Handout A: Background Essay: Farmers in the Gilded Age Answer Key

1. Farmers’ problems in the nineteenth century included the following:
   - Overproduction leading to declining prices for their products
   - Costs of modernizing equipment
   - Indebtedness and foreclosure
   - A sense of powerlessness and inequality in comparison to the prosperity of industrialists, Wall Street traders, and bankers
   - Railroad prices
   - High tariff rates that protected American industry, but increased domestic prices
   - Tight money supply and gold standard

2. In addition to the same problems faced by white farmers, African-American farmers were even more likely to be sharecroppers, trapped in an endless cycle of debt by the crop-lien system. Additionally, early racial tensions seemed to trump the common economic oppression that African-American farmers shared with other farmers. As a result, they would often face exclusion from farmer organizations, forcing them to form their own such as the Colored Southern Alliance.

3. The goals and ideas of the Granger, Alliance, and Populist movements included the following:
   - In the 1860s and 70s, the Grangers focused on agricultural education and cooperative marketing of their products. They lobbied for and won state regulations on railroads and grain storage facilities. In Munn v. Illinois the Supreme Court ruled that such laws passed in the “public interest” were legitimate exercises of state police powers.
   - In the 1880s farmers created the Farmers’ Alliance, seeking more comprehensive reforms, such as government regulation or outright ownership of the railroads, which farmers perceived as predatory and oppressive. They also argued for abolition of national banks and creation of a subtreasury crop-storage plan that would provide farmers low-interest loans using their stored crops as collateral. The Alliance was divided geographically and racially.
   - In the early 1890s, the agrarian movement began to shift into political action to achieve their goals. It formed the Populist Party, whose platform included free silver, abolition of national banks, government ownership of all railroads and telegraphs, and the direct election of senators and the president. In the 1892 election the Populist presidential candidate, James B. Weaver, gained over one million popular votes. The Populist Party also gained influence in state legislatures, and a few of its candidates were elected to Congress.
   - These reform efforts were largely unsuccessful prior to the twentieth century.

4. Some of the results of the 1893 financial panic included:
   - Deep economic depression
Industrial collapse and widespread unemployment
Several violent strikes by workers
Coxey's Army - march on Washington seeking a federal job creation program
Repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890, further committing the U.S. to the gold standard, which farmers blamed for part of their troubles
1894 Wilson Gorman Act, protecting several industries with a higher tariff
Election of the Republican William McKinley as president in 1896

5. Economic and political developments that eventually improved the lives of farmers in the early twentieth century included the following:

- Increased money supply due partly to the Klondike gold rush, leading to inflation of agricultural prices
- Overall economic recovery and increasing prosperity for farmers
- Growing consumer culture, including the availability of mail order catalogs
- Federal regulation of railroads and monopolies
- Federal Farm Loan Act of 1916, guaranteeing farmers low interest loans and improved access to credit
- Improved markets for their products during and after World War I

Handout B: “National Grange Meeting” Rocky Mountain Husbandman, Montana, 10 Jan. 1878 Answer Key

1. Regarding partisan concerns, the Grange sought to represent the interests of all farmers, but rejected any discussion of party politics.

2. The Grange reference to “the great productive industries” meant farmers.

3. The Grange opposed the Coinage Act of 1873, and lobbied for Congress to repeal it, because farmers believed they would benefit from increased coinage of silver.

4. Students might suggest that the First Amendment protects the Grange's freedom of assembly, as well as the organization's right to petition regarding the concerns of farmers, including working for the repeal of the Coinage Act of 1873. Essential virtues demonstrated might include respect, civil discourse, moderation, and responsibility. Accept reasoned responses.
Handout C: Farmers Alliance platform (1886) Answer Key

1. The demands of the Texas Farmers Alliance in 1886 included the following:
   - That land purchased for investment purposes by non-residents be made available to actual settlers in the United States
   - That land forfeited by railroads or other corporations become property of the government and made available for purchase by actual settlers
   - That railroad property be taxed at its full value
   - That public debt be paid by increasing the coinage of gold and silver (inflation)
   - Creation of a cabinet-level national bureau of labor statistic to better understand the needs of American workers
   - Passage of an interstate commerce law that would end the railroads' preferential treatment of large corporate shippers, and limit the cost of railroad transportation

2. Students might suggest that property rights would be endangered by government programs to acquire land that legally belonged to aliens or railroads, as well as by a plan to implement inflation through coinage of “cheap money.” Some student might see the Alliance call for increased regulation of the railroads, to “secure to our people freedom from the onerous and shameful abuses that the industrial classes are now suffering at the hands of arrogant capitalists and powerful corporations” as a challenge to the principle of limited government. Other students might say that such laws would demonstrate government acting in the public interest and general welfare to prevent force, fraud, and corruption. Virtues suggested might include respect, civil discourse, justice, and responsibility. Accept well-reasoned responses.

Handout D: Mary Elizabeth Lease Speech (1890) Answer Key

1. Lease’s main complaints include the following:
   - The country is run for the benefit of Wall Street, not for the benefit of the common people.
   - The West and South are servants of the manufacturing East.
   - Farmers worked hard to increase their crops, and then suffered low prices due to overproduction.
   - Farmers wanted money, land, transportation, abolition of national banks, the power to make loans direct from the government, an end to foreclosure systems, and freedom from abuse by the “bloodhounds of money.”

2. She attracted so much attention and criticism because she eloquently and fearlessly spoke out regarding political issues at a time when women were expected to keep silent in public.

3. Constitutional principles suggested by students might include freedom of speech and assembly. Virtues demonstrated might include courage, civil discourse, perseverance, responsibility. Accept well-reasoned responses.
Handout E: The Populist Party Omaha Platform: 1892 Answer Key

1. The Populist platform asserted the following problems:
   - Moral, political, and material ruin of the nation
   - Corruption in politics
   - Demoralized people
   - Biased newspapers
   - Businesses prostrated
   - Home mortgages
   - Labor impoverished
   - Land concentrated in the hands of capitalists
   - Urban workers unable to unionize, and threatened by imported workers and a hireling army (Pinkertons)
   - Inequality of wealth
   - Government injustice leading to two great classes: tramps and millionaires
   - Silver demonetized; insufficient money supply
   - Two political parties interested only in empowering themselves, not in governing on the people’s behalf

2. The Populist Party advocated the following reforms:
   - Expanding the power of government to end oppression, injustice, and poverty
   - Rural and civic labor working together against their common enemies
   - Shortening working hours
   - Abolition of Pinkerton private police force
   - Government ownership of railroads, telegraphs, and telephone companies
   - Constitutional amendments providing for civil service regulation, limiting the president & vice-president to one term, direct election of U.S. senators
   - Free & unlimited coinage of silver and gold; increasing the money supply
   - Graduated income tax
   - Reduction of state and national revenues
   - Elimination of speculation in land purchases; land ownership by settlers only
   - Restriction of undesirable immigration
   - Secret ballot, initiative, referendum
   - Opposition to any subsidy or national aid to any private corporation for any purpose
3. Answers will vary; accept reasoned responses

4. Students might refer to freedom of speech and assembly. Constitutional principles that might be challenged by the Populists’ platform are limited government, private property, and freedom of contract. However, students might also point out the role of government to respond to the will of the people as expressed through their elected representatives. The impact of the Populist Party indicates that many people did not trust or approve of the two-party system’s long-term grip on political decision-making.

Students might refer to virtues of courage, civil discourse, moderation, perseverance, and responsibility.

Handout F: Farm Wife, 1900 Answer Key

1. Students may agree or disagree with Farm Wife’s statement that she is not a practical woman. They should explain their opinion with references to passages in the account.

2. The general tone of the account seems to be that Farm Wife’s life is hard, but she is, on the whole, satisfied with it. She notes that she does not have as much time as she would like for reading and study, and that her daily work to keep the farm running is varied and challenging, but the tone does not seem to reflect complaint. She had been a good student and would have liked to remain in school, but she writes that she had “unwittingly, agreed to marry the man who is now my husband, and though I begged to be released, his will was so much stronger...” She knew the life of a farm wife would be difficult, but she “could not find it in [her] nature” to “wound a loving heart.” She takes pride in being able to work hard and solve the inevitable problems that come up, such as cows tearing down a fence. One of her joys is that she borrows books and reads them only when her husband is not at home, “to avoid giving offense and still gratify my desire.” She also takes pride in caring well for herself, family, house, and gardens.

3. While it is difficult to describe a typical day, she gives this example of her schedule:

4:00 a.m.: The farm wife gets out of bed, dresses, starts fire in the kitchen stove, gathers flowers for her hair, sweeps the floors, cooks breakfast, strains milk, and fixes her husband’s dinner (lunch) pail.

5:30 a.m.: Husband has gone to work. She takes the livestock into various pastures for the day (cattle, horse, sheep, hogs, chickens).

6:30 a.m.: Back in the house, she makes the beds and tidies the living room, snacking while she works. She washes the children and churns the butter.

8:00 a.m.: She cuts down weeds in the garden until lunch time.

11:30 a.m.: She combs her hair and puts fresh flowers in it, she and the children eat dinner (lunch). She feeds the chickens, sweeps the floors, then rests and reads till 1:00.

1:00 p.m.: She works in the yard and gardens till hogs come up to the back gate, which is how she learns that cows have torn down part of the fence. She repairs the fence and then continues working in the garden.
4:00 p.m.: She prepares supper, and then prepares several hundred vegetable plants for transplanting. She goes out to the pastures to bring home the livestock, and feeds and waters them.

8:00 p.m.: Her husband is home and the family eats supper. Then after her husband and children go to bed, she washes dishes and prepares for making breakfast the next day.

9:00 p.m.: After a short prayer, she goes to bed.

For about three hours in the morning and three more in the afternoon, she works in the gardens, hoeing and planting. For several more hours she is preparing meals and cleaning the house.

4. Answers will vary regarding any surprises. Students whose families run farms may comment about similarities and differences between 1900 farm routines and 21st century farm routines. Students may also comment about the marital role of women and the amount of physical labor involved in farming (Be sure to note that there was no electricity in rural areas and water probably came from a well).

5. Virtues include courage, respect, honor, moderation, perseverance, and responsibility. Accept well-reasoned responses.

Handout G: Graphic Organizer: Comparing Reformers Answer Key

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of document</th>
<th>Main ideas/concerns</th>
<th>Effects/Historical Significance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Handout B:</strong> “National Grange Meeting” Rocky Mountain Husbandman, Diamond City, Mont. 10 Jan. 1878</td>
<td>Report on the National Grange meeting that had occurred in November</td>
<td>Report on the Nov. 23 resolution: 1. Regarding partisan concerns, the Grange sought to represent the interests of all farmers, but rejected any discussion of party politics. 2. The Grange reference to “the great productive industries” meant farmers. 3. The Grange opposed the Coinage Act of 1873, and lobbied for Congress to repeal it, because farmers believed they would benefit from increased coinage of silver.</td>
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| Create a platform for a reform movement that farmers hoped would make government more responsive to them | Cleburne Demands included the following:  
  - That land purchased for investment purposes by non-residents be made available to actual settlers in the United States  
  - That land forfeited by railroads or other corporations become property of the government and made available for purchase by actual settlers  
  - That railroad property be taxed at its full value  
  - That public debt be paid by increasing the coinage of gold and silver (inflation)  
  - Creation of a cabinet-level national bureau of labor statistic to better understand the needs of American workers  
  - Passage of an interstate commerce law that would end the railroads’ preferential treatment of large corporate shippers, and limit the cost of railroad transportation | First attempt to influence politics to benefit farmers; little effect on politics or economy |
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<tr>
<th>Handout D: Mary Elizabeth Lease Speech (1890)</th>
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| Generate support for Populist reform policies and candidates | - The country is run for the benefit of Wall Street, not for the benefit of the common people.  
- The West and South are servants of the manufacturing East.  
- Farmers worked hard to increase their crops, and then suffered low prices due to overproduction.  
- Farmers wanted money, land, transportation, abolition of national banks, the power to make loans direct from the government, an end to foreclosure systems, freedom from abuse by the “bloodhounds of money” | Drew much attention to the farmers’ concerns |
### Handout E:  
The Populist Party Omaha Platform (1892)

**Purpose of document**  
Generate support for Populist reform policies and candidates

**Main ideas/concerns**  
Advocated reforms they hoped would address the serious economic problems of farmers and workers:

- Expanding the power of government to end oppression, injustice, and poverty
- Rural and civic labor working together against their common enemies
- Shortening working hours
- Abolition of Pinkerton private police force
- Government ownership of railroads, telegraphs, and telephone companies
- Constitutional amendments providing for civil service regulation, limiting the president & vice-president to one term, direct election of U.S. senators
- Free & unlimited coinage of silver and gold; increasing the money supply
- Graduated income tax
- Reduction of state and national revenues
- Elimination of speculation in land purchases; land ownership by settlers only
- Restriction of undesirable immigration
- Secret ballot, initiative, referendum
- Opposition to any subsidy or national aid to any private corporation for any purpose

**Effects/Historical Significance**  
Reflected cumulative growth over time for farmers’ reform movement. Rattled but did not break the grip of the two-party system. Attracted enough attention that the Democratic Party adopted some of their platform concerns. Over the next few decades, most of the reform initiatives were implemented.
1. Highlight common themes that emerge in the documents related to farmers’ concerns in the Gilded Age. For example, you might use green for methods of increasing the money supply, yellow for opposition to interests the farmers thought treated them unfairly, and so on for other themes you identify.

2. Compare to current events—answers will vary.
The decades after the American Civil War witnessed a vast array of social, economic, technological, cultural, and political changes in the American landscape. These changes transformed the United States from a largely local to a national society. This new society was characterized by a more integrated nation with large institutions and a broad, national outlook.

The economy experienced significant growth during the late nineteenth century that built on the beginnings of the industrial revolution that had begun before the Civil War. The rise of the factory system depended on technological change and new power sources that made the mass production of goods possible. The expansion of the railroad created a national distribution network for the goods. The modern business corporation grew as a response to managing the national production and distribution of goods. The practices of big business came under media and regulatory scrutiny as equal opportunity seemed to shrink. The great wealth of several industrialists was also scrutinized by those who feared their influence and were concerned about growing inequality.

American workers were the backbone of this new industrial economy as they worked with machines to secure the raw materials from the earth and used them to create a finished product. Millions of workers saw great changes in the nature of their work in the factory system. They earned higher wages and enjoyed greater standards of living but sometimes at a great cost due to dangerous, unhealthy conditions. Workers organized into labor unions to meet the growing power of big business. The labor unions gave workers a sense of solidarity and a greater bargaining position with employers. Waves of strikes and industrial violence convulsed the country, and led to an uncertain future for organized labor.

American farmers were caught between two competing trends in the new industrial economy. The future seemed bright as new western lands were brought under cultivation and new technology allowed farmers to achieve much greater production. However, banks and railroads offered mixed blessings as they often hurt the farmers’ economic position. Farmers organized into groups to protect their interests and participate in the growing prosperity of the rapidly industrializing American economy. At the same time, difficult times led many to give up on farming and find work in factories.

American cities became larger throughout the period as the factory system drew millions of workers from the American countryside and tens of millions of immigrants from other countries. The large cities created immense markets that demanded mass-produced goods and agricultural products from American farms. The cities were large, impersonal places for the newcomers and were centers of diversity thanks to the mingling of many different cultures. The urban areas lacked basic services and were often run by corrupt bosses, but the period witnessed the growth of more effective urban government that offered basic services to improve life for millions of people.

The tens of millions of immigrants that came to the United States primarily settled in urban areas and worked in the factories. They came for the opportunities afforded by large, industrial
economies and provided essential low-skill labor. The “new immigrants” were mostly from southeastern Europe, Asia, and Mexico. They had to adapt to a strange new world, and in turn brought with them new ethnicities, languages, religious practices, foods, and cultures. This tension over assimilation led to debates about American values and the Americanization of immigrants. Some native-born Americans wanted to restrict the number of immigrants coming into the country, while others defended the newcomers.

The changes in the economy and society created opportunities and challenges for millions of other Americans. The status and equal rights of women experienced a general, long-term growth. Many women enjoyed new opportunities to become educated and work in society, though these opportunities were still limited when compared with men. The history of women during the late nineteenth century was not monolithic as white, middle-class women often had a very different experience than women who were poor, or from a minority or immigrant background. Because many women entered the workforce, a debate occurred over the kinds and amount of work that women performed, which led to legal protections. The women’s suffrage movement won the biggest success for equal rights in the period with the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, granting women the right to vote. African Americans did not participate in the growing opportunities and prosperity that other groups in American society did. The long and bloody Civil War had ended with the freeing of African Americans from slavery. This was followed by further gains of constitutional and legal protections, however, many of these rights would soon evaporate. During the late nineteenth century, African Americans found inequality and racism in the segregation of the South, but they were also victimized by inequality and racism in northern cities in the early twentieth century as they moved there in increasing numbers. Black leaders debated the right path to full equality, civic participation, and economic opportunity in American life.

The changes that affected the American economy and society led to a growth in the federal government. The important issues of the nineteenth century were increasingly contested on the national rather than local levels. Businesses, organized labor, farmers, and interest groups turned to the national government to resolve their disputes. The executive branch saw an expansion of its role and influence as it increased its regulatory power over the many aspects of American life. A widespread reform movement called “progressivism” introduced many reforms that were intended to address the changes in society resulting from the modern industrial economy and society. This increased government’s responsiveness but also dramatically increased the size and powers of the federal government. The national government therefore began to supplant the local and state governments in the minds of many Americans and in the American constitutional system.

The late nineteenth century also ushered in great changes in how the United States interacted with the rest of the world. For the first century of its existence, the United States traded with other countries, acquired territory for continental expansion, and fought in a few major wars. However, the United States was generally neutral in world affairs and focused on its domestic situation. That changed as America entered the world stage as a major global
power. This expansion in world affairs led to an internal debate over international powers and responsibilities. Americans also struggled over the character of its foreign affairs. Debates raged over the growth of American military power and whether Americans had a duty to spread democracy around the world.

The changes in the late nineteenth century were bewildering to most Americans who experienced them. Many debates took place to make sense of the changes and to consider how to respond to them. Americans rarely found easy answers and often conflicted with one another on the different solutions. The vast changes that occurred laid the foundation of modern America. The questions and challenges that they faced are still relevant and are debated by Americans today in the twenty-first century. Americans continue to discuss the power and regulation of banks and large corporations. Workers grapple with the globalization of the economy, stagnant wages, and changing technology. Farmers still struggle to make an income amid distant markets determining commodity prices while keeping up with changing consumer tastes about organic and locally-sourced food. Headlines are filled with news of African Americans suffering racism and police brutality. Issues related to the equality of women continue to be debated even as women run for president. Smartphones, social media, the internet, and other technologies change our lives, the culture, and the world economy every day. After more than a century since the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, the fundamental challenges of the era still face us today.