

The 1898 North Carolina Election Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:

Why did the Democrats defeat the Fusion ticket in the 1898 North Carolina election?

Materials:

- Copies of 1898 North Carolina Timeline
- Copies of 1898 North Carolina Documents A-C

Plan of Instruction:

Teachers should read <http://www.lib.unc.edu/ncc/1898/history.html> for background information on the North Carolina election.

1. Introduction: Review Populist demands and election of 1896.

Explain: *Populists didn't always align with Democrats; sometimes they aligned with Republicans, especially in the South where Republicans were poor black farmers and Democrats were rich land owners. When Populists united with Republicans, their platform was sometimes called the "Fusion" ticket.*

2. Hand out 1898 North Carolina Timeline and read through with whole class.

3. Hand out Documents A-C to groups. Have students answer Guiding Questions in groups.

4. Whole class discussion: Why did the Democrats win in 1898?

- What evidence did you use to support your claims?
- Which evidence was stronger/weaker?
- Based on Document B, the Fusionists tried to respond by denying that African Americans were equal. Why might they have chosen to respond this way?
- Was Governor Russell's warning effective? Why or why not?

Citations:

"A White Man's Day." News and Observer. October 21, 1898.
<http://www.lib.unc.edu/ncc/1898/sources/tillman.html>

Governor Russell. Proclamation. *Caucasian* (Raleigh, N.C.), 27 October 1898.
<http://www.lib.unc.edu/ncc/1898/sources/russellproc.html>

Cartoon. News and Observer. August 13, 1898.
<http://www.lib.unc.edu/ncc/1898/sources/cartoon.html>

North Carolina Election Timeline

- 1865** The Civil War ends.
- 1867** The Republican Party is formed in North Carolina.
- 1870** The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution is ratified, guaranteeing African Americans the right to vote.
- 1870** The Democrats regain control of the North Carolina legislature, as Reconstruction comes to an end.
- 1876** Democrat Zebulon Vance is elected Governor.
- 1892** In statewide elections, the combined totals of Populist and Republican votes are more than those for the Democrats.
- 1894** In the first fusion election, the **Republicans and Populists run together** and the **Democrats lose** control of both houses of the legislature.
- 1896** Elections bring **more fusion success**: the Republicans and Populists run together again and keep control of the legislature. A Republican is elected Governor.
- 1898** **Democrats win** a majority of seats in the legislature

Your task is to figure out:

The Fusion ticket (Populists + Republicans) won in 1894 and 1896. So why did the Democrats beat the Fusion ticket in 1898?

DOCUMENT A (Modified)

A WHITE MAN'S DAY.

Eight to Ten Thousand People Listen.

TILLMAN MAKES A GREAT SPEECH FOR DEMOCRACY

Tillman said that he could not understand why whites in North Carolina did not use their large majority to prevent negro domination. He blamed both Democrats and Populists for their continued division, but appealed to the Populists to re-unite with the Democrats. When they had restored white rule, they would have plenty of time to settle their differences. By taking his advice the Populists would reinforce the silver-backed dollar and help keep the Republican goldbugs from making policy.

The crowd yelled with delight at every attack on the Republicans.

Source: The article above appeared in the Democratic newspaper, News and Observer, on October 21, 1898. The article describes a speech by Democratic Senator Ben Tillman who was convincing the large crowd to vote Democratic in the upcoming election.

DOCUMENT B (Modified)

I have been told that several political meetings have been broken up by armed men, using threats, intimidation, and, in some cases, actual violence; that in other cases property has been actually destroyed, and citizens fired on, that several citizens have been taken from their homes at night and whipped; that in several counties peaceful citizens have been intimidated and terrorized by threats of violence to their persons and their property, until they remove their names from the voter registration.

Therefore, I, Daniel L. Russell, Governor of the State of North Carolina, by virtue of authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws, will use all lawful efforts to preserve the peace; and to secure to all the people the quiet enjoyment of all their rights of free citizenship.

And I do further commend and require that all persons who may have entered this State from other states, to leave this State upon pain of being arrested and dealt with according to law.

By the Governor,
DANIEL L. RUSSELL.

Source: The speech above was published in a Populist newspaper on October 26, 1898.

DOCUMENT C



Pant leg is labeled, "THE NEGRO."

Figure being stepped upon is labeled, "WHITE MAN."

Caption reads, "A SERIOUS QUESTION –HOW LONG WILL THIS LAST?"

Source: The following political cartoon appeared in the Democratic newspaper, News and Observer, on August 13, 1898.

Guiding Questions

Name _____

Document A

1. What party does Tillman represent?
2. Who is he trying to convince to vote Democratic?
3. What are two things that Tillman promises will happen if the Democrats win?

Document B

1. Governor Russell says that there's been violence. What party do you think is behind the violence?
2. Who do you think is being attacked? Why would those people be attacked?
3. Do you think this speech had any effect on the violence? Why or why not?

Document C

1. What's the main message of this cartoon?
2. Who do you think was its intended audience?
3. What does it tell you about the Democrats' strategy for the 1898 election?