

Over the political upheaval and revolution that

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



Over time, the tale The Wizard of Oz, has been dissected many ways over in search of its “ true” meaning.

There are many who feel that The Wizard of Oz is merely a child's story, rife with imagination and childish advice - while combating the equally as loud swell of staunch voices that claim a tale interwoven with adult themes, moments, and political representation of their times, namely, Populism. Many have laid out that the allegorical interpretation of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz suggesting that L. Frank Baum was a Populist himself (or, at minimum, a supporter of the populist movement) and that his writing was influenced by the political times of his day.

While we will never know if Baum wrote Oz as an allegorical tale or not, what is clear is that the theme(s) mirrored and alluded too within his fantastic story speak directly to politics and political maneuvering of those around him. Many can argue that Baum was a conservative Republican. Dissenting sides can claim his place as a resounding supporter of Populism. Regardless, of their truths, we do know that neither side nor history itself can deny his observation of the political climate he was in, while also weaving his feelings ever so skillfully into a tale of loss, hope, potential, fear, courage, and ultimately - returning home.

Baum saw and created many reference points in his day, to those characters of his story; the Scarecrow a reference to the 19th century American farmer, and the constant troubles they faced in a day on the precipice of industrial dominance; the Tin Man as those American Industrial workers (hinting not so subtly at the steel workers themselves), and the Lion; as William Jennings

Bryan, a Senator from Nebraska and dominant political force within the democratic party who not only was a driving force (and eventual nominee of the Populist Party) but also a loudly anti imperialist voice off the heels of the Spanish – American War. It could even be argued that the catalyst of the entire story – the cyclone – is a direct representation speaking to the political upheaval and revolution that was sweeping the nation, The question then should not be what “ side” was Baum on, but rather, why he found the advent and nature of Populism important enough to immortalize it in the first place. This is the question Gretchen Ritter, author of *Goldbugs and Greenbacks* answered beautifully in that *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is “ a cultural and political satire which was neither simply pro-Populist or pro-capitalist” (1997b, 173).

Also noting, that “ motive is not at issue” (1997a, 21), for his writing rather – it is the method behind it – being clearly influenced with the happenings around him, and following back into his nature as a reporter while artfully writing the truths of his day. To this end, it does not matter why he wrote said story – just that it’s nature is rooted in the politics of his day. To me, the assertion that the allegorical subtext is lacking is ignorantly wrong at best, and intentionally misleading at worst. As the text has shown and evidence backs, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is a purposeful and intentional work of not only blatant political thought and reflection, but also a foreboding warning to the United States and her subsequent future. Baum was a man born of political background, steeped in journalistic nature, and fortunate to have a front row seat as the Populist movement unfolded; what better way to record this history, than in a story gentle from the outside, but satirical to

its core? The dichotomy that Baum created was one of sweeping generalities, intertwined with simplistic ideals; he aimed not to preach, yet he left valuable, and complex lessons we can all learn from. He sought not to hold us captive in brooding doom, yet he laid plainly a bleak future wrapped in sunshine and rainbows.

He was a craftsman, who artfully and intentionally gave us a child's tale, garbed in adult themes. As such, his seemingly innocent children's story has become one of the most allergically correct pieces of our day – fit for both a child, and the children who still run our country today.