

Meeting of the Minds

Gilded Age (late 19th century)

Objective: The purpose of this activity is to look at and analyze the differing viewpoints regarding the Gilded Age and the impact of various reforms on the American people and life in the United States at the end of the 19th century.

You will select one of the persons named below. You will conduct research to learn about this person and be able to discuss their opinion(s) on the events of the era. You will be expected to articulate your thoughts/ideas on the relevant issues of the Gilded Age. Bonus points can be earned during “the meeting.” People seated silently during “the meeting” may be asked POINTED QUESTIONS to bring them into the discussion. You may earn 5 points of extra credit for coming to the meeting dressed as your chosen person.

The Meeting of the Minds will take place in class on **Friday, February 3, 2017**. Please see your reading schedule for specifics regarding research and preparation time.

Through the class discussion – the Meeting of the Minds - students will share opinions and analyze various viewpoints of the Gilded Age. You will make judgments about whose ideas were the most plausible and whose were most controversial during the Gilded Age.

In preparation for the meeting, you must find a pertinent *primary source document* either by you (speech, article, diary entry, etc.) or about an issue you deeply cared about. You must pull a significant excerpt from that document and use it within the meeting. You will hand in a copy of that primary source after the meeting concludes.

Be ready to discuss any of the topics mentioned below:

- farmer’s problems/issues
- growth of industry
- role of labor unions – a positive force for change or radical anarchists, socialists & communists?
- “captains of industry” or “robber barons”?
- societal change (or lack thereof), particularly with the regard to race relations and/or immigrants
- rise of nativism
- impact of wealth on society at large – Gospel of Wealth? socialism? other?
- public policy and/or the role of government in society, especially with regard to regulation and reform
- role of monopolies and consumer rights and/or workers’ rights
- urbanization and its issues and/or benefits
- the role of women
- If your individual has another significant personal issue, you may address that issue at the “meeting.”

You will be graded on the following criteria:

- successful completion of the "Meeting of the Minds" research sheet – 30 pts.
- successful participation in the "Meeting of the Minds" class discussion – 30 pts.
- successful use of a primary source excerpt during the "Meeting of the Minds" & handing in a copy of that source – 10 points
- **TOTAL: 70 points**

You might have to make inferences about your person and his/her opinion on some issues. State why you take the stand you do on the various issues. If your individual had NO opinion on a particular topic, do not worry. Simply do your best.

Characters

Oliver Hudson Kelley - founder of the *Order of the Patrons of Husbandry* (The Grange) – publicized the plight of farmers.

J. Pierpont Morgan – a financier who was pro-business; represented what farmers opposed.

Cornelius Vanderbilt – railroad tycoon; the railroads were the enemy of the farmer by charging high prices, especially on short hauls.

Jane Addams – founder of *Hull House* - provided services for immigrant families (job training, kindergarten, child care) in cities.

Grover Cleveland – President of the United States - epitomized the presidents of the day with regard to labor issues

Eugene V. Debs - labor organizer; president of the American Railway Union during the Pullman Strike; while in prison he read socialist tracts and became a leader in the American Socialist movement

Henry Clay Frick – right-hand man to Andrew Carnegie at Carnegie (later US) Steel in Pittsburgh. Broke the union during the Homestead Strike.

Samuel Gompers – prominent labor organizer; founded the American Federation of Labor

Mother Jones – Mary Harris Jones was a prominent labor and community organizer; member of the International Workers of the World (Wobblies); helped to build the United Mine Workers and American Socialist Party

Terrence V. Powderly - leader of the Knights of Labor before the Haymarket Square riot

Jacob Riis - Danish immigrant & photographer who chronicled the plight of slum dwellers in his book *How the Other Half Lives*

John D. Rockefeller founder of Standard Oil Company, business tycoon

Andrew Carnegie – Carnegie Steel; philanthropist; "Gospel of Wealth"

William "Boss" Tweed –head of Tammany Hall political machine

Rutherford B. Hayes – President of the U.S.; sent troops to stop the Great Railroad Strike (1877)

Henry George – author of *Progress and Poverty*; his influence has been used all across the political spectrum. He advocated for the "single tax."

Washington Gladden – preacher; Social Gospel movement

William Graham Sumner - promoted Social Darwinism; advocated free markets, anti-imperialism, and the gold standard. Advocated *laissez-faire* capitalism.

W.E.B. DuBois – African American educator and founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

Booker T. Washington – African American educator; founder of the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, AL; "Atlanta Compromise" speech (1895)

“MEETING OF THE MINDS” RESEARCH SHEET

Character name: _____

Role in society at the time of the “meeting:” _____

“Claim to Fame” – accomplishment(s) – *what did this person do to impact the time period under discussion?* _____

Famous Relevant Quotes of this person (and source): _____

Who are your “allies” at the “meeting,” if any: _____

Who are your “opponents” at the “meeting,” if any (and why): _____

Your character's opinion on the topics of the "meeting:"

1. Issue: _____

Opinion: _____

2. Issue: _____

Opinion: _____

3. Issue: _____

Opinion: _____

4. Issue: _____

Opinion: _____

5. Issue: _____

Opinion: _____

If there was an issue in which you had to make an inference – what was that issue?

What was the inference? _____

What historical evidence did you use to arrive at that inference? _____

What questions do you have for the other characters at the “meeting?”

1. Question: _____

2. Question: _____

3. Question _____
