

MONEY & PUBLIC POLICY:

Using the Lens of William Jennings Bryan

Creating Prepared Students in Social Studies (CO standards):

Understand the allocation of scarce resources in societies through analysis of individual choice, market interaction, and public policy

I Can Statements:

I can understand and evaluate the use of money and resources to shape public policy

I can use retrospect to evaluate historical policy, as it relates to money

Grade Level: 10-12

Essential Question:

How are money and natural resources used as political tools?

Materials and Resources:

Internet Access to visit embedded links:

bit.ly/bryan-money-lesson



Learning Plan

1. ACCESS PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:

Ask students to discuss in small groups the questions:

- How is the value of our money protected?
- What examples can you think of where money and natural resources have been used as political tools?
 - Students could mention natural resources like gold, oil, or minerals
 - Students could also discuss monetary policy past and present regarding state and national budgets, etc.
- Discuss the answers as a class, focusing specifically on:
 - What gives our money value, what would happen in a financial crisis to paper money, etc.
 - Events like the gold rush, Dakota Access pipeline, the influence of oil in the Middle East, etc.



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2. ACCESS NEW INFORMATION

Introduce students to the campaign of William Jennings Bryan and the argument over silver and gold (*Bryan argued for the use of gold AND silver to back U.S. money*)

- Show the Money Museum Masterpiece Video about the Morgan Dollar (*it discusses the rise of silver in the late 1800s*)
- Break the class into 3 groups, giving each group a letter of A, B, or C
- Student will start by working alone to read the article assigned their group
 - **Group A** will focus on the development of Bryan Money
 - **Group B** will focus on economic policy and Bryan's "Cross of Gold" Speech
 - **Group C** will focus on Silverites, Populists, and the Movement for Free Silver

Create a jigsaw by having students meet (*size of 3-4 students is recommended*) **with others in their same group.**

- For example, you may have 3 groups of As and 3 groups of Bs, etc.
- In these groups, students will become the "expert" and share their thoughts on the article they read.

Next, have students create groups of 3, with each group containing a member of A, B, and C.

- Students will be tasked with sharing the information they became an expert on and asking questions to the other students about their learnings. Together, they should answer the following questions as a group:
 - *Why was silver important to many mid-westerners?*
 - *What were the two public policy views on gold and silver during Bryan's run for President?*
 - *What did Bryan mean by a "cross of gold"?*
 - *What was the difference between satirical Bryan Money and comparative Bryan Money?*
 - *How were money and medals used as public policy?*

As a class, click through the museum case of Bryan Money. Discuss the influence of the items on display on public policy

3. ASSESS LEARNING

Present or review with students the "I Can" statements for this lesson

- I can understand and evaluate the use of money and resources to shape public policy
- I can use retrospect to evaluate historical policy, as it relates to money

Have students read this article to explore why the gold standard is not used today (this is just a starting point, as students can use other articles to clarify their understanding)

Using their research on the gold standard, have students write a short essay on the following prompt:

- The gold standard in the United States ended in 1933 for domestic transactions. Based on the campaign of "free silver" in 1896 and 1900, evaluate whether or not William Jennings Byran and the Silverites had a better economic plan than the opposing political party. Use evidence from the articles shared in class and current economic policy to support your argument.



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