

**TEACHER GUIDE**

# 1900 DOC. #1: Bryan "The Issue - 1900" Poster

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In the beginning of the 20th century people were concerned about the United States' role as an economic and military superpower and about the power of giant corporations within the free enterprise system. These same issues are still of concern 100 years later at the beginning of the 21st century.

> **Project** the document.

**QUESTION** What are some of the messages about Bryan's positions that are illustrated in the poster? Give your evidence.

**SUGGESTED ANSWER** Bryan supports Free Silver.

**EVIDENCE** silver medallion below his portrait and text: "no crown of thorns," "no cross of gold"

**SEE NOTE** →

**SUGGESTED ANSWER** Bryan opposes U.S. imperialism and supports independence for colonized nations.

**EVIDENCE** foreign figures waving their flags below the Statue of Liberty with text below: "give us liberty or give us death"; image of the liberty bell (a reminder of U.S. independence from Britain)

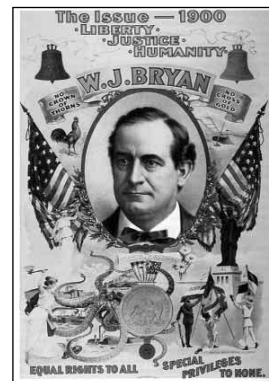
**SUGGESTED ANSWER** Bryan opposes trusts that have monopolistic control over industry.

**EVIDENCE** the octopus (labeled "Trusts") with its tentacles around factories is being attacked by "Lady Liberty"

**SUGGESTED ANSWER** Bryan supports Populism and labor, and opposes the wealthy elite.

**EVIDENCE** image of plow and rooster symbolize farmers; text: "equal rights to all, special privileges to none"; Lady Liberty attacking the "octopus" of trusts/monopolies

**1900 DOC. #1**



National Portrait Gallery Smithsonian Institution

**Bryan "The Issue - 1900" Poster**

**PowerPoint Slide**

**NOTE**

These quotes refer to Bryan's 1896 convention speech supporting Free Silver (1896 doc. #1).

QUESTION **How does the artist represent the principles of “liberty, justice, and humanity”?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER Liberty –is represented by the Liberty Bell and Statue of Liberty;  
Justice –is represented by figure of “blind justice” impartially weighing the scales of justice;  
Humanity –is represented by foreign figures appealing to Statue of Liberty.

**FURTHER QUESTIONS**

How have contemporary candidates tried to tap into Populist sentiments appealing to working people and attacking a wealthy elite?

Where does the current President stand on issues of foreign military involvement and the power of large corporations? Where does his opposition stand? How do you know?

**ADDITIONAL INFO**

Bryan had wanted the annexation of the Philippines to become a major issue in the campaign in order to stir a national debate on whether U.S. imperialism was consistent with democratic traditions. When voters failed to support his anti-imperialist views he took up the antitrust issue. A majority of voters were unwilling to come to support either of these in a time of economic growth. Bryan continued to advocate for Free Silver even though the Gold Standard Act of 1900 had essentially ended this as a concern.

Bryan linked these three concerns – free silver, antitrust and anti-imperialism – into a critique of establishment power. He argued that a small group of Eastern businessmen and wealthy industrialists used the gold standard, trusts, and imperial adventures to secure more wealth and power for themselves. In the process, he argued, democratic institutions were weakened and common people were less able to control their lives. McKinley, on the other hand, saw these same practices as central to prosperity. He argued that gold, consolidated corporate power, and territorial expansion were the keys to a strong economy and opportunity for all U.S. citizens.

**CONNECTIONS**

(see thematic listing)

**Class/Labor**  
**Economic Issues**  
**Foreign Policy**