be *laissez-faire*, but much of the public admired big business and feared radical ideas and the threat of violence, both of which they associated with unions. Students should also consider that industrialization at the time was creating machines that could replace the skills of many workers. American companies were “de-skilling” workers wherever they could to cut costs and raise profits.

• **Other points of view:** Students should consider the strengths and weaknesses of the owners in each case:
  - How much will a strike hurt the owners as compared to the workers? Can they hold out as long as the workers can?
  - How will consumers view a strike? Will they blame their inconvenience more on the owners or on the workers?
  - How does the public view strikes in general? Is there a way to get the public to see the strike from the workers’ point of view?
  - How do the newspapers portray strikes? Is there a way to get the workers’ message across in the press?

Students should also consider the point of view of the manager or owner. Is he trying to provoke a strike in order to destroy the union? This is particularly important in the Homestead Strike, where the manager Frick was probably trying to provoke a strike to crush the union.

• **Ask questions about context:**
  - How does the state government feel about a strike? Does the governor favor the owner, the union, or is he neutral?
  - Have there been many strikes in the country, in the industry, or in the state, and have they been successful?
  - Is the company strong enough to hold out if there is a long strike? Is the union strong enough?
  - Is there a union involved? Is there any organization or discipline on the worker side? This is particularly important regarding the 1877 strike and the Coeur d’Alene strike, where the workers had little organization or discipline.

• **Is the goal realistic?** Does the strike have a reasonable chance of success? The underlying problems and points of view need to be analyzed in each case so that students can make a reasonable assessment of the chances for success.

• **Predict unintended consequences:** Students need to assess long-term consequences. If the strike takes place and it fails, what might the consequences be for the next generation of workers?

• **What could go wrong?** What if strikers become violent? Is there any way to prevent violence from breaking out among the striking workers? What happens if police or soldiers take the owners’ side?
Further Research:

The History Matters Web site has a number of primary sources on strikes, including sources that describe farmers feeding Homestead strikers, the Cripple Creek Strike, and the way strikes are reported. You may find these at http://www.historymatters.gmu.edu. Search for “American Federation of Labor” or the name of a particular strike.
SOURCES


LESSON 4: STRIKES, 1877–1894

Vocabulary

- Great Railroad Strike of 1877—A violent, disorganized strike against the railroad companies; the workers ultimately lost
- Depression—Economic condition characterized by a large drop in the GDP and high unemployment
- Union—A worker organization that aims to improve working conditions and wages
- Strikebreaker/scab—A worker hired to take a striker’s job during the strike
- Homestead Strike—An unsuccessful strike against Carnegie steel in 1892
- Lockout—A situation in which workers are ordered out of a business factory and the business is shut down
- American Federation of Labor—Led by Samuel Gompers; believed in “bread and butter issues,” such as higher pay, better working conditions, shorter hours
- Andrew Carnegie—Industrialist who established Carnegie Steel
- Henry Frick—Manager of the Homestead factory during the 1892 strike
- Pinkertons—Private detectives often hired to break strikes; frequently acted more like soldiers than detectives and would often resort to violence
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- Injunction—An order from a judge to stop a certain action
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- Pullman Strike—Workers in the Pullman factories and the American Railway union were crushed in this 1894 strike
- George Pullman—Owner of the Pullman Palace Car Company and the town of Pullman; workers went on strike in 1894 when he cut wages but kept rents the same
LESSON 4: STRIKES, 1877–1894—
WORKERS’ PERSPECTIVE

Student Handout 1

PROBLEM 1—WILL YOU STRIKE IN 1877?

Times are tough in 1877. The country is in a depression (meaning the economy is shrinking and unemployment is high), so many people aren’t making much money. You live in Baltimore and work on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad as a brakeman—someone who stops the train. The pay is $1.75 per day for 12 hours of work. You know that of the 700 men who work for the railroad in the Baltimore area, six were killed and 61 were injured over the last three years. To make matters worse, brakemen have one of the most dangerous jobs on the railroad. The railroad company owners just announced that they are cutting pay for all workers by 10%, on top of a pay cut they made three years ago.
Even worse, the workweek was cut to three days for many workers, which makes it difficult for them to support their families. The other workers you know in Baltimore have decided to strike rather than accept a pay cut, and they want you to join them.

Will you join the strike?

**PROBLEM 2—WILL YOU STRIKE IN 1892?**

You are the leader of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, one of the most powerful trade unions in the country. The members of your association are skilled workers and are part of the American Federation of Labor. You have a 56-page rulebook that explains workers’ rights and protects them against certain actions owners may take. Your union has a foothold in the Homestead Plant (factory) of Carnegie Steel, near Pittsburgh. Since only skilled workers are allowed in your union, only 800 of the 3800 workers at Homestead are union members. You believe, however, that the unskilled workers will follow your skilled workers should a strike take place. In 1889 the union went on strike at Homestead and defeated the mighty Andrew Carnegie. The manager, William Abbott, agreed to a three-year contract that expired yesterday, June 30th. The contract provided that union workers would have their workday reduced from 12 to 8 hours per day and their wages would rise as the price of steel rose. The steel industry has done well, as prices of steel have remained high through 1889, 1890, and 1891. This year, however, the price has dropped steadily. The other two Carnegie factories are using new machines and methods to cut down on the number of skilled workers (one factory went from 132 skilled workers to 24!) and keep out the union. New machines make it easier to train new, unskilled workers who can then replace more highly paid, skilled workers.

It’s very dangerous to work in iron and steel factories. In 1891 about 300 workers were killed and over 2000 injured in steel mills in the Pittsburgh area alone! Nevertheless, a surplus of workers exists because of immigration and unemployment in the agricultural sector, meaning that there is a steady supply of men looking for jobs.

Negotiations between Henry Frick, a well-known, anti-union manager who replaced Abbott at Homestead, and the union have been ongoing through the spring. The union asked for a renewal of the existing contract. Frick countered with an offer to cut pay by about 15% for many skilled workers and to postpone expiration of the contract until December 31st, rather than June 30th. If the contract expires in the winter, striking will be much more difficult: the cold weather will make it harder to picket outside, and workers’ money will run out more quickly because they’ll have heating bills to deal with. Frick announced at the end of May that the union had to agree to his terms by June 24th or he would break off talks with the union and negotiate contracts with individual workers instead. In the meantime, he had a wall built around the Homestead factory, with gun slits and towers to keep workers out in case of trouble. A little over a week ago, the Homestead plant worked overtime for three days, building up a large supply of steel plating. Frick then closed one part of the factory, sending 800 of the 3800 workers to the unemployment lines. As of yesterday, four more sections of the factory had been shut down, leaving hundreds more unemployed.
If you strike, you could picket and attempt to keep strikebreakers from getting into the factory. The Carnegie Steel Company has a large government contract for steel plating. Some union leaders believe the company will not want a strike, since the Homestead factory has yet to fulfill the contract.

Should you:
1. Accept the pay cut and agree to go back to work?
2. Try to negotiate further with Frick?
3. Call a strike, including union and nonunion, skilled and unskilled men?

You may ask one of the following questions. Your teacher will give you the answer.
1. Is Carnegie Steel making a good profit?
2. Does the public support the workers or the owner?
3. Is the state government likely to get involved on the side of owners, the side of the workers, or stay neutral?
4. Do we have a good chance of keeping strikebreakers out of the factory? Can we hold out longer than Carnegie can?
5. Have strikes been successful in the past?

PROBLEM 3—WILL YOU STRIKE IN 1892?

You are the leader of the local miners’ union in Coeur d’Alene, a silver-mining district in northern Idaho. Your local union is one of several that covers mine workers. The union wants all miners to be paid $3.50 a day. The owners have announced they will pay miners $3.50 a day, but carmen and shovelers (unskilled jobs) will receive $3.00 a day. The owners claim that lower silver prices have forced them to cut costs.

Will you lead members of your union to strike?

PROBLEM 4—WILL YOU STRIKE IN 1894?

You are the leader of the American Railway Union, and you’ve been asked to support a strike by workers at the Pullman Palace Car Company, which makes sleeping cars for trains. The American Railway Union, which does not allow African Americans to join, was very successful a few years ago in a strike against the Great Northern Railroad. If you join the strike, you could stop the trains in the area around Chicago from running, which would put pressure on the Pullman Company to negotiate. Many of the Pullman workers live in the town of Pullman. That’s right, the owner of the company, George Pullman, built a town for his workers and named it after himself. The workers claim that the company cut wages at the factory by 25%, but kept rents the same in the town. One worker had only two cents left in his paycheck after his rent and expenses had been deducted! Pullman claims that he’s had to cut wages because of the depression that started in 1893. The workers say that’s a lot of bunk. If wages are falling, rents should fall also. The rents in Pullman are higher than in surrounding towns, and costs for utilities like gas (kerosene) and water are higher also. Moreover, Pullman still pays high dividends (8% per year) to stockholders. The workers argue that Pullman should reduce
rents and dividends, rather than making deep cuts in wages; after all, when things are bad the workers should not have to be the only ones to make sacrifices.

Will you support the strike?

You may ask one of the following questions. Your teacher will give you the answer.

1. Will enough railroad workers join us to bring trains to a halt?
2. Does the public support the workers or the owner?
3. Is the state government likely to get involved on the side of the owner, the side of the workers, or stay neutral?
4. Is the federal government likely to get involved on the side of the owner, the side of the workers, or stay neutral?
5. Are we stronger or weaker than Pullman? Who can hold out longer in a strike?
6. Have strikes been successful in the past?
LESSON 4: STRIKES, 1877–1894—OWNERS’ PERSPECTIVE

PROBLEM 2—WHAT TACTICS WILL YOU USE AGAINST THE HOMESTEAD STRIKERS IN 1892?

You are Henry Frick, manager of the Homestead Plant (factory) in 1892. Your boss Andrew Carnegie, the owner of Carnegie Steel, acknowledges that workers have the right to organize into unions, which has resulted in Carnegie Steel being one of the last steel companies to employ members of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers (AAISW). The steel market has been shrinking in the last six years, and you are facing stiff competition from companies who employ nonunion labor. Prices have actually risen for a few years, but have declined this year.

In 1889 the union went on strike at Homestead, and Carnegie Steel agreed to a three-year contract. Union workers had their workday reduced from 12 to 8 hours per day, and their wages were set to rise along with the price of steel. Mr. Carnegie chose you to replace the Homestead manager who agreed to the contract, William Abbott. Carnegie and you both feel Abbott gave up way too much to the union.

Carnegie believes that workers need to be treated as individuals. He also feels that the most ambitious should be rewarded, while the lazy should be fired. He said recently, “There is not a man within the sound of my voice who may not rise to the highest position, nor is there any man who, from lack of the right qualities or failure to use them, may not sink to the lowest…” He believes that unions detract from this individual initiative and force employers to treat workers as a group. Compromising with the union in 1889 gave workers the impression that Carnegie Steel would always negotiate with labor, which led more workers to join unions and made the unions stronger.

Mr. Carnegie went on vacation to Scotland earlier this month. He told you to use any means you think appropriate to weaken the union. You made an offer to cut workers’ pay, and the union declined. You then closed down part of the factory, forcing about 800 of the 3800 workers out of a job. You were surprised that all 3800 workers—not just the skilled ones—at the Homestead factory went on strike. You have built up a supply of steel, and you can have the other Carnegie factories increase production, so a strike won’t hurt the company as much as it normally would.

Which, if any, of the following tactics will you use to fight the strike?

- Hire strikebreakers. That way, the company can still produce steel and make money, while the workers will be making nothing.
- Hire people to mix in with the strikers and commit violent acts or provoke strikers to become violent. The public will turn against the strikers, and we can ask the
• state government to send in troops to restore order. The troops could then be used to make it safe for the strikebreakers to get into the factory.
• Hire our own army of Pinkertons (private detectives) to guard the Homestead factory and make sure strikebreakers get into the factory safely.
• Negotiate a reasonable settlement. When the time is right, make the necessary compromises to settle the dispute and avoid a long strike.

**PROBLEM 4—WHAT TACTICS WILL YOU USE AGAINST THE PULLMAN STRIKERS IN 1894?**

You are George Pullman, owner of the Pullman Palace Car Company (which makes railroad cars) in 1894. Your workers have gone on strike because you cut their pay but kept rents the same in the town of Pullman, where many of them live. You tried to explain to them that wage rates have nothing to do with rents. Prices for Pullman cars have been dropping, so you have to cut costs. The country is in a depression, where prices and wages generally drop; however, the rental market is completely different. If workers don’t like the rents, they can move to a different town. That will drive rents down. Despite your explanation, the workers have decided to strike.

The Pullman Palace Car Company has been earning solid profits, so you can hold out against the workers for quite a while. They, meanwhile, will be making nothing while they are on strike.

Which, if any, of the following tactics will you use to fight the strike?
• Hire strikebreakers. That way, the company can still produce Pullman cars and make money, while the workers will be making nothing.
• Hire people to mix in with the strikers and commit violent acts or provoke strikers to become violent. The public will turn against the strikers, and we can ask the state government to send in troops to restore order. The troops could then be used to make it safe for the strikebreakers to get into the factory.
• Hire our own army of private detectives to guard the Pullman factory and make sure strikebreakers get into the factory safely.
• Negotiate a reasonable settlement. When the time is right, make the necessary compromises to settle the dispute and avoid a long strike.
LESSON 4: STRIKES, 1877–1894

Student Handout 3

OUTCOMES

PROBLEM 1—WILL YOU STRIKE IN 1877?

What Actually Happened:

The workers went on strike in what came to be known as the Great Railroad Strike of 1877.

Unintended Consequences:

- There was no union or strike committee, so the strike had no discipline. It soon spread to other railroads in Pennsylvania, and to Buffalo, Chicago, and other cities. Mobs of strikers destroyed railroad cars, tracks, and buildings. Strikers fought with police and soldiers. U.S. army troops were brought in to restore order. Over 100 people died, and 500 were wounded.
- Many strikers were fired; others were rehired at the lower wages the railroad had offered.
- The American public, which had sympathized with the workers at first, was horrified at the violence. Businessmen, newspapers, and political leaders sensed the public outrage and called for strict measures to prevent such worker riots in the future. The strike ended up weakening the unions.
- If you joined the strike, you probably didn’t get killed but you stood a fair chance of losing your job.

PROBLEM 2—WILL YOU STRIKE IN 1892 AT HOMESTEAD?

What Actually Happened:

The workers started the Homestead Strike as a reaction to the pay cut and lockout. They tried to keep strikebreakers out of the factory. Unlike the 1877 railroad strike, strikers in 1892 had discipline and organization. They had a strike committee, a network of scouts, and the sympathy of the mayor and townspeople of Homestead. The unintended consequences (explained below) doomed the strike. The strike was crushed after the governor called in the state militia. The workers had to accept the pay cut, and the company increased the workday to 12 hours. Many workers were fired and blacklisted. Union membership declined from 24,000 in 1892 to 7000 a decade later.
**Unintended Consequences:**

- Strikers used violence against the Pinkerton detectives Frick had hired, killing seven of them. The press reported on the violence, which turned public opinion in general against the strike, although many people still supported the workers.
- Frick appealed to the Pennsylvania governor, who sent 8000 members of the state militia to restore order. The militia also provided protection so that strikebreakers could enter the factory.
- On July 23rd, an anarchist, Alexander Berkman, tried to assassinate Frick. Berkman had nothing to do with the strikers, but since the public connected him with the workers, public sympathy rose for Frick.

**PROBLEM 3—WILL YOU STRIKE IN 1892 AT COEUR D’ALENE?**

**What Actually Happened:**

The workers went on strike, which led to violence in the mining district. The miners were at a grave disadvantage because they did not have a single union that could provide them with discipline and organization.

**Unintended Consequences:**

- Without discipline, miners attacked and killed several strikebreakers. The public turned against the miners, which ended the strikers’ chances for a favorable outcome. The Idaho Governor ordered in National Guard troops and declared martial law to restore order.
- The pay cut remained and many strikers were fired.

**PROBLEM 4—WILL YOU STRIKE IN 1894 AT PULLMAN?**

**What Actually Happened:**

The American Railway Union supported the strike and stopped rail traffic all across the Midwest. The strike affected every railroad in the region. However, there were numerous consequences.

**Unintended Consequences:**

- Railroad owners saw the Railway Union as a major threat, so they pulled together, stayed organized, and supported Pullman. The owners put Pullman cars on mail trains and appealed to the federal government for troops to enforce delivery of the mail. Attorney General Richard Olney, a former railroad lawyer, swore in 3400 special deputies to run the trains.
• Eugene Debs, the head of the American Railway Union, tried to keep the strikers peaceful, but some attacked the deputies and destroyed railroad property. Public opinion turned against the strikers.

• Strikebreakers were available, especially since your union excluded African Americans. Prejudice hurt the union a great deal. Blacks weren’t the only ones who worked as strikebreakers, but they added to the overall number of scabs available.

• President Cleveland sent troops to the Chicago area to restore order. Meanwhile, a Chicago judge issued an injunction preventing union leaders from asking members not to work. Union leaders, including Eugene Debs, were arrested, and the strike failed.
Primary Source: Telegram from Andrew Carnegie to Henry Frick (June 10, 1893)

As I understand matters at Homestead, it is not only the wages paid, but the number of men required by Amalgamated rules which makes our labor rates so much higher than those in the East.

Of course, you will be asked to confer, and I know you will decline all conferences, as you have taken your stand and have nothing more to say…

It is fortunate that only a part of the Works [factories] are concerned [involved]. Provided you have plenty of plates rolled, I suppose you can keep on with armor. Potter will, no doubt, intimate to the men refusal of scale means running only as non-union. This may cause acceptance, but I do not think so. The chances are you will have to prepare for a struggle, in which case, the notice [i.e., that the Works will henceforth be non-union] should go up promptly on the morning of the 25th. Of course you will win, and win easier than you suppose, owing to the present condition of the market.

ANDREW CARNEGIE

QUESTION FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does this primary source reveal about Carnegie’s motives regarding the strike?
# LESSON 5: THE 1877 STRIKE

## OVERVIEW
Histories of great events, such as strikes, often limit their focus to the decision making of leaders. This lesson focuses on ordinary workers caught in a strike situation. By comparing who will join the strike and who will not, students will infer underlying reasons why some workers actively take part in such labor tactics and some do not. Personal lives will feature more prominently in analyzing historical events after this lesson. The lesson is based on a model of decision making applied by a political scientist to the 1877 strike.

## VOCABULARY
- Great Railroad Strike of 1877—Strike against the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad; the workers lost
- Wildcat strike—A strike without union organization or agreement
- Blacklist—A list of workers that an industry refuses to hire

## DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED
- Look for underlying problems
- Ask questions
- Consider consequences
LESSON PLAN

A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (30–40 minutes)

Procedure:

Give each student one of the ten worker profiles from Handout 1. Have the students write down whether they would go on strike. Then distribute Handout 2 and have the class check off whether each worker would go on strike, according to students’ decisions. Follow the tabulation by asking students to answer the questions below the chart of worker characteristics. Have students pair up and share their answers, then discuss everyone’s answers with the class as a whole. You could also give students the primary source by the owner of the B&O Railroad (Handout 4) and ask if the document would lead them to change their decisions.

Decision-Making Strategies:

Ask students why some people decided to join the strike and some did not. The questions at the bottom of the chart on Handout 2 focus on underlying reasons for their decisions.

Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what decision-making skills they found particularly important in deciding these issues. Which of the letters of P-A-G-E applied especially to this problem? (See the Decision-Making Analysis section below for ideas.) Ask students what they think they did well or poorly in terms of P-A-G-E. Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journals or on their decision-making logs.

Putting the Actual Decisions into Historical Context:

Ask students what historical forces brought about the strike and what made it unsuccessful. (Possible causes: The economic depression lowered wages and made workers desperate; industrialization brought workers from small craft shops or farms to large, impersonal corporations, which led to labor conflict. Possible reasons for failure: Public fear of violence or radical ideas from immigrants; modern weapons used by soldiers; newspaper reporting and improved communications.)

Troubleshooting:

You may have to use sample figures for paychecks and expenses to convey the different levels of economic desperation among the ten workers.
B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (15–30 minutes)

Have students make their decisions as homework. Don’t have students pair up—just have them fill in the chart and answer the questions at the bottom. Discuss their answers, highlighting the underlying causes for workers’ decisions to join or stay out of the strike (explained on the “Teacher Notes for Expanding Discussion” page under Questions A and B).
TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION
(For outcomes for students, see Handout 3)

What Actually Happened:

This lesson focuses on the individual decisions that students make under given circumstances. The two discussion questions that accompany the chart on Handout 2 will generate further discussion, so no extra notes are provided here. The answers in Handout 3 provide analysis based on competing theories of worker behavior.

DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

P = Problem
* - Identify any underlying problem
* - Consider other points of view
* - What are my assumptions? Emotions?

A = Ask for information (about)
* - Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)
  - Reliability of sources
  - Historical analogies

G = Goals
- What are my main goals? Are they realistic?
- Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical?

E = Effects
* - Predict unintended consequences
  - Play out the option. What could go wrong?

* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Identify underlying problems/identify assumptions**: As mentioned earlier, the central question focuses on identifying which factors led workers to strike and which led others to hold back. These reasons are related to assumptions made by individual workers who compared their circumstances to the risks involved in going on strike.

- **Consider other points of view**: Students should consider the problem from the point of view of the public, of consumers hurt by the strike, and of owners, as shown in the primary source in Handout 4.
• **Ask questions about context:** The biggest question students have to consider involves whether a union or any organization was involved in the strike (none was). This type of unorganized, wildcat strike (no union—people just individually go on strike) had very little chance of success.

• **Predict unintended consequences:** Students should consider the consequences of their choices, as described above.
### ANSWER KEY—Student Handout 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did this worker go on strike?</th>
<th>Job: (dangerous/not dangerous)</th>
<th>Pay: (starving/not starving)</th>
<th>Location: (central/remote)</th>
<th>Place to hide?</th>
<th>Others sympathize?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No</td>
<td>Dangerous</td>
<td>Starving</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No</td>
<td>Not dangerous</td>
<td>Not starving</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Yes</td>
<td>Dangerous</td>
<td>Starving</td>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Yes</td>
<td>Not dangerous</td>
<td>Not starving</td>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Yes</td>
<td>Dangerous</td>
<td>Starving</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Yes</td>
<td>Not dangerous</td>
<td>Not starving</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Yes, but violence</td>
<td>Dangerous</td>
<td>Starving</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Yes, but violence</td>
<td>Not dangerous</td>
<td>Not starving</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Yes, but crushed</td>
<td>Dangerous</td>
<td>Starving</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Yes, but crushed</td>
<td>Not dangerous</td>
<td>Not starving</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SOURCES


LESSON 5: THE 1877 STRIKE

Vocabulary

- Great Railroad Strike of 1877—Strike against the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad; the workers lost
- Wildcat strike—A strike without union organization or agreement
- Blacklist—A list of workers that an industry refuses to hire
Worker 1:

You work for the B&O Railroad in Baltimore in 1877. Your job as a brakeman is one of the most dangerous there is. You have to walk along the top of the train to turn the brakes for the cars. If you don’t notice that the train is about to go through a tunnel, you’ll be smashed like a bug on a windshield. If you slip while climbing down between cars to adjust the brakes, you’ll be crippled or killed. Of the 700 men who work at the B&O in Baltimore, each year two or three have been killed and more than 20 injured.
Meanwhile, your wages are low. The pay doesn’t look so bad on paper, but on each train trip you have to stay at a hotel; these expenses take up about 40% of your pay. Over the past three years, the company has repeatedly cut your wages. You barely make enough to take care of your family—one more pay cut and they will starve.

Baltimore is in a central location, so if you go on strike and violence breaks out, troops can quickly arrive to crush the workers. Also, if trouble occurs, the area surrounding the city doesn’t have any place you can easily hide. The people of Baltimore have some sympathy for the workers, but most fear that violence could erupt during a strike. If the strike fails, the company might make further cuts in your wages, or they could fire and blacklist you (that is, your name would be put on a list of those not to be hired by any railroad).

No one else has gone on strike against the railroad over the pay cut, but some of the workers in Baltimore want to strike over the latest 10% cut, trying to restore wages to their previous level. They plan to walk off the job at noon.

Will you join the strike?

Worker 2:

You work for the B&O Railroad in Baltimore in 1877. Your job as an engineer can be a little dangerous, but it’s a lot safer than some other railroad jobs. Of the 700 men who work at the B&O in Baltimore, each year two or three have been killed and more than 20 injured. However, you know of only three engineers injured in the past five years, and none has been killed.

Meanwhile, your wages are much too low. The pay doesn’t look so bad on paper, but on each train trip you have to stay at a hotel; these expenses take up about 40% of your pay. Over the past three years, the company has repeatedly cut your wages. However, you still make a decent amount of money and can support your family.

Baltimore is in a central location, so if you go on strike and violence breaks out, troops can quickly arrive to crush the workers. Also, if trouble occurs, the area surrounding the city doesn’t have any place you can easily hide. The people of Baltimore have some sympathy for the workers, but most fear that violence could erupt during a strike. If the strike fails, the company might make further cuts in your wages, or they could fire and blacklist you (that is, your name would be put on a list of those not to be hired by any railroad).

No one else has gone on strike against the railroad over the pay cut, but some of the workers in Baltimore want to strike over the latest 10% cut, trying to restore wages to their previous level. They plan to walk off the job at noon.

Will you join the strike?
Worker 3:

You work for the B&O Railroad in Martinsburg, West Virginia, in 1877. Your job as a brakeman is one of the most dangerous ones there is. You have to walk along the top of the train to turn the brakes for the cars. If you don’t notice that the train is about to go through a tunnel, you’ll be crushed like an insect on a windshield. If you slip while climbing down between cars to adjust the brakes, you’ll be crippled or killed. Of the 700 men you know at the B&O in Martinsburg, each year two or three have been killed and more than 20 injured.

Meanwhile, your wages are much too low. The pay doesn’t look so bad on paper, but on each train trip you have to stay at a hotel; these expenses take up about 40% of your pay. Over the past three years, the company has repeatedly cut your wages. You barely make enough to take care of your family—one more pay cut and they will starve.

Martinsburg is in a remote location, so if you go on strike and violence breaks out, it will take a long time to get troops to the area. Also, the trains bringing the troops have to go through mountain passes that can easily be blocked. In addition, there are many places to hide in the hills around the town if trouble occurs. The people of Martinsburg have a great deal of sympathy for the workers—even the police and the mayor support them. You have to remember, however, that if the strike fails, the company might make further cuts in your wages, or they could fire and blacklist you (that is, your name would be put on a list of those not to be hired by any railroad).

Strikes have already begun in Baltimore against the B&O Railroad. So far the strikers in Baltimore have stopped trains and people there have shown sympathy toward them. Now, some of the workers in Martinsburg want to join the strike protesting the latest 10% pay cut, trying to restore wages to their previous level. They plan to walk off the job at noon.

Will you join the strike?

Worker 4:

You work for the B&O Railroad in Martinsburg, West Virginia, in 1877. Your job as an engineer can be a little dangerous, but it’s a lot safer than some other railroad jobs. Of the 700 men you know at the B&O in Martinsburg, each year two or three have been killed and more than 20 injured. However, you know of only three engineers injured in the past five years, and none has been killed.

Meanwhile, your wages are much too low. The pay doesn’t look so bad on paper, but on each train trip you have to stay at a hotel; these expenses for lodging take up about 40% of your pay. Over the past three years, the company has repeatedly cut your wages. However, you still make a decent amount of money and can support your family.

Martinsburg is in a remote location, so if you go on strike and violence breaks out, it will take a long time to get troops to the area. Also, the trains bringing the troops have to go
through mountain passes that can easily be blocked. In addition, there are many places to hide in the hills around the town if trouble occurs. The people of Martinsburg have a great deal of sympathy for the workers—even the police and the mayor support them. You have to remember, however, that if the strike fails, the company might make further cuts in your wages, or they could fire and blacklist you (that is, your name would be put on a list not to be hired by any railroad).

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Will you join the strike?

Worker 5:

You work for the B&O Railroad in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1877. Your job as a brakeman is one of the most dangerous ones there is. You have to walk along the top of the train to turn the brakes for the cars. If you don’t notice that the train is about to go through a tunnel, you’ll be crushed like an insect on a windshield. If you slip while climbing down between cars to adjust the brakes, you’ll be crippled or killed. Of the 700 men you know at the B&O in Pittsburgh, each year two or three have been killed and more than 20 injured.

Meanwhile, your wages are much too low. The pay doesn’t look so bad on paper, but on each train trip you have to stay at a hotel; these expenses take up about 40% of your pay. Over the past three years, the company has repeatedly cut your wages. You barely make enough to take care of your family—one more pay cut and they will starve.

Pittsburgh is in an accessible location, so if you go on strike and violence breaks out, it will take only a few days to get troops to the area. The trains will come from different directions, a few of which could be blocked at passes in the mountains. Although Pittsburgh is a large city, there are many places to hide in the surrounding hills if trouble occurs. The people of Pittsburgh have some sympathy for the workers, but most fear that violence could erupt during a strike. If the strike fails, the company might make further cuts in your wages, or they could fire and blacklist you (that is, your name would be put on a list of those not to be hired by any railroad).

Strikes have already begun in Baltimore and Martinsburg, West Virginia, against the B&O Railroad. So far the strikers have stopped trains, and people in those cities have shown sympathy toward them. Recently, some steelworkers have organized secondary strikes against steel mills to support the railroad strike. Now, some of the workers in Pittsburgh want to join the strike protesting the latest 10% pay cut, trying to restore wages to their previous level. They plan to walk off the job at noon.

Will you join the strike?
Worker 6:

You work for the B&O Railroad in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1877. Your job as an engineer can be a little dangerous, but it’s a lot safer than some other railroad jobs. Of the 700 men you know at the B&O in Pittsburgh, each year two or three have been killed and more than 20 injured. However, you know of only three engineers injured in the past five years, and none has been killed.

Meanwhile, your wages are much too low. The pay doesn’t look so bad on paper, but on each train trip you have to stay at a hotel; these expenses for lodging take up about 40% of your pay. Over the past three years, the company has repeatedly cut your wages. However, you still make a decent amount of money and can support your family.

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Will you join the strike?

Worker 7:

You work for the B&O Railroad in Chicago in 1877. Your job as a brakeman is one of the most dangerous ones there is. You have to walk along the top of the train to turn the brakes for the cars. If you don’t notice that the train is about to go through a tunnel, you’ll be crushed like an insect on a windshield. If you slip while climbing down between cars to adjust the brakes, you’ll be crippled or killed. Of the 700 men you know at the B&O in Chicago, each year two or three have been killed and more than 20 injured.

Meanwhile, your wages are much too low. The pay doesn’t look so bad on paper, but on each train trip you have to stay at a hotel; these expenses take up about 40% of your pay. Over the past three years, the company has repeatedly cut your wages. You barely make enough to take care of your family—one more pay cut and they will starve.
Chicago is in an accessible location, so if you go on strike and violence breaks out, troops can easily be brought in to crush the workers. Also, if trouble occurs, the area surrounding the city doesn’t have any place you can easily hide. The people of Chicago have some sympathy for the workers, but most fear that violence could erupt during a strike. If the strike fails, the company might make further cuts in your wages, or they could fire and blacklist you (that is, your name would be put on a list of those not to be hired by any railroad).

Strikes have been widespread against the B&O Railroad, taking place in Baltimore, Martinsburg, West Virginia, and Pittsburgh. Recently, some steelworkers have organized secondary strikes against steel mills to support the railroad strike. However, two of the strikes have led to widespread violence. Trains and buildings were destroyed and several soldiers were killed. Newspapers have reported that more troops are on the way to those cities. Now, some of the workers in Chicago want to join the strike protesting the latest 10% pay cut, trying to restore wages to their previous level. They plan to walk off the job at noon.

Will you join the strike?

Worker 8:

You work for the B&O Railroad in Chicago in 1877. Your job as an engineer can be a little dangerous, but it’s a lot safer than some other railroad jobs. Of the 700 men you know at the B&O in Chicago, each year two or three have been killed and more than 20 injured. However, you know of only three engineers injured in the past five years, and none has been killed.

Meanwhile, your wages are much too low. The pay doesn’t look so bad on paper, but on each train trip you have to stay at a hotel; these expenses take up about 40% of your pay. Over the past three years, the company has repeatedly cut your wages. However, you still make a decent amount of money and can support your family.

Chicago is in an accessible location, so if you go on strike and violence breaks out, troops can easily be brought in to crush the workers. Also, if trouble occurs, the area surrounding the city doesn’t have any place you can easily hide. The people of Chicago have some sympathy for the workers, but most fear that violence could erupt during a strike. If the strike fails, the company might make further cuts in your wages, or they could fire and blacklist you (that is, your name would be put on a list of those not to be hired by any railroad).

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10% pay cut, trying to restore wages to their previous level. They plan to walk off the job at noon.

Will you join the strike?

Worker 9:

You work for the B&O Railroad in Chicago in 1877. Your job as a brakeman is one of the most dangerous ones there is. You have to walk along the top of the train to turn the brakes for the cars. If you don’t notice that the train is about to go through a tunnel, you’ll be crushed like an insect on a windshield. If you slip while climbing down between cars to adjust the brakes, you’ll be crippled or killed. Of the 700 men you know at the B&O in Chicago, each year two or three have been killed and more than 20 injured.

Meanwhile, your wages are much too low. The pay doesn’t look so bad on paper, but on each train trip you have to stay at a hotel; these expenses for lodging take up about 40% of your pay. Over the past three years, the company has repeatedly cut your wages. You barely make enough to take care of your family—one more pay cut and they will starve.

Chicago is in an accessible location, so if you go on strike and violence breaks out, troops can easily be brought in to crush the workers. Also, if trouble occurs, the area surrounding the city doesn’t have any place you can easily hide. The people of Chicago have some sympathy for the workers, but most fear that violence could erupt during a strike. If the strike fails, the company might make further cuts in your wages, or they could fire and blacklist you (that is, your name would be put on a list not to be hired by any railroad).

Strikes have been widespread against the B&O Railroad, taking place in Baltimore, Martinsburg, West Virginia, and Pittsburgh. Recently, some steelworkers have organized secondary strikes against steel mills to support the railroad strike. However, two of the strikes have led to widespread violence. Trains and buildings were destroyed and several soldiers were killed. In the past week, troops arrived in all these cities and enforced order. Almost 100 workers have been killed, with many hundreds more wounded. Nevertheless, some of the workers in Chicago want to join the strike protesting the latest 10% pay cut, trying to restore wages to their previous level. They plan to walk off the job at noon.

Will you join the strike?

Worker 10:

You work for the B&O Railroad in Chicago in 1877. Your job as an engineer can be a little dangerous, but it’s a lot safer than some other railroad jobs. Of the 700 men you know at the B&O in Chicago, each year two or three have been killed and more than 20 injured. However, you know of only three engineers injured in the past five years, and none have been killed.
Meanwhile, your wages are much too low. The pay doesn’t look so bad on paper, but on each train trip you have to stay at a hotel; these expenses take up about 40% of your pay. Over the past three years, the company has repeatedly cut your wages. However, you still make a decent amount of money and can support your family.

Chicago is in an accessible location, so if you go on strike and violence breaks out, troops can easily be brought in to crush the workers. Also, if trouble occurs the area surrounding the city doesn’t have any place you can easily hide. The people of Chicago have some sympathy for the workers, but most fear that violence could erupt during a strike. If the strike fails, the company might make further cuts in your wages, or they could fire and blacklist you (that is, your name would be put on a list not to be hired by any railroad).

Strikes have been widespread against the B&O Railroad, taking place in Baltimore, Martinsburg, West Virginia, and Pittsburgh. Recently, some steelworkers have organized secondary strikes against steel mills to support the railroad strike. However, two of the strikes have led to widespread violence. Trains and buildings were destroyed and several soldiers were killed. In the past week, troops arrived in all these cities and enforced order. Almost 100 workers have been killed, with many hundreds more wounded. Nevertheless, some of the workers in Chicago want to join the strike protesting the latest 10% pay cut, trying to restore wages to their previous level. They plan to walk off the job at noon.

Will you join the strike?
### LESSON 5: THE 1877 STRIKE

**Student Handout 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did this worker go on strike?</th>
<th>Job: (dangerous/not dangerous)</th>
<th>Pay: (starving/not starving)</th>
<th>Location: (central/remote)</th>
<th>Place to hide?</th>
<th>Others sympathize?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Based on the chart, what were key reasons for workers in deciding whether to go on strike in 1877?
2. What does this activity show about the underlying reasons for workers to go on strike?
OUTCOMES

What Actually Happened:

In what came to be known as the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, many workers in all these and several other cities decided to go on strike. However, a significant number of workers in these cities decided not to join the strike.

Unintended Consequences:

- No union or strike committee had organized the strike, so the protesters lacked discipline. The strike soon spread to other railroads in Pennsylvania, and to Buffalo, Chicago, and other cities. Mobs of strikers destroyed railroad cars, tracks, and buildings. Strikers fought with police and soldiers. U.S. army troops were brought in to restore order. Over 100 people were killed, and some 500 were wounded. Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Chicago, and other cities lost over $3 million each. The strikers lost more than $600,000, and the railroad lost over $1 million.
- Many strikers were fired. Those who did get rehired received the lower wages the railroad had offered.
- The violence horrified the American public, which had sympathized at first with the workers. The public associated the strike with foreigners and foreign ideas, and especially with communism. Businessmen, newspapers, and political leaders sensed the public outrage and called for strict measures to prevent such riots in the future. The strike ended up weakening the unions.
- Even though the strike failed and owners took a stronger stand against unions, the strike also spurred labor to organize better, resulting in more orderly and disciplined strikes during the 1880s.

If you joined the strike, you probably didn’t get killed, but you stood a fair chance of losing your job.

QUESTIONS

1. Based on the chart, what were key reasons why workers in 1877 decided to join the strike or not?
According to sociologist Glenn Stephens, workers weighed factors such as wages and working conditions against the likelihood of getting killed, injured, or punished. Laborers who were especially desperate in terms of working conditions (i.e., those who had the most dangerous jobs) and wages (those closest to starvation) were more likely to strike than those who were better off. Similarly, workers who felt they stood less of a chance of being killed, injured, or punished were more likely to strike than those who felt vulnerable (i.e., those in central locations with no place to hide, and in cities whose residents didn’t have sympathy for the strikers).

2. What does this activity show about the underlying reasons for why workers go on strike?

Stephens argues that rational choice (i.e., weighing how bad things are currently versus the likelihood that going on strike will make them worse) determined most workers’ choices. Under this model, the most likely person to strike was the brakeman in Martinsburg, West Virginia, while the least likely to strike were the engineers in Baltimore and Chicago. Other sociologists suggest people in situations such as this railroad strike exhibit “mob psychology” and get caught up in doing whatever the rest of the group does. Stephens argues against the mob psychology theory by showing that workers come to decisions by comparing the status quo to the odds of improving the situation or worsening it.
LESSON 5: THE 1877 STRIKE

Student Handout 4

Primary Source: Letter to the Employees of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Co.

Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Company
Office of the President
Baltimore, July 11, 1877

To the Officers and Employees of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company

At a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, held this day, the following preamble and resolutions were adopted:

WHEREAS—The depression in the general business interests of the country continues, thus seriously affecting the usual earnings of railway companies, and rendering a further reduction of expenses necessary; therefore be it

RESOLVED—That a reduction of ten per cent, be made in the present compensation of all officers and employees of every grade, in the service of the Company, where the amount received exceeds one dollar per day, to take effect on and after July 16th, instant.

RESOLVED—That the said reduction shall apply to the Main Stem and Branches east of the Ohio River, and to the Trans-Ohio Divisions, and that it shall embrace all roads leased or operated by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company.

It is hoped and believed that all persons in the service of the Company will appreciate the necessity of, and concur cordially in, this action.

The Board postponed action until some time after its great competitors, the Pennsylvania, New York Central, and Hudson River, and New York, and Erie Companies, had made general and similar reductions in pay, with the hope that business would so improve that this necessity would be obviated. In this they have been disappointed.

The President, in announcing the decision of the Board, takes occasion to express the conviction and expectation that every officer and man in the service, will cheerfully recognize the necessity of the reduction, and earnestly co-operate in every measure of judicious economy, necessary to aid in maintaining effectively the usefulness and success of the Company.

John W. Garrett
President
QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS:

1. What does the owner argue?

2. What does this primary source show about his motives?

3. Would reading this document beforehand have led you to make a different decision in this lesson?
LESSON 6:
GOVERNMENT POLICIES, 1870-1895
Teacher Page

OVERVIEW
There are intriguing aspects to making decisions as the government during a time of laissez-faire. Students will recognize that although the government generally had a “hands-off” policy, it did institute a tariff and subsidize railroads during the Gilded Age.

VOCABULARY
- Tariff—A tax on imports
- Laissez-faire—French for “let things alone”; refers to a policy of keeping the government out of the economy
- Monopoly—One company controls an entire industry
- Antitrust laws—Prevent cutthroat business practices and formation of monopolies
- Subsidy—Government help for business, usually in the form of money
- Externalities—in economics, the effects of a given action
- Credit Mobilier—A construction company that cheated taxpayers by selling materials at inflated prices to the Union Pacific Railroad
- Immigration—People moving to one country from another one

DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED
- Identify assumptions
- Predict unintended consequences
- Look for the underlying problem
- Get specialized information
LESSON PLAN

A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (1–2 class periods of 40 minutes)

Procedure:

Distribute Handout 1 and have students write responses to all the problems in class or as homework. Alternatively, assign each student one of the problems to answer. Put students into groups to discuss the problem which they were assigned. Encourage students to ask you questions before they come to a decision. The “Decision-Making Analysis” section on the “Teacher Notes for Expanding Discussion” page has suggested responses for you to give students.

Next, lead a full-class discussion of the problems. Start with the first problem, and have students discuss their choices and the reasons behind them. After the discussion, have students vote on whether to institute a high tariff. If you are having students keep a decision-making journal, have them record their vote in the journal. Read the actual decision following the vote. Continue in the same manner for the other problems. Alternatively, you could vote and discuss all five problems and then distribute Handout 2 with the actual decisions. Which outcomes surprised students, and why?

Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what they would have done differently, if anything, now that they know the outcomes. What decision-making skills proved especially important in deciding these issues? Which of the letters of P-A-G-E applied especially to this problem? (See the Decision-Making Analysis section below for ideas.) Ask students what they think they did well or poorly in terms of P-A-G-E. Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journal or decision-making logs.

Putting the Actual Decisions into Historical Context:

The government did not get involved in many areas, which makes sense since it was a time of laissez-faire beliefs. On the other hand, when the government did get involved, it usually did so in order to help business. Ask students what historical forces might have led to this small-government, pro-business outlook. (Possible causes: powerful businesses and weak government; businessmen controlled the government, so they could stop a more activist agenda; businessmen controlled the press, which influenced Americans to become more pro-business; Americans’ high regard for the individual and for private property; Americans’ historic distrust of government, an attitude that dates back to the Revolutionary War.)
Troubleshooting:

Students need to be reminded that tariffs apply to imports. There is no reason to cut down on selling goods to others, so no need exists to tax exports.

B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (15–30 minutes)

Have students answer only one or two of the problems, or have students answer all the problems but not discuss them. Have students vote on each problem, then distribute Handout 2 (which shows the outcomes). Have students reflect on their decisions in their logs or journals.

There is a lot of particular content you can teach in discussing the responses to the problems. The “Teacher Notes for Expanding Discussion” page highlights specific content you can bring up when discussing each problem.

Since this lesson has so many problems, all the decision-making skills are grouped together at the end of the analysis of the problems. The description of each skill indicates the problems to which that skill applies.
TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION
(For outcomes for students, see Handout 2)

PROBLEM 1—TARIFF

What Actually Happened:

In purely economic terms, the tariff should have hurt the American economy, since it reduced trade and decreased the GDP from what it would have been. However, the American economy grew tremendously at this time, so it’s hard to know for sure. Rapid industrialization was the main cause, but the tariff may have helped.

PROBLEM 2—MONOPOLIES

What Actually Happened:

Debate exists as to whether America’s antitrust policy, which was intended to stop cutthroat business practices, was a good idea. During the 1912 presidential election, Woodrow Wilson proposed a policy that would essentially break up monopolies whether or not they did anything unreasonable.

PROBLEM 3—REGULATIONS

What Actually Happened:

After 1900 the government began to regulate railroad rates, food, and (to a lesser extent) working conditions. Regulating railroad rates helped some shippers, but it often led to rate increases because railroad owners sometimes controlled the regulatory commissions. Only a few industries had working conditions regulated. At this time, the government didn’t regulate advertising, choosing instead to “let the buyer beware.”

PROBLEM 4—SUBSIDIES

What Actually Happened:

In some circumstances, paying farmers not to produce may be a good idea. (The Decision Making in U.S. History volume on the Great Depression has a problem that deals with this issue.) Lesson 10 of this book discusses farm problems in greater detail. Nevertheless, many students may choose to subsidize farmers because they feel farmers work very hard, face problems because of the weather, and represent an important part of traditional American society.
The government only directly subsidized two groups: farmers and railroads. The Homestead Act gave farmers 160 acres of free land if they lived on and made improvements to the land for five years. Railroads received subsidies in the form of land grants, which they could then sell to settlers.

Externalities provide the key to deciding whether to give subsidies. This economic term implies looking at how the subsidy will affect other parts of the economy. If students feel that enough positive externalities outweigh the outlay of taxpayer money, then they should give the subsidy. Government leaders in the late 1800s felt that enough positive externalities existed to justify subsidies to farmers and railroads. They felt moving people out west would help settle that huge area, expanding the size of the country and increasing economic growth. Similarly, they felt that the lower transportation costs that would result from railroad construction would help all businesses that shipped products. In each case, the government believed the positive externalities outweighed the costs.

An additional question to consider: Would farmers or railroads have expanded into these areas without subsidies? If the answer is yes, then the subsidy was a waste of money. Government leaders felt only an offer of free land would encourage farmers to move to an area referred to as “the great American desert.” On the other hand, maybe people would have moved there eventually anyway. Inventions such as the steel-toothed plow and barbed wire made farming in the West more attractive. Leaders also felt that railroad companies could not afford the enormous expense of constructing so many miles of track. However, maybe private investment could have raised sufficient capital. If people were reluctant to invest, then maybe it would have shown that the railroad was a waste of money. The public goal of unifying the country, especially for development and expanded markets, seemed worth the risk and would not have paid stockholders enough in private gains to entice them to invest. On the other hand, government subsidies led to a great deal of corruption, such as the Credit Mobilier scandal, so the taxpayers were cheated to an extent.

**PROBLEM 5—IMMIGRATION**

What Actually Happened:

Dispute exists as to how extensively labor opposed Chinese immigration. One historian has asserted that unions mainly opposed contract labor, not Chinese immigrants. Labor unions supported the bill, but only when it was already close to passing, and they did not support it enthusiastically. Another historian has argued that after Chinese immigrants were used as strikebreakers at a shoe factory in Massachusetts, unions saw Chinese laborers as a threat to American workers.
**DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:**

**P = Problem**  
- Identify any underlying problem  
- Consider other points of view  
  * - What are my assumptions? Emotions?

**A = Ask for information (about)**  
* - **Historical context** (history of this issue; context in the world)  
  - Reliability of sources  
  - Historical analogies

**G = Goals**  
- What are my main goals? Are they realistic?  
- Generate options to help achieve my goals. Are they **ethical**?

**E = Effects**  
* - **Predict unintended consequences**  
  - Play out the options. What could go wrong?

* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **What are my assumptions?** Handout 3 helps students reflect on their assumptions. The handout makes no judgment that students’ assumptions are wrong; rather, it aims to help students recognize their assumptions. Ask how many students made each of the assumptions, then discuss whether the class thinks the assumptions were valid and why students made them. Students in my classes have been especially prone to making the assumptions about farmers.

- **Ask questions:**  
  Problem 1: Have tariffs worked in the past? (It’s unclear.)  
  Problem 2: How have other countries dealt with monopolies? (Most other countries allow cartels and monopolies.)  
  Problems 3 and 4: What benefits do the businesses provide for other areas of the country? (externalities)  
  Problem 5: Why are Chinese immigrants coming to America? (Businesses advertised for laborers, and Chinese already here wrote their relatives back home and told them that things in America were good.) Has immigration helped or hurt the economy and society in the past? (The U.S. has experienced impressive economic growth during periods of increased immigration. According to economic historian George Borjas, immigrants bring modest growth to the economy and help consumers and employers more than they hurt unskilled or relatively unskilled laborers.)

  a. **Predict unintended consequences:** Students should consider the consequences of their choices, which are included on Handout 2 for each problem.
SOURCES


LESSON 6: GOVERNMENT POLICIES, 1870-1895

Vocabulary

- **Tariff**—A tax on imports
- **Laissez-faire**—French for “let things alone”; refers to a policy of keeping the government out of the economy
- **Monopoly**—One company controls an entire industry
- **Antitrust laws**—Prevent cutthroat business practices and formation of monopolies
- **Subsidy**—Government help for business, usually in the form of money
- **Externalities**—In economics, the effects of a given action
- **Credit Mobilier**—A construction company that cheated taxpayers by selling materials at inflated prices to the Union Pacific Railroad
- **Immigration**—People moving to one country from another one
You are a senator during the Gilded Age. Which of the following proposed bills will you support as beneficial for the country (as opposed to beneficial to helping you get reelected)? Decide what you would do in each case and explain your decision.

1. Enact a high tariff to protect American businesses from competition from foreign imports. The tariff is a tax added to imports (for example, textiles, steel, or wine). Raising the tariff would mean that the government could collect more taxes from those who continue to import into the U.S., and American consumers might choose to buy more American products since imports would become more expensive. Would you raise the tariff? Explain.

2. Regarding monopolies, which of these proposals would you support?
   A. Break up any business that controls more than a certain percentage of an industry.
   B. Outlaw business practices that unfairly hurt other businesses or try to set up a monopoly. For example, outlaw deals where suppliers will not sell to a competitor.
3. Which of these proposals for regulating business would you support?
   A. Regulate the rates railroads can charge in order to make rates uniform and fair.
   B. Regulate the quality of meat and other food.
   C. Regulate working conditions and maximum hours for laborers.
   D. Regulate business advertising.

4. For which of the following industries should the government provide subsidies (federal assistance, usually in the form of money)?
   A. Farming
   B. Oil refining
   C. Telephones
   D. Railroads
   E. Department stores

5. U.S. immigration policy is very open. Almost anyone, no matter how poor or needy, can immigrate to the U.S. Some workers complain about contract labor, in which American companies bring foreign workers into the country to work for very low wages. American workers argue that contract labor causes their wages to drop and some to lose their jobs to these foreign workers. One of the groups of immigrant laborers is the Chinese. The National Labor Union wants to exclude Chinese immigration, and the Knights of Labor opposes contract labor.
Workers have demanded an eight-hour day and public works programs by the government to put unemployed laborers back to work. The government hasn’t enacted these other programs, but it could exclude the Chinese in order to make some concession to workers. In California, meanwhile, a great deal of hostility exists toward Chinese immigrants. The House of Representatives has passed a bill to halt all Chinese immigration. Will you vote in favor of this bill? (Remember, you’re deciding based on what is best for the country, not what is best for you.) Explain.
LESSON 6: GOVERNMENT POLICIES, 1870-1895

Student Handout 2

OUTCOMES

PROBLEM 1—TARIFF

What Actually Happened:

The government did adopt a high tariff in the late 1800s. It helped protect some businesses from foreign competition.

Unintended Consequences:

- The tariff hurt American consumers. Since tariffs act as barriers against foreign businesses, they decrease competition and allow American businesses to charge higher prices.
- The tariff also hurt American exporters, since other countries responded by placing high tariffs on American goods sold there.

PROBLEM 2—MONOPOLIES

What Actually Happened:

The government did not adopt option A (antimonopoly) as a policy, but did adopt option B (antitrust; it was intended to prevent practices that hurt other businesses). The government decided to focus only on preventing cutthroat businesses practices, saying in effect that if a business owner achieved a monopoly through legitimate methods, it wasn’t illegal. (Do you think this was a wise policy?)

PROBLEM 3—REGULATIONS

What Actually Happened:

The government did not regulate any of these industries during the Gilded Age (1865–1900), except for a few laws targeting railroad rates. Laissez-faire ideology opposed regulations of businesses, so for the most part the government exercised a “hands-off” policy.
PROBLEM 4—SUBSIDIES

What Actually Happened:

Only railroads received direct subsidies during the Gilded Age. Government officials felt that the cost of building railroads was so high that companies would not build them without assistance. The government also believed that the railroads would greatly benefit the country as a whole, so subsidies would be worth the cost. Naturally, there were unintended consequences—mainly corruption and the misuse of taxpayer dollars, especially in the Credit Mobilier scandal.

Farmers did not receive direct subsidies during the Gilded Age. Had this happened, government subsidies would have kept more farmers in business, leading to further overproduction of food, thus worsening the problem—and at taxpayer expense.

None of the other areas received subsidies, and should not have received subsidies. If oil refiners, telephone companies, and department stores couldn’t make a profit on their own, then getting taxpayer money wouldn’t have made them profitable in the long run. Furthermore, subsidizing these industries would not have been likely to result in the same benefits to the economy and the general public as subsidizing the railroads did. Thus, the government had little incentive to provide them with subsidies.

PROBLEM 5—IMMIGRATION

What Actually Happened:

The Senate approved the bill (the Chinese Exclusion Act) in 1882 (excerpts from this primary source appear in Handout 4). However, it did not help workers very much.

Unintended Consequences:

- The Chinese Exclusion Act was the first to restrict immigration based on race. It set the precedent for more restrictions, which some saw as a violation of rights and others saw as a necessary response to the flood of immigrants.
- Unfortunately, the act also had the effect of legitimizing other forms of racism. Some of the worst violence against Chinese in the United States happened after the Exclusion Act, such as the 1885 massacre at Rock Springs, Wyoming. Jim Crow segregation of blacks in the South also became more prevalent after the act. The Chinese Exclusion Act didn’t cause Plessy v. Ferguson, but according to historian Andrew Gyory, it made Plessy’s “separate but equal” doctrine more acceptable.
- Businesses engaged in importing and exporting with China (especially those in New England) opposed the Exclusion Act and might have been hurt by it.
LESSON 6: GOVERNMENT POLICIES, 1870-1895

Student Handout 3

ASSUMPTIONS

Put a check next to the assumptions you made while you were deciding these five problems concerning government policies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEM 1—TARIFFS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ Tariffs protect American jobs.</td>
<td>___ Other countries won’t retaliate by putting tariffs on American goods.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEM 2—MONOPOLIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ The government can prevent monopolies.</td>
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<tr>
<th>PROBLEM 3—BUSINESS REGULATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>___ Government officials who regulate businesses will generally try to protect the American public, rather than the businesses they have the responsibility to regulate.</td>
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<tr>
<th>PROBLEM 4—SUBSIDIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ Farmers work very hard, face problems because of the weather, and represent an important part of traditional American society; therefore, they should be more entitled to subsidies.</td>
<td>___ Farmers should be more entitled to subsidies because they tend to be poorer than other people.</td>
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<tr>
<th>PROBLEM 5—IMMIGRATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ Immigrants take more jobs than they create.</td>
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<th>GENERAL ASSUMPTION</th>
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<td>___ Someone who does not vote for any subsidies will be seen as stingy or unkind.</td>
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</table>
LESSON 6: GOVERNMENT POLICIES, 1870-1895

Student Handout 4

Primary Source: The Chinese Exclusion Act, 1882

Preamble. Whereas, in the opinion of the Government of the United States the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities within the territory thereof:

Therefore,

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That from and after the expiration of ninety days next after the passage of this act, and until the expiration of ten years next after the passage of this act, the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States be, and the same is hereby, suspended; and during such suspension it shall not be lawful for any Chinese laborer to come, or, having so come after the expiration of said ninety days, to remain within the United States.

SEC. 2. That the master of any vessel who shall knowingly bring within the United States on such vessel, and land or permit to be landed, and Chinese laborer, from any foreign port of place, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars for each and every such Chinese laborer so brought, and may be also imprisoned for a term not exceeding one year.

SEC. 3. That the two foregoing sections shall not apply to Chinese laborers who were in the United States on the seventeenth day of November, eighteen hundred and eighty…

SEC. 6. That in order to the faithful execution of articles one and two of the treaty in this act before mentioned, every Chinese person other than a laborer who may be entitled by said treaty and this act to come within the United States, and who shall be about to come to the United States, shall be identified as so entitled by the Chinese Government in each case, such identity to be evidenced by a certificate issued under the authority of said government, which certificate shall be in the English language or (if not in the English language) accompanied by a translation into English…

SEC. 11. That any person who shall knowingly bring into or cause to be brought into the United States by land, or who shall knowingly aid or abet the same, or aid or abet the landing in the United States from any vessel of any Chinese person not lawfully entitled to enter the United States, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall, on conviction thereof, be fined in a sum not exceeding one thousand dollars, and imprisoned for a term not exceeding one year.
SEC. 14. That hereafter no State court or court of the United States shall admit Chinese to citizenship; and all laws in conflict with this act are hereby repealed.

SEC. 15. That the words “Chinese laborers,” whenever used in this act, shall be construed to mean both skilled and unskilled laborers and Chinese employed in mining.

Approved, May 6, 1882.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS:

1. What does the Chinese Exclusion Act reveal about the United States at this time?
2. Would reading this document beforehand have led you to make a different decision about excluding Chinese immigrants?
LESSON 7: CHILD LABOR, 1900

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW
Child labor during the Gilded Age was a very complex issue. Many possible ways existed to end it, so therefore many possibilities exist for students to generate options. However, this lesson focuses on techniques used by Mary “Mother” Jones around 1900.

VOCABULARY
- Child labor—Usually refers to children working full days at some sort of manufacturing/production job
- “Mother” Jones—Mary Harris Jones, an activist who pushed to end child labor and for workers’ rights in general
- Lewis Hine—A photographer and activist against child labor
- Theodore Roosevelt—President from 1901–09; pushed for many reforms

DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED
- Ask questions
- Consider other points of view
- Predict unintended consequences
LESSON PLAN

A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (20–30 minutes)

Procedure:

Distribute Handout 1 (which includes several quotes from primary sources) and have students work in small groups to decide which strategies they would adopt. List their suggestions on the board. Next, distribute Handout 2 (which describes the outcomes) and discuss the similarities and differences between what actually happened and what students suggested.

Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what they would have done differently, if anything, now that they know the outcomes. What decision-making skills proved especially important in deciding these issues? Which of the letters of P-A-G-E applied especially to this problem? (See the Decision-Making Analysis section below for ideas.) Ask students what they think they did well or poorly in terms of P-A-G-E. Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journals or their decision-making logs.

Putting the Actual Decisions into Historical Context:

Ask students the following question: Why did child labor become a more important issue around the turn of the century than it had been previously? (Possible reasons: Fear of sending children off to impersonal factories, as opposed to working with parents on farms; importance of education to upward mobility led to a greater need to stay in school; better-educated parents who placed a greater value on education for their children; the increasing ability of the media to reach more people with lurid stories about child labor accidents; smaller family size meant more time to spend with each child.)

Troubleshooting:

It’s hard for some students to put child labor in context. Children had always worked on farms and, even in 1900, millions of children still did. Opponents of child labor didn’t worry about this; instead, they became upset at the prospect of children working in factories and sweatshops, or simply away from the supervision of parents.

B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (10–15 minutes)

Have students decide on their strategies as homework. In class the next day, have them list their strategies on the board, then read or hand out the outcomes. Keep the discussion short by focusing on Mother Jones and Lewis Hine. Were their strategies effective? Why or why not?
TEACHER NOTES FOR
EXPANDING DISCUSSION

(For outcomes for students, see Handout 2)

What Actually Happened:

As mentioned in Handout 2, Theodore Roosevelt didn’t meet with Mother Jones and the marchers. The publicity surrounding Mother Jones’s march led to action, however, eventually resulting in the creation of the National Child Labor Committee and the passage of the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act, which limited child labor.

DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

P = Problem
- Identify any underlying problem
- Consider other points of view
- What are my assumptions? Emotions?

A = Ask for information (about)
- Historical context h (history of this issue; context in the world)
- Reliability of sources
- Historical analogies

G = Goals
- What are my main goals? Are they realistic?
  * - Generate options to help achieve my goals. Are they ethical?

E = Effects
  * - Predict unintended consequences
  * - Play out the option. What could go wrong?

* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Consider other options**: The point of this lesson is for students to generate many options, hopefully some of which will be innovative. Some of the options are listed in the “What Actually Happened” section above.
- **Predict unintended consequences**: When students decide which of the options to choose and explain the reasons for their choices, they should predict unintended consequences. For example, prices may rise for goods previously made by child labor, since the new workers would have to be paid a higher wage; American products may not be as competitive in the world due to higher wage costs, leading to decreasing exports and/or increasing imports.
- **Play out the option**: Businesses that used children as workers and parents who needed the income from their children opposed attempts to end child labor. Parents claimed that the government was telling them how to raise their children, which they felt was un-American.
SOURCES


LESSON 7: CHILD LABOR, 1900

Vocabulary

- Child labor—Usually refers to children working full days at some sort of manufacturing/production job
- “Mother” Jones—Mary Harris Jones, an activist who pushed to end child labor and for workers’ rights in general
- Lewis Hine—A photographer and activist against child labor
- Theodore Roosevelt—President from 1901–09; pushed for many reforms
LESSON 7: CHILD LABOR, 1900

Student Handout 1

PROBLEM—WHAT WILL YOU DO ABOUT CHILD LABOR?

Assume that you are an ordinary citizen in 1900 who opposes child labor. You’ve seen a lot of children working in factories. For example, in a textile mill you’ve witnessed this scene:

*Little girls and boys, barefooted, walked up and down between the endless rows of spindles, reaching thin little hands into the machinery to repair the snapped threads. They crawled under machinery to oil it. They replaced spindles all day long [and all] night through. Tiny babies of six years old with faces of sixty did an eight hour shift for ten cents a day. If they fell asleep, cold water was dashed in their faces, and the voice of the manager yelled above the ceaseless racket and whir of the machines. Toddlers chaps of four years old were brought to the mills to “help” the older sister or brother of ten years but their labor was not paid.*

In a rope factory, you saw this:

*This factory was run also by child labor. The machinery needed constant cleaning. The tiny, slender bodies of the little children crawled in and about under dangerous machinery, oiling and cleaning. Often their hands were crushed. A finger was snapped off.*

You know that children have always worked on farms alongside their parents. But factory labor is different: Children work long hours, determined by factory owners, rather than their parents. Children also work away from home and often get injured.

There are over two million children under age 16 working in the United States at this point. You want to do something to reduce or end child labor. List possible options and strategies to end child labor, then choose which one of these you think will work best.

**List strategies/options to end child labor:**

Choose one strategy/option and explain why you think it will work best:
LESSON 7: CHILD LABOR, 1900

Student Handout 2

What Actually Happened:

Different people proposed different strategies to end child labor, including the following:

- Mother Jones held rallies and speeches to bring the problems of child labor to the attention to the American public.
- Mother Jones also held a dramatic march by mill children in 1903. They marched about 125 miles over the course of 20 days in order to see President Roosevelt. The President didn’t meet with them, but news coverage of the march increased awareness of the problem of child labor. In the years after the march, many states passed laws that outlawed child labor (some states had had child labor laws before the march.)
- Lewis Hine was a photographer who used photographs to raise the public’s awareness of the problems of child labor. One of his pictures is shown below:

- Other people pushed for child labor laws at the state and national levels.
LESSON 8: THE ELECTION OF 1884

Teacher Page

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW
The 1884 election is not well known, so students will be unlikely to know the candidates or outcome. This will actually help, however, for students will be better able to focus on what underlies voters’ decisions, rather than on the actual candidates. Students can also focus on what the election campaign reveals about the time period.

VOCABULARY
- Grover Cleveland—President from 1884–1888 and from 1892–1896; a Democrat
- Veto—Occurs when the president rejects a bill Congress has passed
- Inflation—Higher prices
- Tariff—A tax on imports
- Bribe—A payment to get someone to perform or allow an unethical and/or illegal act

DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED
- Ask questions about reliability of sources
- Reflect on goals
LESSON PLAN

A. IN DEPTH LESSON (15–20 minutes)

Procedure:

Give half the students Handout 1 and the other half Handout 2 (both these handouts describe candidates for office) and ask them to vote. Handout 2 has the same information as Handout 1, but presented in reverse order. Will this lead to differences in voting? Should the order in which information is presented influence decision making? Next, show students Cleveland’s campaign poster (Handout 3) and ask if students find it effective. What kinds of appeals does it make? After students have voted, distribute Handout 4 (which gives them the outcome) or tell them which candidates won. Ask students what they’ve learned from this outcome.

Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what decision-making skills proved especially important in deciding for whom to vote. Which of the letters of P-A-G-E applied especially to this problem? (See the Decision-Making Analysis section below for ideas.) Discuss their answers or have students write their answers in their journals. On what basis did they choose a candidate for which to vote? What criteria do students think they should consider when they vote in actual (not historical) elections? Here are some suggestions:

- Single issue—One big issue matters to me and I’ll decide based on that issue.
- Issues in general—I’ll look at how the candidates stand on several issues and then make up my mind.
- Character—What kind of person is each candidate?
- Backing—Who supports each candidate? If I like or dislike a particular group or organization, then I can see which candidate that group/organization is backing and use that information to decide whether to vote for a candidate. For example, if I don’t like environmental groups, then I’ll vote against any candidate environmental groups support.
- Qualifications—I will vote for the candidate who seems more qualified for the job, based on experience or decision-making skills.
- Age—I will vote for the candidate who is younger (or older).

Putting the Actual Decisions into Historical Context:

Ask students what the election shows about America at the time. (Possibilities: Voters were more interested in the personal traits of presidential candidates than they were in issues; there were no great political issues in the minds of voters at the time; people voted more according to ethnic or religious identity than on the issues.) Were students surprised by the outcome of the election? If so, why? Do students think that their reasons for voting differed from those of people during the Gilded Age? Ask students to give you reasons...
why people during that era might have voted, then have them read about the Gilded Age to find out about major issues of the time.

Troubleshooting:

Ask students what they think the references to rum (alcohol abuse, probably by immigrants, at a time of when the temperance movement—led almost exclusively by non-immigrant reformers—was on the rise) and Romanism (Catholicism—another reference to immigrants, as well as an appeal to get Protestant votes) mean.

B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (10 minutes)

Have students decide on a candidate as homework. Ask them to vote, and to predict the overall results. Read or hand out the outcomes (Handout 4) in class the next day. Keep the discussion short by focusing only on whether students placed more weight on personal characteristics or on issues.
TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

(For outcomes for students, see Handout 2)

What Actually Happened:

No additional notes. All aspects of the election are covered in Handout 2 and by the questions in the lesson plan.

DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

| P = Problem | - Identify any underlying problem |
| - Consider other points of view |
| - What are my assumptions? Emotions? |
| A = Ask for Information (about) | - Historical context (History of this issue; Context in the world) |
| * - Reliability of sources |
| - Historical analogies |
| G = Goals | * - What are my main goals? Are they realistic? |
| - Generate options to help achieve my goals. Are they ethical? |
| E = Effects | - Predict unintended consequences |
| - Play out the option. What could go wrong? |

* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Ask about reliability of sources**: The charges made about Cleveland’s (Candidate A) illegitimate child come from his opponent’s campaign, so those who made the charges have reason to lie or exaggerate.

- **Reflect on your goals**: Do students think character, experience, or stances on issues matters most when voting? This election focused more on issues of character, and some historians consider it the worst mudslinging campaign in American history.

Further Research:
The platforms of the Republican and Democratic Parties for all elections in American history are available at the American Presidency Project:
http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/platforms.php
SOURCES


LESSON 8: THE ELECTION OF 1884

Vocabulary

- Grover Cleveland—President from 1884–1888 and from 1892–1896; a Democrat
- Veto—Occurs when the president rejects a bill Congress has passed
- Inflation—Higher prices
- Tariff—A tax on imports
- Bribe—A payment to get someone to perform or allow an unethical and/or illegal act
LESSON 8: THE ELECTION OF 1884

You are a voter in 1884, and you have to decide which of the major candidates to support.

Candidate A:
1. He is the former mayor of Buffalo and current governor of New York State.
2. He is known as incorruptible. His supporters say he cleaned up corruption in Buffalo, and he was known as the “veto” governor in New York. In both places, he ended the practice of favoritism (i.e., appointing friends and associates to government jobs, regardless of whether they’re qualified).
3. He is the son of a Presbyterian minister. When he was sheriff of Erie County, he fearlessly prosecuted crooked government contractors.
4. His party opposes inflation and wants a lower tariff, but also wants to better protect American business from foreign competition.
5. He did not serve in the army during the Civil War; instead, he hired a substitute to take his place (this was a common practice).
6. A newspaper accused this candidate of fathering an illegitimate child. He admitted that he had, and said he had paid to take care of the child. His opponent’s campaign made up the slogan, “Ma! Ma! Where’s My Pa?” which they had people chant at campaign rallies.

Candidate B:
1. He’s a former representative (and was Speaker of the House) and senator from Maine, serving in the U.S. Congress for 18 years. Before going to Congress, he served for four years (1859–1863) in the Maine legislature. He also served as Secretary of State for a year.
2. His party favors the regulation of railroads for the good of the public.
3. He opposes inflation, wants a high tariff, and favors subsidies for businesses (especially shippers). While in Congress, he tried to get an amendment passed to prevent taxpayer money from being used for religious schools.
4. He has been accused of taking bribes from railroad companies while in Congress.
5. A Protestant minister at a campaign rally stated, “We…don’t propose to leave our party and identify ourselves with the party [Candidate A’s party] whose antecedents are Rum, Romanism and Rebellion.” This candidate was at the rally but didn’t comment on the statement.

Who will get your vote—Candidate A or Candidate B? Please vote for the one you think will be better for the country. Which candidate do you think won the election?
LESSON 8: THE ELECTION OF 1884

Student Handout 2

You are a voter in 1884, and you have to decide which of the major candidates to support.

Candidate A
1. A newspaper accused this candidate of fathering an illegitimate child. He admitted that he had, and said he had paid to take care of the child. His opponent’s campaign made up the slogan, “Ma! Ma! Where’s My Pa?” which they had people chant at campaign rallies.
2. He is the son of a Presbyterian minister. When he was sheriff of Erie County, he fearlessly prosecuted crooked government contractors.
3. He did not serve in the army during the Civil War; instead, he hired a substitute to take his place (this was a common practice).
4. His party opposes inflation and wants a lower tariff, but it also wants to better protect American business from foreign competition.
5. He is known as incorruptible. His supporters say he cleaned up corruption in Buffalo, and he was known as the “veto” governor in New York. In both places, he ended the practice of favoritism (i.e., appointing friends and associates to government jobs, regardless of whether they’re qualified).
6. He is the former mayor of Buffalo and current governor of New York State.

Candidate B
1. A Protestant minister at a campaign rally stated, “We…don’t propose to leave our party and identify ourselves with the party [Candidate A’s party] whose antecedents are Rum, Romanism and Rebellion.” This candidate was at the rally but didn’t comment on the statement.
2. He opposes inflation, wants a high tariff, and favors subsidies for businesses (especially shippers). While in Congress, he tried to get an amendment passed to prevent taxpayer money from being used for religious schools.
3. He has been accused of taking bribes from railroad companies while in Congress.
4. His party favors the regulation of railroads for the good of the public.
5. He’s a former representative (and was Speaker of the House) and senator from Maine, serving in the U.S. Congress for 18 years. Before going to Congress, he served for four years (1859–1863) in the Maine legislature. He also served as Secretary of State for a year.

Who will get your vote—Candidate A or Candidate B? Please vote for the one you think will be better for the country. Which candidate do you think won the election?
LESSON 8: THE ELECTION OF 1884

Student Handout 3

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What persuasive techniques does this campaign ad use?
2. Do you think this would have been an effective campaign ad in 1884? If so, why do you think it would have been more effective then than today?
LESSON 8: THE ELECTION OF 1884

Student Handout 4

What Actually Happened:

Candidate A, Grover Cleveland, defeated Candidate B, James G. Blaine, in a very close election, in terms of both the popular vote (48.5% to 48.2%) and the electoral vote (had New York gone the other way, Blaine would have become president), as you can see from the map below:

The campaign itself focused more on personal attacks than on issues. The revelation that Cleveland had illegitimate child hurt him, but the fact that he had supported the child seemed to lessen the impact. The charge of corruption against Blaine hurt him significantly, leading significant numbers of Republicans to cross over and vote for Cleveland. However, the comment at the campaign rally by the Protestant minister hurt Blaine more. Catholic immigrants were outraged by the reference to “Romanism.” They either thought (mistakenly) that Blaine had said it, or felt he should have said he didn’t agree with it. They voted in large numbers for Cleveland and might have provided the difference in New York State. After the election, the Democrats came up with their own version of the chant Republicans had used in the campaign, saying, “Ma! Ma! Where’s My Pa? Gone to the White House. Ha! Ha! Ha!”

Cleveland lived up to his reputation for preventing corruption. He vetoed many bills that would have paid for pensions (many of which were fraudulent) for Civil War veterans. He also vetoed a bill to distribute grain to drought-stricken farmers, saying, “Federal aid in such cases encourages the expectation of paternal care on the part of the Government and weakens the sturdiness of our national character....” He investigated railroads and
forced them to return 81 million acres of government land grants. Near the end of his term, he proposed cutting the tariff; however, Congress didn’t back him, and this unpopular proposal helped the Republicans defeat him in the 1888 election. President Cleveland is remembered mainly for the bad legislation he prevented, rather than for legislation he got Congress to pass.
INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW
The Gilded Age is known for corruption: Boss Tweed in New York City, the Grant Administration, and the Credit Mobilier Scandal in particular. This lesson has students look at the topic of civil service reform from the broader perspective of how to clean up or at least reduce corruption.

VOCABULARY
- Boss Tweed—William Marcy Tweed, a corrupt Democratic official in New York City in the 1870s
- Civil service test—Requirement for some government jobs
- Patronage—Practice of hiring relatives or friends for government jobs
- Mugwumps—Republicans who voted for Democrat Grover Cleveland
- Secret ballot—Keeps a voter’s choices confidential

DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED
- Ask questions
- Consider other points of view
- Predict unintended consequences
LESSON PLAN

A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (15–30 minutes)

Procedure:

Ask students if they think much corruption exists in government today, and if so, what they think should be done about it. Tell them that corruption was a big issue during the Gilded Age, and distribute Handout 1. Have students work in groups and generate lists of options for stemming corruption. Discuss their answers, then give out Handout 2 (which lists outcomes) or discuss with them what actually happened.

Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students which decision-making skills were especially important in deciding what to do about the issue of corruption. Which of the letters of P-A-G-E were particularly relevant to this problem? (See the Decision-Making Analysis section below for ideas.) Ask students what they think they did well or poorly in terms of P-A-G-E. Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journals or in their decision-making logs.

Putting the Actual Decisions into Historical Context:

Ask why corruption was so widespread during the Gilded Age. (Possible answers: Rapid growth of the population, economy, and cities meant that local governments were unable to provide necessary services; government became too large to control, so money could easily be stolen; clean government was less important to voters than ethnic and religious issues; greater inequality of wealth at this time meant that the rich could essentially “buy” political power.)

Troubleshooting:

Ask students what government jobs today require civil service tests. Do they know anyone who works for the police, fire department, or post office? This discussion will help them understand civil service tests better and show them that this reform still exists today.

Emphasize that Boss Tweed was a political leader, not a business leader. My students often get this confused.

B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (10–15 minutes)

Have students decide on their reforms as homework. The next day, ask them to give their ideas for reform and list these ideas on the board. Next, read or hand out the results (Handout 2). Keep discussion short by focusing only on the civil service test.
TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

(For outcomes for students, see Handout 2)

What Actually Happened:

Students may generate different alternatives than the ones actually proposed at the time. For example, students in my classes have suggested more coverage of corruption by newspapers, limiting campaign contributions, and using election monitors. Ask students to consider the unintended consequences of each proposal.

**DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:**

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* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

The three skills highlighted above are especially important to this problem, although it does involve other skills as well. Students are given the goal of the problem (to lower corruption), but it will require some thinking to generate options that can achieve that goal.

One way to generate worthwhile options is to ask what the underlying problem is. In this case, some people felt that corrupt officials had too much power. One way to reduce that power was to institute the secret ballot, thus breaking the control officials had over voters. A different view of the underlying problem appears in the fourth proposal, which only a minority of people supported. Proponents of the fourth proposal felt that the
government was too large, and that the more jobs it had to hand out, the greater the likelihood of corruption in awarding those jobs. Cutting taxes and government jobs would supposedly decrease corruption. Some people took the opposite view, claiming that government was too small. In this view, people could push around a weak national (or city, or state) government in order to get special advantages.

Students should ask about context—specifically, if other countries had instituted civil service reform. England had indeed tried it and found it effective in reducing corruption.

You could also play out the option. For example, if an elected official decided to end patronage, loyal party members would be upset and might choose to ignore the official’s choices for any jobs that he didn’t control directly. Similarly, Congress resisted civil service reform by reducing the number of government jobs requiring the civil service test to only 10%. My students have suggested that anti-corruption bills be attached to other popular bills in order to enhance the bills’ prospects of passing.
**SOURCES**


LESSON 9: GOVERNMENT
CORRUPTION, 1870–1895

Vocabulary

- Boss Tweed—William Marcy Tweed, a corrupt Democratic official in New York City in the 1870s
- Civil service test—Requirement for some government jobs
- Patronage—Practice of hiring relatives or friends for government jobs
- Mugwumps—Republicans who voted for Democrat Grover Cleveland
- Secret ballot—Keeps a voter’s choices confidential
LESSON 9: GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION, 1870–1895

Student Handout 1

The 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s were a time of great corruption in all levels of American government. For example, William Marcy Tweed (known popularly as “Boss” Tweed) and his cronies controlled the Democratic Party in New York City. He used his power to cheat city taxpayers out of $13 million for a courthouse that was never completed. (It was originally supposed to cost $250,000.) At the national level, in the Credit Mobilier scandal (when a construction company sold materials at inflated prices to the Union Pacific Railroad, cheating taxpayers) several Congressmen accepted bribes.

Further corruption at the national level existed in the practice of giving government jobs to loyal supporters of the winning political party—not to the most qualified people. Office seekers hoping to land one of these so-called “patronage jobs” besieged election winners, taking precious time away from more important duties. People even put advertisements in the newspapers, such as this one: “WANTED—A GOVERNMENT CLERKSHIP at a salary of not less than $1000 per annum. Will give $100 to any one securing me such a position.” The federal government was growing, employing 131,000 people at this time. Moreover, new government jobs required mathematical, scientific, or other skills. When President Garfield was assassinated in 1881 by a disappointed office seeker, many people decided that something needed to be done. But what?

List at least three ideas for stopping government corruption. Next, decide which of these three ideas would work best and explain why.
LESSON 9: GOVERNMENT
CORRUPTION, 1870–1895

Student Handout 2

What Actually Happened:

People came up with several proposals to cut the amount of corruption in government:

1. Civil service reform (see the Pendleton Civil Service Act in Student Handout 3) based federal government jobs on how applicants scored on a test, rather than on favors they did for politicians. This cut the amount of patronage, but the civil service test only applied to about 10% of government jobs. Nevertheless, the number of government jobs covered by civil service expanded to 50% by 1900, and by the end of the 20th century almost all government jobs were civil service. One author has argued that the civil service reform movement gave the United States a stable, competent government.

2. People in the Republican Party called Mugwumps also proposed the secret ballot, which some states adopted. Before the secret ballot, people voted on a party-supplied ticket in front of polling workers and others. The thinking was that if people could vote in secret, they could vote corrupt politicians out of office without fear of retaliation.

3. Another strategy involved prosecuting officials for corruption (although this didn’t always work, as shown in the cartoon on the right) or for refusing to appoint people to government jobs simply because they had been promised the positions in return for political favors. President Cleveland did refuse some appointments, upsetting members of his party. “How could we not reward people who helped us win?” they asked.

4. Cut the size of the government and cut taxes. Making government smaller decreased the potential for corruption because fewer patronage positions existed.
LESSON 9: GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION, 1870–1895

Primary Source: Pendleton Act (1883)

An act to regulate and improve the civil service of the United States.

Be it enacted...That the President is authorized to appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, three persons, not more than two of whom shall be adherents of the same party, as Civil Service Commissioners, and said three commissioners shall constitute the United States Civil Service Commission. Said commissioners shall hold no other official place under the United States.

Sec. 2. That it shall be the duty of said commissioners:

First, for open, competitive examinations for testing the fitness of applicants for the public service now classified or to be classified hereunder. Such examinations shall be practical in their character, and so far as may be shall relate to those matters which will fairly test the relative capacity and fitness of the persons examined to discharge the duties of the service into which they seek to be appointed.

Second, that all the offices, places, and employments so arranged or to be arranged in classes shall be filled by selections according to grade from among those graded highest as the results of such competitive examinations.

Third, appointments to the public service aforesaid in the departments at Washington shall be apportioned among the several States and Territories and the District of Columbia upon the basis of population as ascertained at the last preceding census...

Fourth, that there shall be a period of probation before any absolute appointment or employment aforesaid.

Fifth, that no person in the public service is for that reason under any obligations to contribute to any political fund, or to render any political service, and that he will not be removed or otherwise prejudiced for refusing to do so.

Sixth, that no person in said service has any right to use his official authority or influence to coerce the political action of any person or body. Seventh, there shall be non-competitive examinations in all proper cases before the commission, when competent persons do not compete, after notice has been given of the existence of the vacancy, under such rules as may be prescribed by the commissioners as to the manner of giving notice...
Sec. 8. That no person habitually using intoxicating beverages to excess shall be appointed to, or retained in, any office, appointment, or employment to which the provisions of this act are applicable.

Sec. 9. That whenever there are already two or more members of a family in the public service in the grades covered by this act, no other member of such family shall be eligible to appointment to grades.

Sec. 10. That no recommendation of any person who shall apply for office or place under the provisions of this act which may be given by any Senator or member of the House of Representatives, except as to the character or residence of the applicant, shall be received or considered by any person concerned in making any examination or appointment under this act.


**QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS**

1. How effective do you think this act was?
2. What other laws, if any, should Congress pass to prevent corruption today?
LESSON 10: POPULISM, 1892

Teacher Page

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

The Populists are intriguing both as a social movement and as a political party. In this lesson, students decide what policies might have helped farmers at the time and then compare their choices to the Omaha Platform the Populists adopted in 1892. The Populists proposed many ideas, but this problem focuses on only four of them. One of the proposals included in this lesson did not come from the Populists (it’s from the New Deal); it has been included so students will not automatically think that every proposal they learn about in this problem actually occurred at this time.

The Populists were a complicated group, consisting of various classes and races. This lesson simplifies the situation in order to let students decide about some key Populist proposals without overwhelming them with other details.

VOCABULARY

- Populists—Farmers’ party in the 1890s
- Market—The point where goods and services are sold
- Gold standard—Proposal for all currency to be backed by gold
- Fixed costs—Costs that don’t change from year to year
- Subsidy—Government help for business, often in the form of money
- Immigration—Moving permanently from one country to another
- Omaha Platform—List of Populist positions on issues in 1892

DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED

- Consider other points of view
- Identify the underlying problem
- Predict unintended consequences
LESSON PLAN

A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (20–40 minutes)

Procedure:

There are two different handouts. Handout 1 is more challenging than Handout 2: since rather than providing students with options from which to choose, it forces them to practice generating their own options. Give Handout 1 if the class has mastered the elements of P-A-G-E. However, most students will benefit from seeing the options as laid out in Handout 2.

If you use Handout 1, distribute it as homework and tell students to brainstorm at least three possible solutions to the farmers’ problems. In class, have students list their proposals on the board. Choose three or four of the proposals and discuss them. What are the possible consequences of each? Do students have any questions? (You could ask other questions from P-A-G-E about assumptions, point of view, etc.) After discussing the proposals, have students vote on them. Next, distribute Handout 3, which describes the outcomes.

If you use Handout 2, give students the problems to do as homework or at the beginning of class. Divide students into small groups and assign each group one proposal to decide on. Move throughout the room to clarify misunderstandings or to answer any context questions students may have. Eventually bring the class back together and have the group assigned proposal 1 report its decision. The whole class then votes on that proposal. Repeat the same steps for the other proposals.

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Decision-Making Strategies:

To provide more structure to help student thinking, include these strategies:

1. **Identify any underlying problems:** Ask students the following: What were the underlying causes of farm problems? Tell them to try to focus their decisions on addressing those causes.

2. **Consider other points of view:** Assign each group one of the points of view below and tell students to consider the effects of each of the proposals from the point of view assigned to them. They should try to think of some new effects. Should the country adopt the proposals?
Points of view:
—Farmers —Big Business —Small Businessmen —Economists
—Workers —Railroad companies —African Americans —Women

3. **Predict unintended consequences**: Remind students to consider and list the good and bad unintended consequences of each proposal.

**Reflecting on Decision Making:**

Hand out or tell the class the outcomes, then ask students what they’ve learned. Next, ask what decision-making skills they found especially important in deciding these issues. Which of the letters of P-A-G-E were particularly relevant to this problem? (See the Decision-Making Analysis section on the “Suggested Answers for Teachers” page for ideas.) Discuss students’ answers or have them write their answers in their journals. Compare students’ proposals (Handout 1) or decisions on the proposals (Handout 2) to what the Populists actually did in the Omaha Platform.

**Putting the Actual Decisions into Historical Context:**

Ask students to what extent the Populists’ goals (mainly, to increase economic competitiveness—especially for farmers—in an industrial economy) were realistic. Were the Populists doomed to defeat from the beginning, or did they just make strategic mistakes? Students can research what historians have concluded about the fate of the Populist movement in order to find answers to this question. For example, Richard Hofstadter feels the Populists were doomed because they were out of touch with the rapidly changing society, whereas Gretchen Ritter feels the Populists could have succeeded.

You could also tell students that, in the short run, all of the Populist planks in the Omaha Platform were defeated. Why did they fail? (Possible causes: Capitalists had too much wealth and power; racism divided the Populists; the economy was improving fast enough to keep a majority relatively happy; some people saw the whole Populist program as too radical or too anti-property.) Why were some Populist proposals adopted at a later point? (Possible causes: more reformers in cities, where a lot of working-class people lived; more progressive leadership in the federal government; many reforms were adopted individually, which might have seemed less radical than enacting a long list of reforms all at once.)

**Troubleshooting:**

Students sometimes have difficulty understanding how inflation could help farmers, even with the explanation in Proposal 2 of Handout 2 about adding silver to the money supply. I have used the following concrete example in class to help students: A farmer owes $200 per year in mortgage (a fixed cost) and makes $250 in year 1 for his crops, $300 in year 2, and $350 in year 3, even though he sold the same amount of crops every year. Will that farmer find it easier or harder to pay his mortgage? (Easier—his crop prices rise because inflation has caused there to be more money in the economy. Since consumers have more...
money, they will bid up the price of crops. Inflation has made his mortgage easier to pay!

Making decisions on too many programs can become tedious. Thus, this lesson analyzes only four programs, whereas the Populists actually proposed more than ten programs in the Omaha Platform. The Progressives later championed many of the Populists’ political proposals. (The Decision Making in U.S. History volume on Progressivism has a lesson that explores Progressive programs in greater depth.)

### B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (10–20 minutes)

Use Handout 2 (which provides students with the proposals), but only have students decide on Proposals 1, 3, and 7. Divide students into small groups and assign each group one proposal to decide. Walk around the room so that you can clarify any misunderstandings or answer any questions about context students might have. Bring the class back together and have the group assigned to Proposal 1 report its decision. Afterwards, have the whole class vote on that proposal. Repeat the same steps for Proposals 3 and 7.

Give the class Handout 3 or tell students the outcomes, and then ask students what they’ve learned from them. Next, ask which decision-making skills students found especially important in deciding on these issues. Focus on just one or two skills of P-A-G-E.
TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

(For outcomes for students, see Handout 3)

HANDOUT 1

You can use the analyses below for Handout 2 to evaluate any decisions students come up with that are similar to the proposals in Handout 2. You can evaluate student decisions on proposals other than the ones listed on Handout 2 by asking students what good and bad effects they think each proposal will have.

HANDOUT 2

What Actually Happened:

The Populists actually made Proposals 1, 2, and 4 (on Handout 2) in their party platform for the Election of 1892 (see Student Handout 4, which has the primary source “Omaha Platform, 1892”). The Populists lost the election, so their ideas were not implemented at that point in history; however, Proposals 2, 3, and 4 were eventually enacted in different forms, so some idea exists of how they might have worked.

- **PROPOSAL 1: Government Ownership of Railroads**
  You may want to tell students that government-owned railroads worked well in Great Britain, most of Europe, and Japan, despite having, to some degree, the negative effects listed as unintended consequences on Handout 3: higher taxes, corruption, and inefficiency. The U.S. does not have as extensive a railroad system as these other countries and regions. Students should consider an important difference (under “Ask questions” in P-A-G-E): the United States is much larger and less densely populated than these other countries, so an extensive railroad network here would have higher costs and lower revenues.

- **PROPOSAL 2: Add Silver to the Money Supply**
  A great deal of debate has arisen among economists and economic historians regarding the question of monetary causes of depression and economic growth. You could explain to students that the silver issue is actually much more complex than described in Handout 2. According to historian Gretchen Ritter, the focus on silver was part of a long chain of proposals to make the money supply more flexible (i.e., more able to expand along with the economy). However, farmers also pushed for silver because they felt that bankers in the East controlled the money supply and used it to advance their own interests at the expense of farmers of the South and West. Farmers often had great difficulty obtaining credit; at the same time, they saw their own banks sending off deposits to New York to invest in the stock market. Farmers therefore wanted a silver standard in order to take
back the money supply from the “money power” and make the financial system more equitable for all regions of the country.

- **PROPOSAL 3: Subsidize Farmers**  
  The government eventually implemented this proposal decades later, but not in this exact form. Tell students that the subject of subsidizing farmers reappeared again with the New Deal during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

- **PROPOSAL 4: Prevent Immigrants From Owning Land**  
  Tell students that legislation to limit immigration in general eventually passed in the 1920s in the form of the National Origins Act. Despite limits on immigration, however, farmers still overproduced in the 1930s. Thus, it looks like this proposal would not have helped because it didn’t address the real problem—overproduction, rather than too many farmers. The number of farmers declined in the three decades after 1890, but the production of farm crops kept increasing.

**DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P = Problem</th>
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<tr>
<td>* - Identify any underlying problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>* - Consider other points of view</td>
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<tr>
<td>- What are my assumptions? Emotions?</td>
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<td>- Historical analogies</td>
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<tr>
<th>G = Goals</th>
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<tr>
<td>- What are my main goals? Are they realistic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Generate options to help achieve my goals. Are they ethical?</td>
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<td>* - Predict unintended consequences</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Play out the option. What could go wrong?</td>
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* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Identify any underlying problem:** The Populists only looked at symptoms; therefore, they wanted to control railroads, limit immigration in order to decrease the supply of workers, shorten the workweek in order to lower unemployment, and raise prices to help farmers to pay off their loans. They did not take into account the underlying problem: advances in technology had led to overproduction of food while decreasing the number of farmers needed to produce this food. Recognizing this underlying problem might have led to
different proposals: for example, letting some farmers go out of business or having the government help former farmers by training them for non-farm jobs. You can use Question 1 in the Lesson Plan section to help students focus on the underlying problem.

- **Consider other points of view:** Question 2 in the Lesson Plan section above has students look at the Populist proposals from other points of view. Populism appealed to farmers, workers, and African Americans. Although immigrant workers didn’t like the immigration restriction proposal, workers in general found much they liked in the Populists’ proposals. Big business, railroad companies, and small businessmen did not like the Populists’ proposals concerning inflation and government regulation. The proposals don’t mention anything about women directly, and women would probably split along class lines. The point of view section should alert students to the fact that business interests organized to defeat the Populist proposals. Playing out what may happen will help students see that the Populists should have concentrated on motivating their main constituency in order to counteract business’s efforts to defeat Populist reforms. In reality, the Populists had almost no chance to get their proposals passed.

- **Predict unintended consequences:** Handout 3 outlines some possible unintended consequences of the four proposals of Handout 2. Students may possibly come up with other consequences.

**Further Research:**

The History Matters Web site has several primary sources on the Populists (including ones concerning Tom Watson) and issues of race and labor. Available at [http://www.historymatters.gmu.edu](http://www.historymatters.gmu.edu); search for “Populism.”
SOURCES


LESSON 10: POPULISM, 1892—
POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

Vocabulary

- Populists—Farmers’ party in the 1890s
- Market—The point where goods and services are sold
- Gold standard—Proposal for all currency to be backed by gold
- Fixed costs—Costs that don’t change from year to year
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- Immigration—Moving permanently from one country to another
- Omaha Platform—List of Populist positions on issues in 1892
LESSON 10: POPULISM, 1892—POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

Student Handout 1

POPULIST POLICIES FOR FARMERS

It is 1892, and farmers make up 50% of the American population. New farm machinery allows farmers to produce more crops than they did in years past, but unfortunately, this increased production has caused prices of farm goods to steadily decrease. Railroads help farmers sell their products in new markets, but they also make new land accessible for farming, which in turn adds to the problem of overproduction.

Meanwhile, a problem exists regarding the nation’s money supply, which is based on gold. The money supply cannot increase unless the amount of gold also increases, but this hasn’t happened. Over the last 30 years, the money supply in America has remained relatively constant while the supply of goods has tripled. With more and more goods but the same number of dollars, sellers have had to keep lowering prices in order to attract buyers. This is known as deflation.

On top of decreasing prices for farm goods, shipping and storage costs have also increased. In addition, shippers charge smaller customers (such as farmers) more than they charge large companies; also, large companies can negotiate lower rates because of the amount of business they bring to the shipping companies.
As prices constantly drop, more and more farmers get squeezed out of business. They receive less every year for their crops, but the amount they have to pay for the loans on their land remains fixed. Hundreds of thousands of farmers have decided to leave their farms. Many farmers are angry, and some have teamed up to form the Populist Party. Farmers want something done. But what?

**BRAINSTORM POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**
LESSON 10: POPULISM, 1892—
POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

Student Handout 2

POPULIST POLICIES FOR FARMERS

It is 1892, and farmers make up 50% of the American population. New farm machinery allows farmers to produce more crops than they did in years past, but unfortunately, this increased production has caused prices of farm goods to steadily decrease. Railroads help farmers sell their products in new markets, but they also make new land accessible for farming, which in turn adds to the problem of overproduction.

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The Populists are a political group organized to help farmers. Their platform in the 1892 election stated, “There are but two sides. On the one side are the allied hosts of monopolies, the money power, great trusts and railroad corporations... On the other are the farmers, laborers, merchants and all the people who produce wealth.” The Populists made some (but not all) of the following proposals for solving farmers’ problems. Which would you support?
PROPOSAL 1:

The government should take over the railroads and run them. Right now, the railroads rip off the little guys—especially the hard-working farmers. It would be better to put control of the railroads in the hands of the people’s representatives.

Do you support this proposal? Explain.

PROPOSAL 2:

Right now, the amount of money in the economy depends on the amount of gold available. The government should add silver to the money supply, or simply print money not backed by gold. That way, the money supply would expand, prices would go up, and farmers would be able to pay off their loans and mortgages. With farmers thriving, other businesses in farming areas would also benefit.

Do you support this proposal? Explain.

PROPOSAL 3:

The government should subsidize farmers, paying the cost of planting, or perhaps paying off part of the mortgages on land owned by struggling farmers. These people work hard to scratch out a living. The government should help them out.

Do you support this proposal? Explain.
PROPOSAL 4:

The government should prevent immigrants from owning land. These immigrants keep coming to this country and starting farms, which increases the amount of crops produced and consequently drives down prices. Cutting down on the number of people who own land can limit the supply of crops and drive prices up.

Do you support this proposal? Explain.
LESSON 10: POPULISM, 1892—
POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

Student Handout 3

OUTCOMES

PROPOSAL 1—GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP OF
RAILROADS

What Actually Happened:

The Populists did make this proposal (see the Omaha Platform in Handout 4). It was not adopted in the U.S., but was in Japan, Russia, France, and other countries.

Benefits:

- Uniform track sizes and operating procedures
- Cheaper prices for shippers and passengers, since the government pays part or all of the costs
- Cheaper prices mean that trade within the country may increase

Unintended Consequences:

- **Higher taxes**—The government would most likely need to raise taxes in order to pay for the buyout and for operating the railroads thereafter. Higher taxes could then result in decreased demand and lower investment in other areas of the economy.
- **Corruption**—Most likely, a large government bureaucracy would have to be created to run the railroads, which would then create many opportunities for corruption. Corruption scandals involving government subsidies to railroads (Credit Mobilier) had already occurred.
- **Inefficiency**—Market competition forces private businesses to be efficient or they’ll go out of business; the government doesn’t face that pressure. Many private railroad companies had already gone out of business in the previous 25 years. The government would be more likely to keep less-used lines open, whereas competition would force private companies to close unprofitable lines. On the other hand, keeping unprofitable lines open would mean that passengers or shippers in lightly traveled areas would still have a transportation system available to them. If a private company chose to close such lines, these passengers and shippers would be stranded.
PROPOSAL 2—ADD SILVER TO THE MONEY SUPPLY

What Actually Happened:

The Populists did make this proposal (see the Omaha Platform in Handout 4). The government didn’t add silver to the money supply, but the whole point of adding silver—to cause inflation—occurred anyway. Starting in about 1897, more gold was discovered around the world, and new techniques for refining gold were developed, increasing the amount of gold, which allowed for an increase in the money supply, which then led to inflation. Prices started rising in the U.S. economy.

Benefits:

- Prices rose and farmers benefited, just as the Populists had argued. Prices did not increase rapidly, as some people feared, because the money supply increased slowly and because the economy expanded along with the money supply.
- Inflation meant that bankers made less money on earlier loans, since the dollars people used to pay back those loans were worth less than before. Although bankers weren’t happy, they still made money, and the economy in general expanded rapidly as it recovered from the depression of 1893.

PROPOSAL 3—SUBSIDIZE FARMERS

What Actually Happened:

The Populists did not make this proposal (see the Omaha Platform in Handout 4). The government eventually implemented this proposal decades later, but not in this exact form.

Benefits:

- Farmers would surely have benefited from government subsidies, at least in the short run.
- Subsidies might have saved many small family farms.
- Subsidies might have kept the prices of farm goods low by helping farmers pay their expenses, thus reducing the price they would need to charge for their crops.

Unintended Consequences:

- **Higher taxes**—The government would most likely need to increase taxes in order to pay for the farm subsidies.
- **Corruption**—Farmers would have an incentive to make their condition look worse than it really was in order to get more money from the government. The possibility also existed that some might try to bribe government officials.
• **Inefficiency**—The government bureaucracy in charge of giving the subsidies might pay out too much money or incorrectly decide who needs it most.

• **Continued overproduction by farmers**—If overproduction of food posed the underlying problem and drove prices down, subsidies would most likely have made the problem *worse* by keeping more farmers in business.

### PROPOSAL 4—PREVENT IMMIGRANTS FROM OWNING LAND

**What Actually Happened:**

The Populists did make this proposal (see the Omaha Platform in Handout 4). In 1913, California enacted a similar proposal that prevented Japanese immigrants from owning land.

**Benefits:**

- Preventing immigrants from owning land would have left more land for American citizens.

**Unintended Consequences:**

- Governments of the countries from which the immigrants came may feel insulted by this blatant discrimination against their former citizens. They may retaliate against American businesses or citizens in their country. Thus, business in general could suffer.

- In a competitive market such as farming, reducing the number of people who can own land will lead to less efficient use of land. Low demand for land often results in a greater number of inefficient farms. Conversely, high demand increases the price of the land, which increases costs, and that drives inefficient farmers out of business more quickly.

- Discrimination against immigrants damages America’s image as a land of opportunity, which may affect investments, trade, and—obviously—immigration. By only targeting one group, the proposal in California had little effect on the amount of crops produced—but it had a big effect on U.S.-Japanese relations, resulting in protests, a souring of the U.S.’s image abroad, and boycotts of American products in Japan.
We declare, therefore—

First.—That the union of the labor forces of the United States this day consummated shall be permanent and perpetual; may its spirit enter into all hearts for the salvation of the republic and the uplifting of mankind.

Second.—Wealth belongs to him who creates it, and every dollar taken from industry without an equivalent is robbery. “If any will not work, neither shall he eat.” The interests of rural and civil labor are the same; their enemies are identical.

Third.—We believe that the time has come when the railroad corporations will either own the people or the people must own the railroads; and should the government enter upon the work of owning and managing all railroads, we should favor an amendment to the constitution by which all persons engaged in the government service shall be placed under a civil-service regulation of the most rigid character, so as to prevent the increase of the power of the national administration by the use of such additional government employees.

FINANCE.—We demand a national currency, safe, sound, and flexible, issued by the general government only, a full legal tender for all debts, public and private, and that without the use of banking corporations; a just, equitable, and efficient means of distribution direct to the people, at a tax not to exceed 2 per cent per annum, to be provided as set forth in the sub-treasury plan of the Farmers’ Alliance, or a better system; also by payments in discharge of its obligations for public improvements.

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 to not less than $50 per capita.
3. We demand a graduated income tax.
4. We believe that the money of the country should be kept as much as possible in the hands of the people, and hence we demand that all State and national revenues shall be limited to the necessary expenses of the government, economically and honestly administered. We demand that postal savings banks be established by the government for the safe deposit of the earnings of the people and to facilitate exchange.

TRANSPORTATION.—Transportation being a means of exchange and a public necessity, the government should own and operate the railroads in the interest of the people. The telegraph and telephone, like the post-office system, being a necessity for the
transmission of news, should be owned and operated by the government in the interest of the people.

LAND.—The land, including all the natural sources of wealth, is the heritage of the people, and should not be monopolized for speculative purposes, and alien ownership of land should be prohibited. All land now held by railroads and other corporations in excess of their actual needs, and all lands now owned by aliens should be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers only.

For the full platform, go to:
http://www.wwnorton.com/eamerica/media/ch22/resources/documents/populist.htm

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. List at least five groups that would not support the Omaha Platform; list the specific parts of the platform each group wouldn’t like.
2. Which parts, if any, of the Omaha Platform do you consider radical?
3. Was the Omaha Platform a practical document that could have actually benefited farmers had it been implemented, or was it unrealistic and impractical?
LESSON 11: THE ELECTION OF 1892

Teacher Page

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

The 1892 election focused primarily on issues—and particularly on inflation, as proposed by the Populists in the form of the free coinage of silver. The issue would become even more central in the next presidential election in 1896 (discussed in Lesson 13). Lesson 10 focused on key issues proposed by the Populists; this one looks at the platforms of other parties as well.

VOCABULARY

- Electoral vote—Votes by the Electoral College for president; the number of votes each state has in the college equals the total number of its senators and representatives
- Third party—Political party other than the Republicans or Democrats; such parties historically have had very little chance of winning the presidency
- Grover Cleveland—Democratic President, 1884–1888, and 1892–1896
- Veto—When the president rejects a bill passed by Congress
- Tariff—A tax on imports
- Immigration—Moving permanently from one country to another
- Inflation—Rising prices
- Homestead Strike—An unsuccessful strike against Carnegie Steel in 1892
- Free coinage of silver—Proposal to allow U.S. currency to be backed by silver as well as gold; would allow the government to print more money, which would then lead to inflation
- Graduated income tax—Plan which taxes higher incomes at a higher percentage

DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED

- Ask questions about reliability of sources
- Reflect on goals
LESSON PLAN

A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (15–20 minutes)

Procedure:

Give students Handout 1, which describes the candidates, and ask them to vote. After they have voted, let them know who the candidates were and who won (either by distributing Handout 2 to the class or by just telling them). Next, discuss what students learned about elections and decision making. Was there anything in the description of Cleveland that could have helped us see how he would handle the major crisis of his presidency (the 1893 depression)? Ask students what they learned from this outcome.

Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what decision-making skills they found especially important when deciding for whom they would vote. Which of the letters of P-A-G-E applied especially to this election? (See the Decision-Making Analysis section below for ideas.) Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journals.

Putting the Actual Decisions into Historical Context:

Ask students what this election reveals about America at that time. (Possibilities: Voters had become more interested in the issues brought up by the Populist Party; personalities did not become as important a factor as in previous elections.)

Troubleshooting:

Ask students to explain why adding silver would cause inflation. (The government could not print more dollars unless enough gold existed to back them. “Adding silver” meant that silver as well as gold could now back dollars. Previously, the government did not have enough gold to expand the money supply. Adding silver would thus allow the government to print more money. More money in circulation would then allow more people to bid on the same number of goods, which would lead to higher prices.)

Students often get confused about the graduated income tax. Use an example such as this: A person makes $10,000 and pays 10% in taxes ($1000). A person making $20,000 pays 10% on the first $10,000, but 20% on the next $10,000, for a total of $3000.

B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (10 minutes)

As homework, have students decide on a candidate. In class the next day, ask them to vote individually and to predict the overall results of the election. Next, tell students the results or give them Handout 2, which describes what happened. Keep the discussion short by focusing only on whether students based their votes more on personal characteristics or on issues.
TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

(For outcomes for students, see Handout 2)

What Actually Happened:

No additional notes. All aspects of the election are covered in Handout 2 and by questions in the lesson plan.

DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

P = Problem
- Identify any underlying problem
- Consider other points of view
- What are my assumptions? Emotions?

A = Ask for Information (about)
- Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)
  * - Reliability of sources
    - Historical analogies

G = Goals
  * - What are my main goals? Are they realistic?
    - Generate options to help achieve my goals. Are they ethical?

E = Effects
- Predict unintended consequences
- Play out the option. What could go wrong?

* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Ask about reliability of sources**: The charges made against Candidate A (Harrison) came from his opponent’s campaign, so those who made the charges had reason to exaggerate or lie.

- **Reflect on your goals**: Do students think character, experience, or stances on issues matter most in a candidate? This election focused more on the candidates’ positions on issues and on people’s perceptions of Harrison’s performance as president.

Further Research:

**SOURCES**


LESSON 11: THE ELECTION OF 1892

Vocabulary

- **Electoral vote**—Votes by the Electoral College for president; the number of votes each state gets in the college is equal to the total number of its senators and representatives
- **Third party**—Political party other than the Republicans or Democrats; such parties historically have had very little chance of winning the presidency
- **Grover Cleveland**—President, 1884–1888 and 1892–1896, a Democrat
- **Veto**—Occurs when the president rejects a bill passed by Congress
- **Tariff**—A tax on imports
- **Immigration**—Moving permanently from one country to another
- **Inflation**—Rising prices
- **Homestead Strike**—An unsuccessful strike against Carnegie Steel in 1892
- **Free coinage of silver**—Proposal to allow U.S. currency to be backed by silver as well as gold; would allow the government to print more money, which would then lead to inflation
- **Graduated income tax**—Plan which taxes higher-income people at a higher percentage
LESSON 11: THE ELECTION OF 1892

Student Handout 1

You are a voter in 1892, and you have to decide which of the major candidates to support for president.

Candidate A:
- He is the president, running for reelection.
- He is a veteran of the Civil War, and he was the reporter of his state’s supreme court. He attended college and worked as a lawyer before entering politics.
- He has two children, but his wife just died two weeks ago. He is a Protestant.
- His party advocates high, protective tariffs, along with further restrictions on immigration to exclude criminals and paupers.
- He has been accused of giving too many pensions to veterans, some of whom did not deserve them. He has also been accused of giving too much help to rich bondholders and too many business subsidies.

Candidate B:
- He is known as an honest leader who works hard against corruption. A former governor and president, he refused while in office to appoint party favorites, and he vetoed bills to allocate money for various subsidies.
- He is married with five children. He is a Protestant. He did not attend college, but was a lawyer at one point.
- He favors limited inflation, but doesn’t want to add too much silver to the money supply.
- He has been very critical of Candidate A because of the high tariff passed during his presidency. He says the tariff protects big business at the expense of consumers. He wants a lower tariff, but only if it doesn’t hurt industry or labor.
- He has criticized Candidate A for his handling of the Homestead Strike.
- His party opposes Chinese immigration but favors immigration from Europe.
Candidate C:
- He has served three terms in Congress as a member of a third party. He was a soldier in the Union army during the Civil War, receiving medals for bravery. He graduated from law school and practiced law for several years.
- His party favors expansion of the money supply through the free coinage of silver. Adding silver to the money supply will cause prices to go up and will help farmers by increasing crop prices and making it easier for them to pay off their loans.
- His party also supports government ownership of the railroads and a graduated income tax (under which the rich pay a higher percentage than the poor).

Who will get your vote—Candidate A, Candidate B, or Candidate C? Please vote for the one you think will be better for the country as a whole.

Which candidate do you predict will win the election?
LESSON 11: THE ELECTION OF 1892

What Actually Happened:

Candidate B (Democrat Grover Cleveland) defeated Candidate A (Republican President Benjamin Harrison) and Candidate C (Populist James B. Weaver). Cleveland won the popular vote, drawing 46.1% to Harrison’s 43.0%. The electoral vote was not close, with Cleveland getting 62.4% to Harrison’s 32.7%. Weaver got 8.5% of the popular vote and also won a total of 22 electoral votes (5%). This was unusual because third parties rarely win any electoral votes.

As the incumbent, Harrison should have had the advantage. Historians believe he was hurt mainly by the McKinley Tariff, by divisions within his party, and by excessive government spending during his presidency. As a third-party candidate, Weaver had very little chance: since each state is winner-take-all, a candidate coming in third or even second in a state still receives zero electoral votes. Nevertheless, he received over one million votes out of 11 million cast, showing that many people were upset by the control big business seemed to have over the country.

Thus, Cleveland found himself back in the White House after four years. It was not a happy presidency, as the Depression of 1893 began a year after he took over. People naturally blamed Cleveland for their economic distress. To make matters worse, Cleveland sent troops in to crush the Pullman Strike, which alienated him from many workers. (On the other hand, many others were happy that he put down the strike, since they saw the threat of anarchy in it.) Cleveland stuck with the gold standard, hoping that keeping prices stable would help the country recover from the depression. Unfortunately for him, this didn’t help, and more and more of the public began to press for expanding the money supply by adding silver.
LESSON 12: TAXES AND TARIFFS, 1894
Teacher Page

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW
Taxes have always been a big issue in American history, going all the way back to the Ipswich tax revolt in the 1600s. In this lesson, students get a chance to decide what they think about taxes. Should the U.S. have an income tax? Should taxes be based on using services (tolls or sales tax), or on ability to pay (income tax)?

VOCABULARY
- Depression—A decline in the economy and high unemployment
- Tariff—A tax on imports
- Lobbyists—People who try to influence Congress to enact legislation favorable to a certain industry or group of people
- Surplus—Occurs when the government takes in more in taxes than it spends
- Income tax—A tax on money earned, rather than on property or purchases (sales)
- Inheritance tax—A tax on a person’s wealth; collected when he or she dies
- Unconstitutional—Describes laws which the Supreme Court has decided violate the Constitution

DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED
- Ask questions
- Consider other points of view
- Reflect on goals
- Play out options
LESSON PLAN

A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (One class period of 40 minutes)

Procedure:

You have the option of using either of the two handouts for this lesson. Handout 1 provides more context, making it easier for students to understand the situation. Handout 2 is only a few lines long, so students have to ask more questions to get the information they need. (The second handout just takes four sentences out of the first handout and eliminates the rest, so the phrasing is the same.)

The lesson emphasizes asking questions (skill A from the P-A-G-E model). Divide the class into small groups and give students either Handout 1 or Handout 2. Tell students they can get answers to three of the questions from the list on the handout. When the group has decided which questions they want answered, have one student from the group come to the teacher’s desk and get the written answers to those three questions.

Alternatively, you could tell students that you’ll be walking around the room in case people want to ask questions. A third possibility is to have the whole class decide on questions they think are important and vote on the most important three. You can then read the answers to the whole class.

After students have received answers to their questions, each group decides what to do about the tariff and other taxes. Have each group explain its choice, then read what President Cleveland actually did and the effects his actions had.

Decision-Making Strategies:

The questions are designed to improve students’ ability to ask better (or any) questions.

Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what decision-making skills they found especially important in deciding these issues. Which of the letters of P-A-G-E applied especially to this problem? (See the Decision-Making Analysis section below for ideas.) Ask students what they think they did well or poorly in terms of P-A-G-E. Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journals or in their decision-making logs.

Putting the Actual Decisions into Historical Context:

Why were tariffs and income taxes such big issues at this time? (Possible answers: democratic ideals held that taxes should be fairly apportioned, which they weren’t under the tariff; workers and farmers had become more organized and militant in order to
protect their interests; the number of American exporters had increased, and they wanted lower tariffs in order to boost exports).

Troubleshooting:

Handout 1 has an explanation of the graduated income tax. Make sure that students understand this by asking them to explain in their own words what the term means. Go back over the explanation, if necessary.

**B. QUICK MOTIVATOR: (10–15 minutes)**

Have students make their decisions as homework. The next day, briefly discuss their answers, then distribute the outcomes and have students comment in their journals or logs.
TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

(For outcomes for students, see Handout 3)

HANDOUT 1

Additional Answers to Questions:

1. Context: Has the U.S. ever had an income tax or inheritance tax before?

Yes. During the Civil War, the U.S. had both an income and inheritance tax and collected a significant amount of revenue with them. Neither proved that difficult to collect, although some fraud did occur.

2. Context: Do other countries have income or inheritance taxes?

Yes. Most industrial countries in Europe have an income tax, and most have an inheritance tax. These seem to work well, with little protest from taxpayers.

3. Context: Do other countries have tariffs?

Yes. However, the United States has the highest tariffs. In most cases, countries retaliate when another country puts up a tariff, reducing trade in the long run.

4. Specialized information: How does reduced trade affect a country’s economy?

Less trade means lower economic growth. Trade allows countries to specialize, and specialization leads to higher production of goods. Look at it this way: If a country can specialize, it’s going to produce what it can produce best—items for which it has a comparative advantage. Trade increases the demand for these items, and thus helps a country’s economy grow faster. When a tariff causes a reduction in trade, a country’s economy suffers. Here’s another way to think about tariffs: Would having tariffs between states in the U.S. make sense? Most people would say no, but if having tariffs between states is a bad idea, why is it a good idea to have tariffs between countries?

5. Context: Who primarily pays for the tariff, the rich or the poor?

A tariff taxes by the purchase, not according to a person’s income. Thus, tariffs end up affecting poor people more than rich people. For example, if a tariff adds $1.00 to the price of an item, that’s a much higher percentage of someone’s income who makes $100 than of someone who makes $1000.
6. Specialized information: Do tariffs keep jobs in the United States?

They probably do in the short run, since the reduced competition allows businesses to expand and hire more workers. However, other countries almost always retaliate by putting tariffs on American exports. Exporters therefore lose business and jobs, while some manufacturers in the U.S. gain business and jobs. The U.S. ends up with about the same number of jobs, but the jobs are certainly less efficient since the tariff protects them from foreign competition. Export businesses have to be efficient in order to compete in an international market. Manufacturing businesses in the U.S. that operate efficiently don’t need tariff protection since they can compete on their own. Therefore, the jobs a tariff protects are by definition less efficient.

7. Context: What arguments were made at this time for and against the income and inheritance taxes?

Arguments against:
   a. It’s unfair for the government to tax some citizens, but not others.
   b. The inheritance tax threatens property. For example, if a father dies and his family doesn’t have enough money to pay the inheritance tax, they could end up losing their property. We need to protect private property from the government.
   c. These taxes are essentially class warfare against the rich.
   d. These taxes wouldn’t work because rich people would find ways to evade them. Some might even leave the country.
   e. If the poor don’t have to pay these taxes, they’ll in effect become second-class citizens.

Arguments for:
   a. Citizens should be taxed according to their ability to pay.
   b. Other taxes are based on private property, so the inheritance tax hardly poses some new “threat.”
   c. The rich need more services from government because they have more property to protect, so they should pay more taxes.
   d. The law will punish those who try to evade the new taxes. As for leaving the country, the rich would have no place to go in Europe because the countries there all have income taxes too.
   e. If paying taxes is a sign of citizenship, then the poor (who pay the bulk of taxes from the tariff and excise taxes) are very much first-class citizens.

8. Context: What arguments were made at this time for and against the tariff?

See the answers to numbers 12 and 13 below.

9. Context: How well have tariffs worked in the past?

High tariffs in the early 1800s worked well to protect new American industries. In the 1830s and 1850s, the tariff was a source of conflict between the North and South. Many
people in the North felt that low tariffs hurt manufacturers and caused unemployment; most in the South felt a high tariff was necessary in order to lower costs for cotton planters. Since the 1870s, the tariff once again became controversial. Supporters claimed it protected American business and workers. Critics argued that American business didn’t need to be protected since America had the largest, most modern economy in the world. They argued instead that American consumers needed lower prices.

10. Context: What has happened in the past to bills that proposed lower tariffs?

Almost all tariff bills end up having hundreds of amendments added in order to raise tariff rates on specific products. This occurs because congressmen feel pressure from lobbyists to protect important industries in their districts. For example, a congressman with many sugar growers in his district will be pressured to increase the tariff on foreign sugar.

HANDOUT 2

Additional Answers to Questions:

11. Context: How badly does the government need the tariff revenue? Is the country running a deficit or a surplus?

The government can always use the money, but the country is running a surplus right now, which means the government takes in more tax revenue than it spends. Actually, running a deficit during a depression can be beneficial: increased government spending can help the economy grow and thus combat the depression.

12. Specialized information: Whom does a tariff help?

A tariff helps protect both businesses and the workers employed by those businesses from foreign competition.

13. Specialized information: Whom does a tariff hurt?

A tariff can hurt consumers and exporters because it usually results in higher prices for those items subject to the tariff. Since a tariff shields American companies from competition, it makes them more like monopolies and allows them to increase prices. A tariff also often leads other countries to retaliate by placing tariffs on American goods, which in turn reduce exports. Some opponents of the tariff believe it hurts the government as well: high tariff rates lead to a reduction in imports, which means that the government takes in less tax revenue.
14. Context: Does the U.S. have taxes other than the tariff?

Yes. One is the income tax. The government could institute an income tax under which everyone pays an equal percentage (say, 2%), or one under which rich people pay more than poor people (for example, the tax could start on incomes greater than $5000 per year; workers at the time earned about $500 per year.) Another type of tax targets inheritances and estates. Here again, the tax (say, 5%) could apply only to large estates (for example, those worth over $10,000).

What Actually Happened:

Tell students that the issues of tariffs and income taxes continued to provoke debate throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century.

DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

| P = Problem | - Identify any underlying problem | * - Consider other points of view |
| - * - Consider other points of view |
| - What are my assumptions? Emotions? |

| A = Ask for information (about) | - Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world) |
| - Reliability of sources |
| - Historical analogies |

| G = Goals | * - What are my main goals? Are they realistic? |
| - Generate options to help achieve my goals. Are they ethical? |

| E = Effects | - Predict unintended consequences |
| * - Play out the option. What could go wrong? |

* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Points of view:** With the tariff question, it’s important to consider the points of view of both consumers and foreign countries, the latter of which will likely retaliate.

- **Ask questions about context:** To make an informed decision, students need to have an understanding of the situations in the United States and other countries at the time. For example, knowing who pays for the tariff, whether other countries have income taxes, and what has happened in Congress to previous tariff bills would help. It’s also important to know if the U.S. has had an income tax before and whether other countries have them. Understanding the economics of tariffs,
especially the trade-offs involved and the overall effects on the economy, are also central to making a decision.

- **Reflect on goals**: It’s important to clarify the goals of taxation. Should taxes apply to goods (as with the tariff) or to services (as with tolls)? Should the government impose taxes in order to protect jobs, or for other economic or social goals? As a society modernizes, does it require more taxes? Should taxes be based on the ability to pay? Which is more important: economic growth or fairness in taxation?

- **Play out the option. What could go wrong?** Did students consider what could go wrong when a lower tariff bill gets submitted to Congress? Did they consider the fact that lobbyists can actually convince congressmen to raise tariff rates? Did they consider the constitutionality of an income tax?
SOURCES


LESSON 12: TAXES AND TARIFFS, 1894

Vocabulary

- Depression—A decline in the economy and high unemployment
- Tariff—A tax on imports
- Lobbyists—People who try to influence Congress to enact legislation favorable to a certain industry or group of people
- Surplus—Occurs when the government takes in more in taxes than it spends
- Income tax—A tax on money earned rather than on property or purchases (sales)
- Inheritance tax—A tax on a person’s wealth; collected when he or she dies
- Unconstitutional—Describes laws which the Supreme Court has decided violate the Constitution
LESSON 12: TAXES AND TARIFFS, 1894

You are President Grover Cleveland in 1894. The country is in an economic depression, so businesses are not doing well, and unemployment is high. The federal government gets most of its tax money from the tariff, which is a tax on imports. In fact, the tariff brings in so much tax money that the government is running a surplus (that is, it takes in more money than it spends). Since you were elected in 1892 after arguing for a lower tariff, the public seems to support the idea of lowering the tariff.

The tariff protects manufacturers from international competition. As a result, it also protects the workers in those companies from losing their jobs. Of course, the tariff also results in higher prices for the products to which it applies. Consumers end up paying about 50% more than they would have if no tariff existed. The tariff also leads other countries to put up tariffs of their own, which means American goods end up costing more abroad, which means that the demand for these goods declines. Thus, the tariff also reduces exports; in addition, by shielding American companies from competition, it makes them more like monopolies and allows them to charge higher prices.

Several other types of taxes exist in addition to the tariff. One is the income tax. As president, you could urge that the government institute an income tax that takes an equal percentage (say, 2%) from everyone, or one that taxes rich people at a higher rate than poor people. The government could also implement a tax on estates inherited by relatives. Here again, the tax (say, 5%) could apply more to the rich than to the poor: for example, it could start on estates worth over $10,000.

Which of the following will you support?
- Lowering the tariff
- Implementing an income tax that will tax richer Americans
- Implementing an inheritance tax that will tax richer Americans

To help you make a decision, you can get answers from your teacher to three of the following questions:
1. Has the U.S. ever had an income tax or inheritance tax before?
2. Do other countries have income or inheritance taxes?
3. Do other countries have tariffs?
4. How does reduced trade affect a country’s economy?
5. Who primarily pays for the tariff, the rich or the poor?
6. Do tariffs keep jobs in the United States?
7. What arguments were made at this time for and against the income and inheritance taxes?
8. What arguments were made at this time for and against the tariff?
9. How well have tariffs worked in the past?
10. What has happened in the past to bills that proposed lower tariffs?
LESSON 12: TAXES AND TARIFFS, 1894

Student Handout 2

You are President Grover Cleveland in 1894. The country is in an economic depression, so businesses are not doing well and unemployment is high. The federal government gets most of its tax money from the tariff, which is a tax on imports. In fact, the tariff brings in so much tax money that the government has a surplus (that is, it takes in more than it spends). Since you were elected in 1892 after arguing for a lower tariff, it seems the public supports the idea of a lower tariff.

Will you lower the tariff?

To help you make a decision, you can get answers from your teacher to three of the following questions:

1. Has the U.S. ever had an income tax or inheritance tax before?
2. Do other countries have income or inheritance taxes?
3. Do other countries have tariffs?
4. How does reduced trade affect a country’s economy?
5. Who primarily pays for the tariff, the rich or the poor?
6. Do tariffs keep jobs in the United States?
7. What arguments were made at this time for and against the income and inheritance taxes?
8. What arguments were made at this time for and against the tariff?
9. How well have tariffs worked in the past?
10. What has happened in the past to bills that proposed lower tariffs?
11. How badly does the government need the tariff revenue? Is the country running a deficit or surplus?
12. Whom does a tariff help?
13. Whom does a tariff hurt?
14. Does the U.S. have taxes other than the tariff?
LESSON 12: TAXES AND TARIFFS, 1894

Student Handout 3

What Actually Happened:

President Cleveland pushed for a lower tariff, but as the bill went through Congress, amendments were added so the tariff actually raised overall rates. President Cleveland criticized the “manipulations of trusts [big business],” whose lobbyists had pushed for the amendments that resulted in the higher tariff. Nevertheless, he chose not to veto the Wilson-Gorman Tariff because it contained an income tax of 2% on individuals and corporations with incomes over $4000 (about 2% of Americans had an income this high in 1895), and because he did not think he could win a tariff fight with Congress.

Allowing the Wilson-Gorman Tariff to become law hurt Cleveland badly, since he had run on a platform to lower the tariff. It also made him look weaker than Congress.

Supporters of the income tax, such as William Jennings Bryan, were delighted by its inclusion in the tariff bill. However, their joy did not last long. A few months later, the Supreme Court declared the income tax unconstitutional. The court ruled that the income tax was a direct tax, and according to Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution, a direct tax must be “apportioned among the several states...according to their respective numbers [population].” Since some states had a higher proportion of rich people—especially New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut—the Court ruled that the tax was not proportional to the population of each state.

The higher tariff probably hurt the American economy a little, contributing to the length of the depression. It protected jobs in some industries, but increased prices for consumers by 40%, thereby lowering demand. The tariff definitely caused a crisis in the economy of Cuba (there was a high tariff on sugar, and Cuba produced mostly sugar), helping spark a rebellion, which eventually led to war between the U.S. and Spain over the island.
LESSON 13: THE ELECTION OF 1896

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW
Class divisions played as big a role in the 1896 election as in any in American history, with farmers and many workers backing Bryan and business owners and wealthy people favoring McKinley. Inflation via the free coinage of silver emerged as the main issue in the election; in addition, silver became a symbol for each of the two sides in the election. Lesson 10 in this volume focused on issues the Populists raised in this election.

VOCABULARY
- Tariff—A tax on imports
- Immigration—Moving permanently from one country to another
- Inflation—Rising prices
- Free coinage of silver—Proposal to allow U.S. currency to be backed by silver as well as gold; would allow the government to print more money, which would then lead to inflation
- Women’s suffrage—Giving females the right to vote
- Prohibition—Making the sale of alcohol illegal
- Trusts—Monopolies
- William McKinley—Republican candidate and winner of the 1896 election
- William Jennings Bryan—Democratic candidate in the 1896 election
- Deficit—Occurs when the government spends more than it takes in from taxes

DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED
- Ask questions about reliability of sources
- Reflect on goals
LESSON PLAN

A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (15–20 minutes)

Procedure:

Give students Handout 1 (which describes the candidates) and ask them to vote. After they have voted, let them know who the candidates were and who won (either by distributing Handout 2 to the class or by just telling them). You could then have them read the excerpt from William Jennings Bryan’s “Cross of Gold” speech in Handout 4, and ask if reading this source beforehand would have led them to vote differently. Next, ask students if the description of McKinley in Handout 1 lead them to think he would be a good president or a bad one. Next, discuss what students learned about elections and decision making.

Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what they learned from this outcome. Ask students what decision-making skills they found especially important when deciding for whom they would vote. Which of the letters of P-A-G-E applied especially to this election? (See the Decision-Making Analysis section below for ideas.) You might want to ask students if they voted primarily because of a candidate’s character, decision-making skills, or positions on important issues. Which do students think people should consider most important when voting in presidential elections? Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journals.

Putting the Actual Decisions into Historical Context:

Ask students what the election reveals about America at the time. (Possibilities: By 1896, voters were more interested in the issues raised by the Populist Party; personalities were not as important as in previous elections.) Did students vote differently or the same as the voters at the time? Why?

Troubleshooting:

It’s helpful to review the following terms: tariffs, inflation, income tax, unconstitutional.

B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (10 minutes)

As homework, have students decide on a candidate for whom to vote. In class the next day, have students vote and predict the results of the election. Next, read or hand out the results (Handout 2). Have a brief discussion, focusing only on whether students gave more weight to personal characteristics or to issues when voting.
TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION
(For outcomes for students, see Handout 2)

What Actually Happened:

Bryan was such a talented speaker that he became known as the “Boy Orator of the Platte” (a river that runs through his home state of Nebraska). Bryan gave one of the most famous campaign speeches in American history, referred to as the “Cross of Gold” speech, at the Democratic Convention. He would run for president several more times, would become Secretary of State, and would serve as the prosecuting attorney in the Scopes trial, one of the most famous trials in American history.

DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

P = Problem
- Identify any underlying problem
- Consider other points of view
- What are my assumptions? Emotions?

A = Ask for information (about)
- Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)
- Reliability of sources
- Historical analogies

G = Goals
* - What are my main goals? Are they realistic?
- Generate options to help achieve my goals. Are they ethical?

E = Effects
- Predict unintended consequences
- Play out the option. What could go wrong?

* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

• Reflect on your goals: To a much greater extent than in previous elections, this election seemed to be based on whether people wanted the country to go in a new direction (Bryan) or stay on the same course (McKinley). Note that the campaigns were based more on issues and less on the character of the candidates or on scandals. Yet one of the defining elements of McKinley’s administration was the way in which he made decisions during a crisis. Is there any way to tell how a candidate will make decisions in office? Were there clues in Handout 1 as to how McKinley the candidate would make decisions as president? (Well organized campaign? Former soldier? Imperialist ambitions regarding Hawaii, Nicaragua?)
Further Research:

The platforms of the Republican and Democratic Parties for all elections in American history are available at The American Presidency Project: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/platforms.php
SOURCES


LESSON 13: THE ELECTION OF 1896

Vocabulary

- Tariff—A tax on imports
- Immigration—Moving permanently from one country to another
- Inflation—Rising prices
- Free coinage of silver—Proposal to allow U.S. currency to be backed by silver as well as gold; would allow the government to print more money, which would then lead to inflation
- Women’s suffrage—Giving females the right to vote
- Prohibition—Making the sale of alcohol illegal
- Trusts—Monopolies
- William McKinley—Republican candidate and winner of the 1896 election
- William Jennings Bryan—Democrat candidate in the 1896 election
- Deficit—Occurs when the government spends more than it takes in from taxes
LESSON 13: THE ELECTION OF 1896

Student Handout 1

1896 Election

You are a voter in 1896, and you have to decide which of the major candidates to support.

Candidate A:
1. He was a representative in Congress for 14 years and is one of the main supporters of the high tariff that the U.S. now has in effect. Since 1891, he has been the governor of his state.
2. He attended college and worked as a lawyer before going to Congress. He was a soldier in the Union army during the Civil War, received several promotions, and was regarded as a valiant soldier.
3. He is married and has two children. He is a Protestant.
4. His party favors high protective tariffs and restrictions barring immigrants who can’t read or write. It also favors enlargement of the navy, annexing Hawaii, and building a canal in Nicaragua that would connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.
5. He has not campaigned much, but his campaign has been very well organized and well financed. According to rumors, the reason he hasn’t campaigned much is because his wife is very sick and he has chosen to stay with her. He is a devoted husband.
6. This candidate seems to represent the interests of wealthy businessmen, while the other candidate seems to represent the interests of poor farmers and workers.

Candidate B:
1. He was a representative from his state in Congress for four years. Over the last two years, he has traveled around the country arguing for expanding the money supply by adding silver, which would lead to inflation and ultimately help farmers.
2. He is married with three children. He is a very devout Protestant. He did very well in college and became a lawyer. He’s only 36, so if elected he would become the youngest president in American history.
3. He worked hard for the passage of an income tax and criticized the Supreme Court for declaring the income tax unconstitutional.

4. During this campaign, he has traveled all over the country in order to speak to voters. He’s the first presidential candidate to travel this much in order to appeal directly to ordinary Americans. He is a wonderful speaker—he electrified the crowd with his nomination acceptance speech earlier this year.

5. He supports women’s suffrage and the prohibition of alcohol.

6. His party favors the regulation of big business and a lower tariff. It also sympathizes with the Cubans in their guerrilla war with Spain.

7. The president in office now is from this candidate’s party. The economy has been struggling over the last four years (most notably with the Depression of 1893), and many people blame this candidate’s party for their economic problems.

Who will get your vote—Candidate A or Candidate B? Please vote for the one you think will be better for the country as a whole.

Which candidate do you predict will win the election?
LESSON 13: THE ELECTION OF 1896

Student Handout 2

OUTCOME

What Actually Happened:

Candidate A, Republican William McKinley, defeated Candidate B, Democrat William Jennings Bryan. McKinley won the popular vote with 51.0% to Bryan’s 46.7%. The electoral vote was not close, with McKinley receiving 61%.

Fortunately for McKinley, the economy had improved right before the election. For example, the price of wheat rose from 64 cents per bushel in July to 82 cents per bushel in October. Crop failures in other parts of the world increased demand for American crops. As the economy improved, the dramatic changes Bryan advocated didn’t seem as urgent; many began to view him as too radical.

Class divisions played as big a role in the 1896 election as in any in American history. Bryan succeeded in uniting farmers, workers, and small businessmen against the big business and banking interests that backed McKinley and opposed the inflationary policies of Bryan and the “silverites.” These business and banking interests started an “honest money” campaign in which professional economists wrote and lectured about the negative effects of inflation and the need for stable prices.

In addition, factories, mines, and railroads told employees that they would have to cut back or close down if Bryan won the election, and some bankers told farmers that they could get extensions on their loans if McKinley won the election. Many workers and farmers in the Midwest (Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, etc.) still sided with the Republicans in
the Northeast against the heavily Democratic South out of habit, as they had done since
the Civil War. Bryan didn’t win any of these states, which cost him the election.

As President, McKinley had to deal with a federal deficit. To raise more revenue, he
pushed for and got a higher tariff passed. The Dingley Tariff was the highest in American
history. It proved a costly failure both for the government and the economy, reducing
imports so much that the government took in less revenue and increasing the deficit.
McKinley didn’t implement any new economic initiatives. He felt that it was sufficient to
maintain a sound currency (no inflation) and protect business through a high tariff. In
1897, the economy recovered from the depression as more gold poured into the U.S. and
prices rose. The improved economy increased McKinley’s popularity, and he won
reelection in 1900.

However, President McKinley made his greatest mark on American history with his
foreign policy. His actions in Cuba and the Philippines catapulted the U.S. into world
affairs, where it has stayed ever since. Some historians have condemned McKinley for
indecisiveness and imperialism in his foreign policy, while others view him as thoughtful
and clear in his goals.
LESSON 13: THE ELECTION OF 1896  
Student Handout 3

Primary Source: William Jennings Bryan’s Cross of Gold Speech, 1896 (excerpt)

…The sympathies of the Democratic party, as shown by the platform, are on the side of the struggling masses who have ever been the foundation of the Democratic party. There are two ideas of government. There are those who believe that, if you will only legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea, however, has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous, their prosperity will find its way up through every class which rests upon them.

You come to us and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard; we reply that the great cities rest upon our 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 in the country…

No, my friends, that will never be the verdict of our people. Therefore, we care not upon what lines the battle is fought. If they say bimetallism is good, but that we cannot have it until other nations help us, we reply that, instead of having a gold standard because England has, we will restore bimetallism, and then let England have bimetallism because the United States has it. If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we will fight them to the uttermost. Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand 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.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What arguments did Bryan make? How effective do you think these arguments were?
2. What do Bryan’s arguments reveal about the time period?
3. Would reading Bryan’s speech beforehand have led you to vote for a different candidate in the 1896 election? How important do you think speeches are in getting a candidate elected?