

**Focused Learning Lesson**  
**American History**  
**Grade Level: 11**  
**H-1B-H9**

**Overview:**

This lesson explores the problems faced by both agrarian and industrial workers during the emergence of modern America (1890-1930). Students will look at the difficulties faced by these two groups, as well as the movements, which spawned changes within these industries. The lesson focuses specifically on the rise of populism and labor unions in America. Students will discuss specific problems faced by workers and solutions offered by these new groups. As culminating activities for this lesson, students will complete two graphic organizers, which can be used for assessment. The first activity will have students complete a cause and effect chart for the rise of Populism. The second activity will have students compare and contrast two early labor unions (American Federation of Labor and Knights of Labor) using a Venn diagram.

**Approximate Duration:**

45 minutes

**Benchmarks and GLEs:**

H-1B-H9 - Analyzing the rise of labor and agrarian movements

GLE:

27. Describe problems facing farmers and laborers, the ways they sought to enact change, and the responses of the government and business community (e.g., populism, sharecroppers, rise of labor unions)

**Objectives:**

1. The learner will identify and describe early labor unions and the efforts they made to improve the conditions of industrial workers.
2. The learner will identify major issues faced by farm workers and discuss how the populist movement addressed those issues.

**Teacher Preparation:**

- To prepare for this lesson, the teacher will need to review the content notes provided in Attachment 1 and prepare to lead a class discussion about the problems faced by industrial and farm workers, the accomplishments of the Populist Party and the formation of labor unions.
- Additionally, the teacher will need to make class copies of Attachment 2 and Attachment 3, which will be used in the lesson and for assessment purposes.

**Materials/Equipment/Resources:**

- Teacher Notes (Attachment 1)
- Copies of Handout entitled, “Populism – Cause and Effects” (Attachment 2)
- Copies of Handout entitled, “Early Labor Unions – Compare and Contrast” (Attachment 3)
- Overhead Projector and Transparency of Teacher Notes (optional)

**Lesson Procedures:**

1. Begin the lesson by discussing the two major groups of workers during the time period known as the “Emergence of Modern America” which lasted from 1890-1930). These groups were farm workers and factory or industrial workers.
2. Discuss these two occupations with the class and describe the rural or urban connection to each job. Make a point to distinguish the many other differences between these two types of work, but then establish a major commonality – they both faced serious problems.
3. Using the teacher notes in Attachment 1, have students list the problems faced by farmers in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century.
4. After students have a good idea of the types of problems faced by farmers, discuss the rise of the Grange and the Populist Party. Have students identify the major goals of these two groups.
5. Next, have the students complete the cause and effect chart for the Rise of Populism. (Attachment 2)
6. Discuss with students, the answers that they wrote in each column of the chart.
7. After some class discussion, have the student transition from thinking about farmers to those people living and working in our nation’s cities. Describe the types of jobs they would have held working in early factories.
8. Using the teacher notes, have students list some of the working conditions in early factories.
9. Explain that two early groups were formed to remedy these problems faced by factory and industrial workers. Have students copy the descriptions of the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor that are provided in the teacher notes.
10. Using their notes, have students compare and contrast these two early labor unions using the Venn diagram provided in Attachment 3.
11. Discuss with the class the major similarities and differences between these two groups.
12. For closure, have students discuss the differences they see when comparing today’s agricultural industry and today’s factories to those discussed in the lesson.
13. Collect the two diagrams for formal assessment.

**Assessment Items:**

The assessment for this lesson consists of questions and answers during the class discussions and formal assessment of two class activities (Cause and Effects Chart and Venn diagram). Along with the worksheets in Attachment 2 and 3, there are also answer keys with suggested responses to those assessment items.

**Reference Links and Technology Connections:**

Danzer, G., J. Klor de Alva, L. Wilson, & N. Woloch. (1998). *The Americans*. Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell.

## Rise of Labor and Agrarian Movements

### Agrarian Movement

Problems faced by farmers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century

- Low crop prices
- High cost loans
- High railroad shipping charges

The Grange (a.k.a.) The Patrons of Husbandry

- Social and educational organization through which farmers attempted to combat the power of the railroads in the late nineteenth century.

Populism

- Movement formed with the founding of the “Populist” or “People’s” Party
- Demanded the following reforms for farmers:
  - Reduced debt on farmers and workers
  - Greater voice in government for farmers and workers
- Populist Ideas adopted by the Democratic Party
  - Income tax
  - Direct election of senators
  - Secret ballot
  - Eight hour workday

### Labor Movement

Pre-Union Working Conditions

- Factory workers worked twelve to fourteen hours a day, six or seven days a week
- Employees were not entitled to vacations, sick leave, unemployment compensation or payment for on the job injuries
- Injuries occurred very frequently
- Factories were dirty, poorly lit, lacked sufficient ventilation, and had dangerous equipment
- Wages were so low that everyone in the family had to work (men, women and children)

## Labor Unions


- Knights of Labor
  - Founded by Uriah Stephens
  - Open to all workers regardless of race, gender, or degree of skill
  - Advocated an eight hour workday
  - Advocated “equal pay for equal work”
  - Advocated arbitration instead of strikes
  
- American Federation of Labor
  - Founded by Samuel Gompers
  - Craft union
  - Open to skilled, white men only
  - Advocated higher wages
  - Advocated shorter work weeks
  - Advocated collective bargaining or group negotiations
  - Major tactic for achieving goals was strikes
  
- Government Pressures on Unions
  - Industrial leaders used the Sherman Anti-trust Act to prevent labor unions from actions such as strikes, picket lines or boycotts
  - Anti-union feelings were due to the following:
    - Fears of disorder
    - Violence
    - Shortage of goods
    - Fear of a socialist revolution

# Rise of Populism



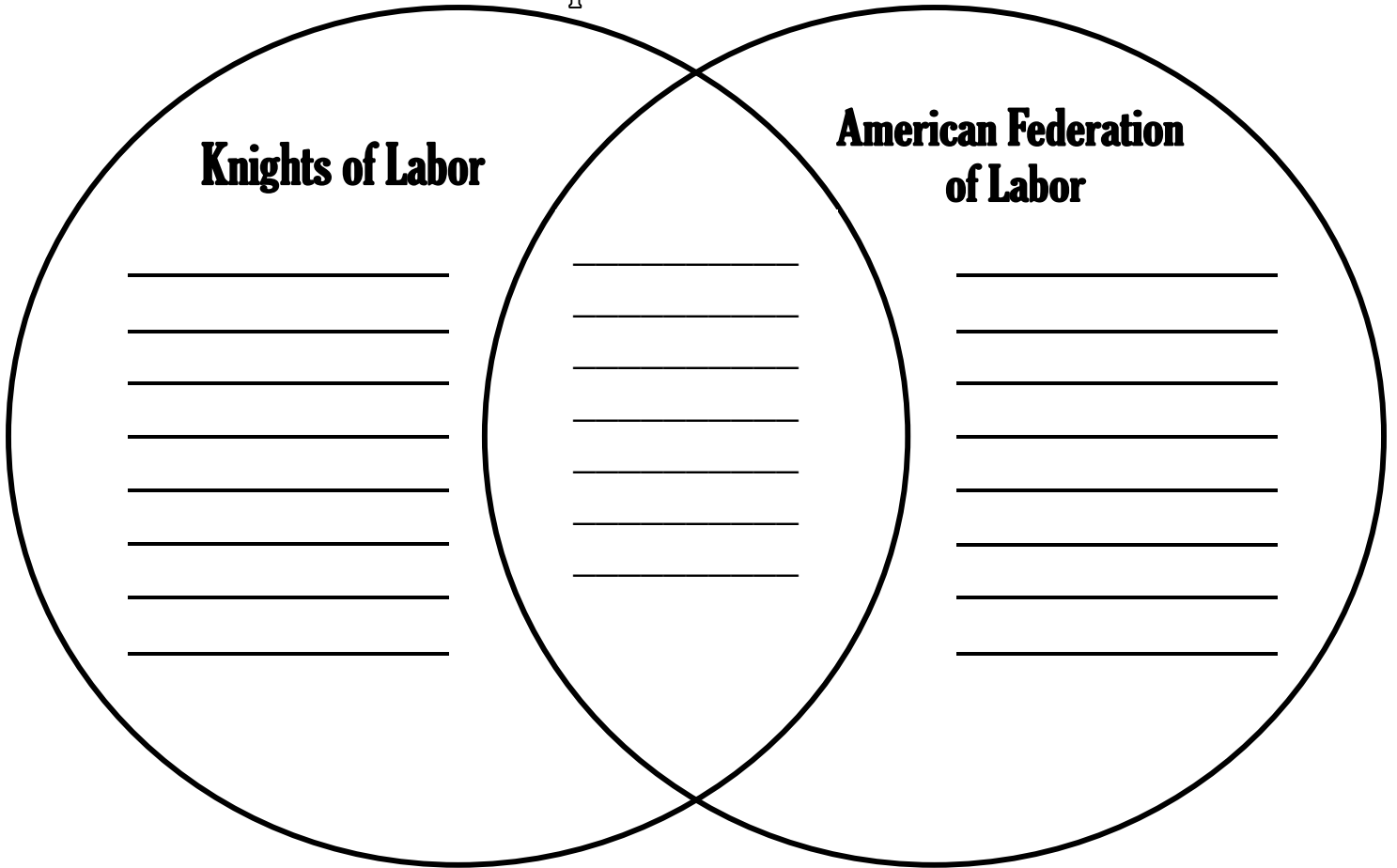
Causes

Effects

<h1>Rise of Populism</h1>		
Causes	Effects	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low crop prices</li> <li>• High interest loans for farmers</li> <li>• High railroad shipping charges</li> <li>• Lack of “voice” among farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced debt on farmers and workers</li> <li>• Created a greater voice in government for farmers and workers</li> <li>• Influenced the Democratic Party</li> <li>• Credited with the following ideas: Income tax Direct election of senators Secret ballot Eight hour workday</li> </ul>	

# Early Labor Unions

Compare and Contrast



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## Compare and Contrast

