**Wizard of Oz**

The idea of using the Wizard of Oz as an allegory on populism was first originated by Henry Littlefield in 1964. It has been used, embellished, and expanded on over the decades but remains an effective tool to help understand, appreciate, and remember the key issues of this important period of history.

Although Frank Baum never intended this piece to be a political commentary (?), it was created in an era which inspired many of these conflicts and connections in the art and literature of the time.

|  |
| --- |
| **Word Bank** |
| Dorothy | Toto | Tin Man | Scarecrow |
| Cowardly Lion | Oz | Wicked Witch of the West | Wicked Witch of the East |
| Good Witch of the North | Yellow Brick Road | Emerald City | Munchkins |
| Flying Monkeys | *Ruby* Slippers (in the book they are ***Silver***) | The Wizard | Tornado / whirlwind |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | “Greenbacks” – the paper money printed by Lincoln during the Civil War that was not backed up by any precious metals. Considered fake money later. |  |
| 2 | Farmers – ignorant, uneducated, but honest and resourceful. |  |
| 3 | Gold Standard – the idea that currency would be printed only if an equivalent amount of gold was available. |  |
| 4 | Common people who work for a wage. At the time, wage earners were considered slaves to their work. |  |
| 5 | Industrial workers (factory workers) who work with large machines. |  |
| 6 | Prohibitionists (people who felt that no one should drink alcohol) who ended up loyally following the Populist movement. |  |
| 7 | The abbreviation for “ounce”. |  |
| 8 | Railroad owners who were very powerful and controlled most of the land on the plains. |  |
| 9 | Free Silver movement that felt that the poor economy could be helped by printing more money backed by equivalent amounts of silver. |  |
| 10 | Banking and financial areas (particularly New York city). |  |
| 11 | The quick rise of a political movement from the Midwest that could destroy the whole corrupt system of American politics. |  |
| 12 | The innocent, honest, caring people left in America. |  |
| 13 | William Jennings Bryan – noble and fierce, however, criticized for not supporting the war efforts. |  |
| 14 | President William McKinley – made promises to everyone, and was seemingly unable to accomplish any of those promises. |  |
| 15 | Working class (blue collar) that supported the Populist ideas (mostly in the Great Lakes area like Chicago) |  |
| 16 | Native Americans – who had been highly resistant to settlement and homesteading on the Great Plains. |  |

**Section 2: Interpretation**

Do you agree or disagree with the theory that the The Wizard of Oz is an allegory for the history of populism and bimetallism in the U.S. in the late 1800s? Provide SPECIFIC REASONS to support your position!!!