

Teresa Jacobs
Wiregrass History Colloquium
Lenox, GA
July 15-18, 2008

Building Background Knowledge

“Populism and the Election of 1896”

Themes:

- Values, beliefs, political ideas, and institutions
- Conflict and cooperation
- Patterns of social and political interaction

Habits of the Mind:

- Significance of the past
- What’s important, and what’s not
- Historical empathy
- People who make a difference
- Evaluating Evidence

Objectives: Students will be able to

- Become interested in a given topic
- Build background knowledge
- Use the background knowledge to become better and more informed readers of hard text

Materials:

- Chart paper
- Felt tip markers
- Variety of texts, images, maps, and other primary and secondary sources

Procedures:

1. Read “A New National Anthem” aloud while students view it projected on the screen.

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2. Have students write down what they think the song is about on the note card provided. (Note cards will be pre-numbered for group in next step.) Draw a line after all thoughts are jotted down.
3. Have students move to the group that matches the number on their note card and have them write down all their background knowledge about the topic of this lesson. (Populism and the Election of 1896)
4. Students will share their knowledge in their groups.
5. Then, have groups created a web of what they know on a piece of chart paper using just one color marker.
6. Give out a primary source document on the topic to each group.
7. Ask groups to place an "N" beside any NEW information.
8. Ask groups to add their NEW knowledge to their web using a different color marker.
9. Give out another primary source document on the topic to each group.
10. Again, ask each group to text code with an "N" beside any NEW information.
11. Ask groups to add their NEW knowledge to their web using a different color marker.
12. Bring all students back to the large group with their original note card and read the song again; have students write about their impressions about the song again underneath the line.
13. Debrief:
 - Contrast first and second reading of the song: "What was it like to hear the song the second time?" "What made the experience different?"
 - Have groups report out on their webs.
 - Had they been curious about the topic? What inspired their curiosity?

Primary source documents for this presentation were compiled by Robert W. Cherny and published by Jackdaw Publications.

Lesson idea from Chris Sink (with permission)

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A NEW NATIONAL ANTHEM

My county, 'is of thee,

Once land of Liberty,

Of thee I sing.

Land of the Millionaire;

Farmers with pockets bare;

Caused by the cursed snare—

The Money Ring.

My native country, thee,

Thou wert so pure and free,

Long, long ago.

Yet still I love they rills,

But hate thy usury mills

That fill the banker's tills

Till they overflow.

So when my country, thee,

Which should be noble, free,

I'll love they Greenback men,

Who strive with tongue and pen,

For Liberty again,

With right good will.

And then my country, thee,

Thou wilt again be free;

And Freedom's tower.

Stand by your fireside then,

And show that you are men,

Whom they can't fool again,

And crush their power.

"The Alliance Songster" Song by Thomas Nicol

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