

Document A: Mary Elizabeth Lease, 1890 (Modified)

Mary Elizabeth Lease was a famous speaker who advocated for women's suffrage and temperance. She was perhaps best known as a leader in the Populist Party, speaking on the interests of farmers and workers. This is an excerpt from a speech that she gave in 1890 to the Women's Christian Temperance Union, a women's organization against alcohol.

The mightiest movement the world has known in two thousand years . . . is sending out the happiest message to oppressed humanity that the world has heard since John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness that the world's Redeemer was coming to relieve the world's misery.

To this sterile and remote region, infested by savage beasts and still more savage men, the women of the New England States, the women of the cultured East, came with husbands, sons and brothers to help them build up a home upon the prairies of the West. . . . We endured hardships and dangers; hours of loneliness, fear and sorrow. . . . We toiled in the cabin and in the field; we helped our loved ones to make the prairie blossom. . . .

Yet, after all our years of toil and **privation**, dangers and hardships, our homes are being taken from us by an **infamous** system of mortgage foreclosure. It takes from us at the rate of five hundred a month the homes that represent the best years of our life, our toil, our hopes, our happiness. How did it happen? The government, siding with Wall Street, broke its contracts with the people. . . . As Senator Plumb [of Kansas] tells us, "Our debts were increased, while the means to pay them was decreased." . . .

No more millionaires, and no more paupers; no more gold kings, silver kings and oil kings, and no more little **waifs** of humanity starving for a crust of bread. . . . We shall have the golden age of which Isaiah sang and the prophets have so long foretold; when the farmers shall be prosperous and happy, dwelling under their own vine and fig tree; when the laborer shall have that for which he toils. . . . When we shall have not a government of the people by capitalists, but a government of the people, by the people.

Source: Speech by Mary Elizabeth Lease to the Women's Christian Temperance Union, 1890

Vocabulary	<u>infamous</u> : well-known for being bad; wicked
<u>privation</u> : deprivation	<u>waif</u> : a helpless person

Document B: Cross of Gold Speech (Modified)

This is an excerpt from William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech at the Democratic National Convention in July 1896. It received a rousing ovation and earned Bryan the Democratic nomination for the presidency. Today, it is considered one of the most famous speeches in American history.

The merchant at the corner store is as much a businessman as the merchant of New York. The farmer who goes forth in the morning and toils all day . . . is as much a businessman as the man who works on Wall Street.

We come to speak for this broader class of businessmen. . . . It is for these that we speak. We are fighting in the defense of our homes and our families. We have petitioned, and our petitions have been **scorned**. We have **entreated**, and our entreaties have been disregarded. We have begged, and they have mocked us.

We beg no longer; we entreat no more; we petition no more. We defy them!

You come to us and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard. I tell you that the great cities rest upon these 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 this country.

Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands 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.

Source: William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech at the Democratic National Convention in July 1896.

Vocabulary

scorned: rejected in a disrespectful manner, disregarded

entreated: pleaded

Guiding Questions

Document B

1. Sourcing: Who gave this speech? When was it given?
2. Contextualization: Where was this speech delivered and who was his audience?
3. Contextualization: This speech was received with enthusiastic applause and cheers by the convention goers. Based on the content of the speech, how do you think the audience may have felt about each of the following. (Use evidence from the speech to justify your response.)

Big Business:

Religion:

Farmers:

4. Corroboration: What were two similarities between Bryan's speech and Lease's speech (in Document A)?
5. Corroboration: What might these similarities suggest about how populist leaders appealed to people in the 1890s?
6. Corroboration: What might these similarities suggest about the people who supported the Populist Party in the 1890s?