The Gilded Age

- The definition of *gilded* according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary is “to give an attractive but often deceptive appearance.”
- The Gilded Age in U.S. is the late 19th century, from the 1870s to about 1900.
- It was a **time of enormous growth**, attracting millions from Europe.
- Most of the growth and prosperity occurred **only in the North and West**.
- What was going on in the South at this time?
The era was called the Gilded Age because although life in the U.S. looked bright and shiny, underneath the surface, there was lots of poverty and corruption.
The Gilded Age

- The Gilded Age was a period of transformation in the economy, technology, government, and social customs of America.
- This formation forged a modern, national industrial society out of what had been small regional communities.
- Many new corporations and businesses gave way to ultra-rich individuals.
- The period was also marked by social movements for reform, the creation of machine politics, and continued immigration.
The summer home of Cornelius Vanderbilt II. Built in 1893, it typifies the excesses of Gilded Age wealth.
Economic Problems in America

- Decreases in crop prices and crop failures in the 1880s bred economic discontent among farmers that led to the formation of the Populists.
- Basically, farmers felt the need to stand up to big businesses and corporations.
- Populism is a belief in the power of regular people, and in their right to have control over their government rather than a small group of political insiders or a wealthy elite.
- The Populist Party emerged.
Crash Course- Western Expansion

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q16OZkgSXfM
The Gold Standard

“The gold standard is a monetary system where a country's currency or paper money has a value directly linked to gold. With the gold standard, countries agreed to convert paper money into a fixed amount of gold. A country that uses the gold standard sets a fixed price for gold and buys and sells gold at that price. That fixed price is used to determine the value of the currency.”
Bimetallism

- Is the use of both gold and silver as money
- Farmers (wheat and cotton) thought Bimetallism to be very beneficial to them
- Silver miners in the west approved of Bimetallism to ensure the value of silver.
- Goldbugs vs. Silverites
William Jennings Bryan

- Gave “Cross of Gold Speech”
  - National Democratic Convention
  - July 9, 1896
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeTkT5-w5RA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeTkT5-w5RA)
- Ran for president 3 times
- “The gold standard has slain tens of thousands.”
- Also a big proponent of the free silver movement.
The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (originally published in 1900)

- Symbolizes Bimetallism

- In the original book:
  - yellow brick road: gold
  - Traveled the road with silver slippers
    - In 1939, the movie changed the silver slippers into ruby slippers.
  - Dorothy leads:
    - Scarecrow: Farmers
    - Tin Woodman: Workers
    - Cowardly Lion: Politicians
  - Goal is to see the Wizard (President) in Oz (Oz. = Ounce)
  - Munchkins: the “little” people
  - Wicked Witch of the West: Giant Corporations (the enemy)
  - Dorothy defeats the Witch: Progressives tried to defeat the Corporations
Agrarian Movement

- When the farmers started to stand up and make their voice heard.

Patrons of Husbandry & The Grange
- Organizations that helped farmers with the agrarian movement.
- Their purpose was to support farmers financially, legally and even socially (through education).
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVpiljpF4ZI