

Why Were the Populists Unhappy?

Populism arose as Kansas farmers were unhappy about their situation. New farming technology allowed farmers to plant more, which brought about a surplus and farmers could not make much money with these **low farm prices**. Farmers needed that money to pay for the expensive machines they used, so when they did not receive a fair price for their crops they went further into **debt**. The **droughts** of the late 1880s and early 1890s devastated the farmer's harvest, propelling them further into debt. **High interest rates** on machinery and mortgages often forced farmers into foreclosure. Farmers saw much of this as being due to the **greed and corruption of banks, railroads, and big business**. They believed that there was too much **inequality of wealth** in the country and that the government should eliminate that inequality.

The song "The Kansas Fool" expresses these ideas. Compare the verses of the song and identify which of the grievances, listed in bold above, is represented in the song. Write that grievance in the box on the right.

Song Lyric	Grievance
Chorus: Oh, Kansas fools! Poor Kansas fools! The banker makes of you a tool;	1.
I look across the fertile plain, Big crops-made so by gentle rain' But twelve cent corm gives me alarm, And makes me want to sell my farm.	2.
With abundant crops raised everywhere, "tis a mystery, I do declare, Why farmers all should fune and fret And why we are so deep in debt.	3.
At first we made some money here, With drought and grasshoppers each year;	4.
And now the interest that we pay	5.

Soon takes our money all away.	
The bankers followed us out west, And did in mortgages invest; They looked ahead and shrewdly planned, And soon they'll have our Kansas land.	6.