

6.13 Politics in the Gilded Age

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 12 marks**

KEY WORDS people’s (populist) party 人民党 • gilded age politics 政治
• political machines 政治机器 • laissez-faire 自由放任 • gilded age 镀金时代

Objective

Build the skills to explain **Gilded Age politics** 政治.

You must be able to:

- state what inspired the People’s (Populist) Party and what it called for
- name the two things the major parties contended over
- state what reformers argued
- state how political machines thrived

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Populism

Economic instability inspired agrarian activists to create the People’s (Populist) Party, which called for a stronger governmental role in regulating the American economic system. The direct answer to 6.12’s laissez-faire position.

■ Party contention

The major political parties appealed to lingering divisions from the Civil War and contended over tariffs and currency issues. A backward-looking appeal alongside two economic questions.

■ Reformers’ argument

Reformers argued that economic greed and self-interest had corrupted all levels of government. “All levels” — the charge is systemic, not against particular officeholders.

■ Machines

In an urban atmosphere where the access to power was unequally distributed, political machines thrived, in part by providing immigrants and the poor with social services. The CED explains their success by what they supplied.

2 Practice

2.1 State what inspired the Populist Party and what it called for. [2]

2.2 State how political machines thrived. [2]

2.3 Reformers made a systemic charge.

(a) State it and the force of “all levels”. [2]

(b) Name the two economic questions the parties contended over. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 The Populist Party called for [1]

- **A** a stronger governmental role in regulating the economic system
- **B** laissez-faire
- **C** an end to elections
- **D** higher immigration

3.2 Political machines thrived in part by providing immigrants and the poor with [1]

- **A** social services
- **B** land grants
- **C** railroad shares
- **D** military protection

3.3 An organisation is corrupt and supplies services nobody else provides.

(a) State why it endures. [1]

(b) Explain the difficulty this creates for reformers. [2]

Solutions

2.1 economic instability inspired agrarian activists to create it; it called for a stronger governmental role in regulating the American economic system.

2.2 access to power was unequally distributed in cities, and machines provided immigrants and the poor with social services.

2.3 (a) that economic greed and self-interest had corrupted government; “all levels” makes the charge systemic rather than against particular officeholders. (b) tariffs and currency issues.

3.1 A. stronger regulation.

3.2 A. social services.

3.3 (a) because those services are needed and unavailable elsewhere. (b) removing the machine removes the services with it, so reform must replace what it destroys or lose the support of those who relied on it.