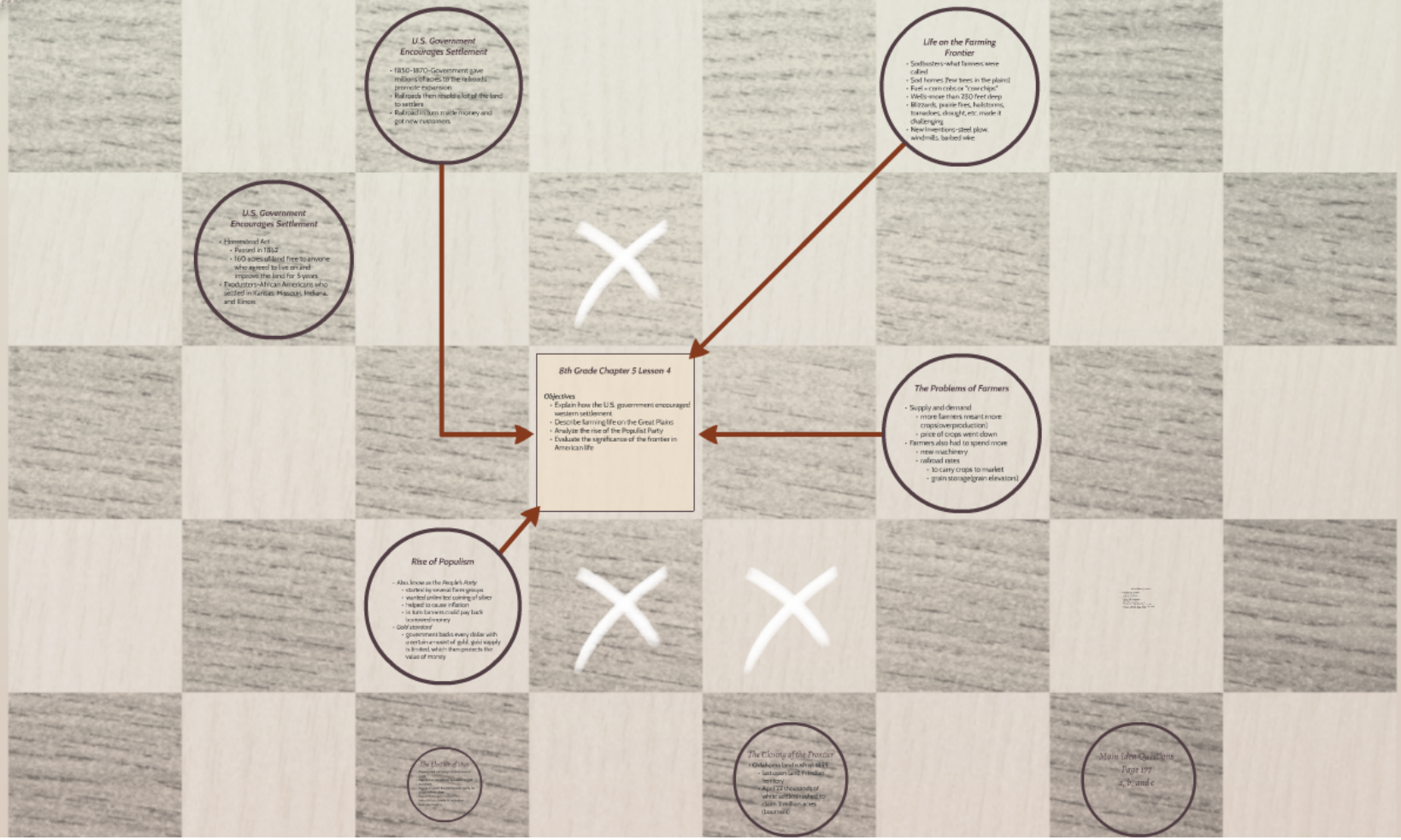
8th Grade Chapter 5 Lesson 4



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Objectives

- Explain how the U.S. government encouraged western settlement
- Describe farming life on the Great Plains
- Analyze the rise of the Populist Party
- Evaluate the significance of the frontier in American life

U.S. Government Encourages Settlement

- Homestead Act
  - Passed in 1862
  - 160 acres of land free to anyone who agreed to live on and improve the land for 5 years.
- Exodusters-African Americans who settled in Kansas, Missouri, Indiana, and Illinois

U.S. Government Encourages Settlement

- 1850-1870-Government gave millions of acres to the railroads promote expansion
- Railroads then resold a lot of the land to settlers
- Railroad in turn made money and got new customers.

Life on the Farming Frontier

- Sodbusters-what farmers were called
- Sod homes (few trees in the plains)
- Fuel = corn cobs or "cow chips"
- Wells-more than 280 feet deep
- Blizzards, prairie fires, hailstorms, tornadoes, drought, etc. made it challenging
- New Inventions-steel plow, windmills, barbed wire

The Problems of Farmers

- Supply and demand
  - more farmers meant more crops(overproduction)
  - price of crops went down
- Farmers also had to spend more
  - new machinery
  - railroad rates
    - to carry crops to market
    - grain storage(grain elevators)

The Problems of Farmers

- Farmers began working together
  - formed the Grange
  - originally for social purposes
- Formed cooperatives
  - had their own grain elevators
  - sold directly to merchants
- Demanded action from the government
  - asked to regulate railroad rates and storage charges
  - Mullen v. Illinois (government could regulate railroads because they serve the public interest)

Rise of Populism

- Also, know as the *People's Party*
  - started by several farm groups
  - wanted unlimited coining of silver
  - helped to cause inflation
  - in turn farmers could pay back borrowed money
- *Gold standard*
  - government backs every dollar with a certain amount of gold, gold supply is limited, which then protects the value of money

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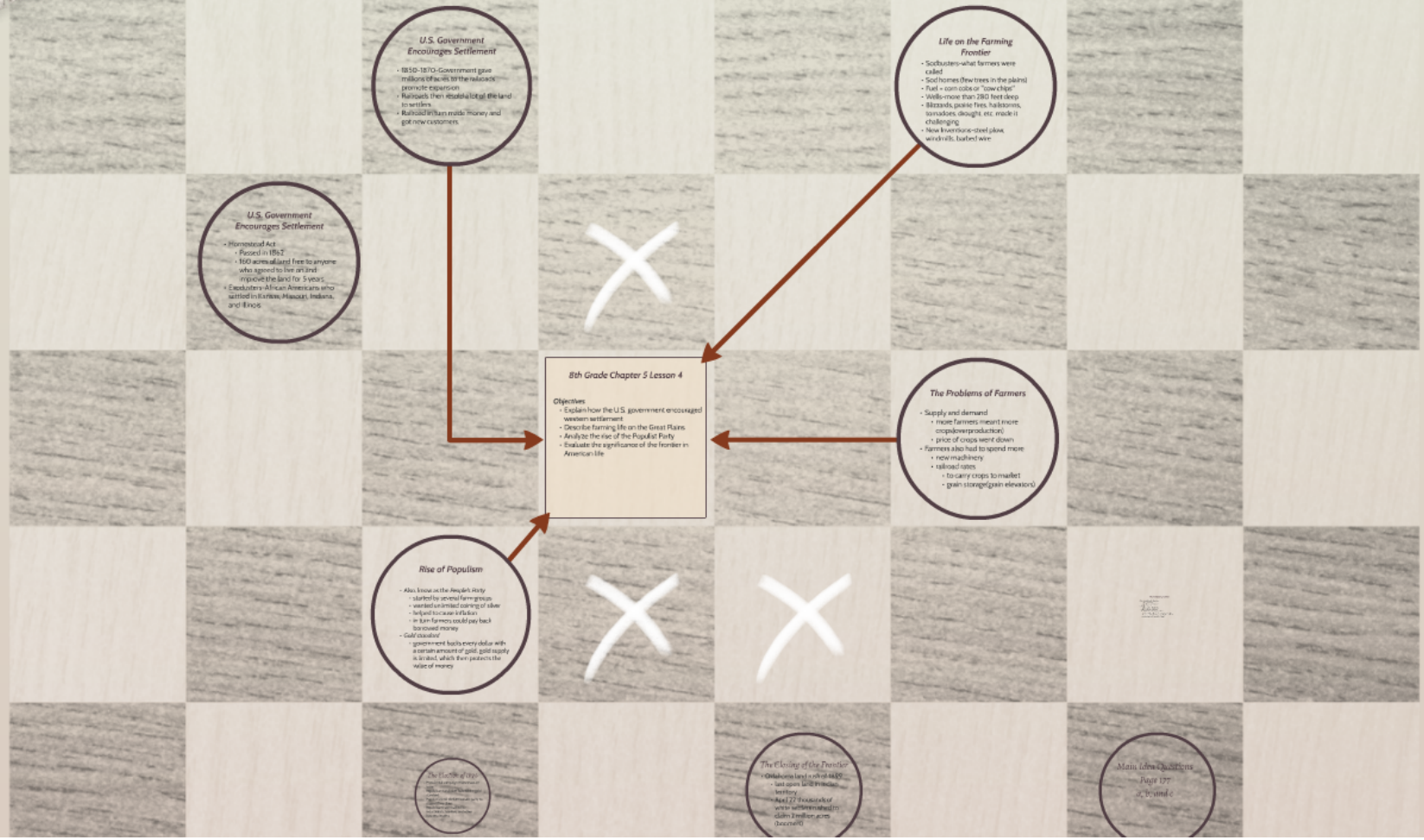

The Election of 1896

- Presidential campaign money was an issue
- Republican candidate favored the gold standard
- Populist joined the Democratic party to support free silver
- Republicans won backed by industrialists, bankers, and other business leaders.

The Closing of the Frontier

- Oklahoma land rush of 1899
  - last open land in Indian territory
  - April 22 thousands of white settlers rushed to claim 2 million acres (boomers)

Main Idea Questions

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