

Name: _____ Hour: _____

HIPPO: WJB's "Cross of Gold" Speech – (Sample HIPPO customized to this specific document.)

Historical Context (When and where was this speech being given? What was going on at the time that makes this important or helps give the speech context?)

This speech was given at the 1896 Democratic Convention in Chicago. Farmers were struggling across the midwest with low crop prices and high debt, while businessmen and a handful of other ultra-wealthy types were prospering in the North. Federal legislation protected American businesses while doing little to help farmers, and Populism was on the rise - especially across the Midwest.

Intended Audience (To whom was this speech given? How might the intended audience have shaped this speech? Was there a secondary audience beyond the men in the room at the time? Explain)

The primary audience was the delegates at the 1896 Democratic Convention - the ones who'd soon be choosing their next candidate for President of the United States. WJB no doubt wanted to appeal to their party loyalties while presenting himself and his argument as a potential winner in the upcoming election. It would have been reasonable to assume the speech would be covered in newspapers across the country, so WJB would also be trying to appeal to potential voters as much as possible.

Point of View: (Who was the speaker? What do we know about him at this point in his life? Was he speaking primarily for himself or for a larger organization or movement, and how would this shape his choices in this speech?)

WJB was a lawyer and well-known public speaker even before this, and had served in the House of Representatives for 4 years. He may not have been nationally famous before this speech, but he had some experience with making his case to a room of people, and his speaking style is both sophisticated and appropriately emotional. He was also highly educated, as evidenced by his comfortable use of both historical and Biblical allusions.

Purpose (Why was this speech given and recorded? What did the author hope would happen as a result? What did he want his audience to THINK or DO differently based on his words?)

WJB wanted to become the Democratic candidate for POTUS (President of the United States). He seems to have sincerely believed in bimetallism and the importance of farmers and other "little people" across the nation, but in order to do what he thought was best for them (and the country), he had to have the power to make it happen.

Other (What else should we keep in mind while analyzing this document? Any important allusions, tricky vocabulary, or other elements to which we should pay attention? Anything else you'd add?)

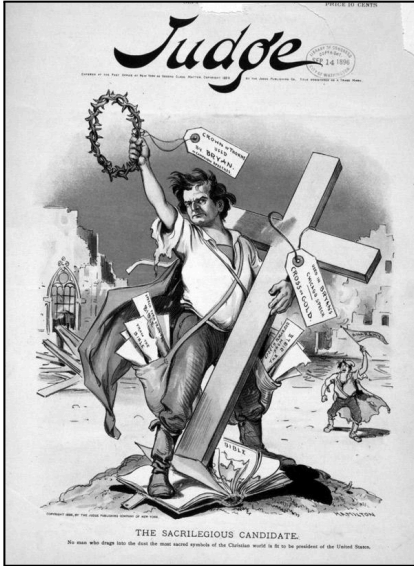
Although there were newspapers, this was still a generation comfortable with long speeches and complex economic, social, and political arguments. Attention spans were longer, and 'rhetoric' was still a standard course of study expected of any educated male. In other words, the power of a good speech probably meant even more then than it does today - there was no TV news or 'sound bites' or media packages, etc. - you had to do it live and in person.

Summary (If you were to reduce this document to a short, simple sentence or two, what would it say?)

This is NOT the same as explaining what the document is ABOUT. What does it SAY?)

Some may complain that the silver standard {bimetallism} isn't good for "business," but this neglects far too many legitimate "businessmen" across the nation - farmers, miners, homesteaders, laborers of all kinds, who have just as much stake in the success of this great nation as rich factory owners. That's who the Democratic Party speaks for! Some people argue that if you legislate in favor of big business, the wealth will trickle down to everyone else, but we know that it's only when you protect the working class that EVERYONE prospers. We will not allow ourselves to be exploited or 'crucified' by a policy designed only to help the rich and powerful!

Bryan's "Cross of Gold" Speech [Excerpts]



On the 4th of March, 1895, a few Democrats, most of them members of Congress, issued an address... asserting that the money question was the paramount issue of the hour... concluding with the request that all believers in free coinage of silver in the Democratic Party should organize and take charge of and control the policy of the Democratic Party.... Our silver Democrats went forth from victory unto victory, until they are assembled now, not to discuss, not to debate, but to enter up the judgment rendered by the plain people of this country...

When you come before us and tell us that [our economic policies] shall disturb your business interests, we reply that you have disturbed our business interests by your action. We say to you that you have made too limited... the definition of a businessman...

The farmer who goes forth in the morning and toils all day, begins in the spring and toils all summer, and by the application of brain and

muscle to the natural resources of this country creates wealth, is as much a businessman as the man who goes upon the Board of Trade and bets upon the price of grain. The miners who go 1,000 feet into the earth or climb 2,000 feet upon the cliffs and bring forth from their hiding places the precious metals to be poured in the channels of trade are as much businessmen as the few financial magnates who in a backroom corner the money of the world.

We come to speak for this broader class of businessmen... those hardy pioneers who braved all the dangers of the wilderness, who have made the desert to blossom as the rose—those pioneers away out there, rearing their children near to nature's heart, where they can mingle their voices with the voices of the birds—out there where they have erected schoolhouses for the education of their children and churches where they praise their Creator, and the cemeteries where sleep the ashes of their dead—are as deserving of the consideration of this party as any people in this country. It is for these that we speak...

We have petitioned, and our petitions have been scorned. We have entreated, and our entreaties have been disregarded. We have begged, and they have mocked when our calamity came. We beg no longer; we entreat no more; we petition no more. We defy them! ...

Now, my friends, let me come to the great paramount issue. If they ask us here why it is we say more on the money question than we say upon the tariff question, I reply that if protection has slain its thousands the gold standard has slain its tens of thousands...

[U]pon which side shall the Democratic Party fight[?] Upon the side of the idle holders of idle capital, or upon the side of the struggling masses? ...

There are two ideas of government. There are those who believe that if you just legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, that their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous their prosperity will find its way up and through every class that rests upon it...

If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we shall fight them to the uttermost, having behind us the producing masses of the nation and the world. Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them, you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold!