

Wizard of oz political allegory

Literature



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“ There’s no place like home, there’s no place like home, there’s no place like home”, repeated Dorothy. A young girl trying to go back home to Kansas after a cyclone lands her and her dog, Toto, in the Land of Oz. There Dorothy meets the Scarecrow, the TinMan, and the Cowardly Lion who are all in need of something that is considered important to them; a brain, a heart, and courage. Along the way, they have to travel to Emerald City to see the Wizard of Oz, directed by the Good Witch of the North, especially for Dorothy to get back home.

However, Dorothy and the gang run into problems with the Wicked Witch of the West, who wants Dorothy’s ruby slippers (which was originally the Wicked Witch of the East shoes). In America, in the late 1890’s, the Populist Movement was in full throttle. Populism is “ government of, for, and by the people”. The Populist Party was a political party, which was a collection of various social groups against monopolies and the rich. In these social groups, included poor white farmers from the South; wheat farmers in the Mid-Western states such as Kansas, Nebraska; African- Americans; and Northern factory workers.

These oppressed groups naturally didn’t agree with banks, railroads and the rich. The Populist Movement relates to the Wizard of Oz because it portrays the people of these places as fools because some actually do listen to these presidents who really don’t have the American people best interest at heart. Also, the events that occurred during the Populist Movement involving farmers, their hardships, oppressed workers, and politics mirrored Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tinman, and the Cowardly Lion. Therefore, this shows how the Wizard of Oz proves to be a political parable.

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In the text, Dorothy is a young girl who is always laughing and playing with her dog, Toto. She lives in the dry, Great Plains of Kansas with her Aunt Em and Uncle Henry, who is a farmer. They live in a rundown looking house, and all around them was dull and grey. Dorothy represented an everyday women living in Kansas, just living a normal life during this time period. She also represents their values as well. Auntie Em and Uncle Henry show the everyday farmer. In the historical content, they portray the farmer who works day in and day out, but not seeing any benefits from their farming.

In the book, a cyclone appears to come and takes Dorothy and Toto to this magical land named the Land of Oz. It turns out Dorothy's house landed and killed the Wicked Witch of the East. The cyclone is supposed to represent the Populist Movement and the political upheaval it brought involving William Jennings Bryan, and the Granger movement. The cyclone could also represent a Silverite victory, when the Senate adopted a bill that prohibited the government from issuing money bonds without the consent of the Congress. It was basically to stop the government from using only gold at times.

During this time, farmers were suffering from issues involving supply and demand. They were making more and more of wheat/grain but the value of it was becoming less and less. They were receiving less money for their goods. They wanted money to be both silver and gold so it can be easy for farmers, and workers to make the same money, and have the rich make their money. The Land of Oz is a utopia where there was color, flowers, beauty, and birds singing in the tree. In the Land of Oz, lived Munchkins. They were supposed to represent other average American workers as well.

When the Wicked Witch of the East died, they were freed of oppression. The Wicked Witch of the East represented factories and industrialized settings. Many of the farmers from the West blamed their problems on the wealthy and industry. Later on in the text, Dorothy meets the Good Witch of the North. The Good Witch represents a Northern electorate who had supported populism. The Good Witch sends Dorothy to go to the Wizard of Oz, down the yellow brick road to Emerald City, who has the power to send her back to Kansas.

The Good Witch also gives Dorothy the silver shoes, which also serves as protection. This can relate to the Bimetallism vs. Gold Standard. I say this because Dorothy shoes are silver and she is sent to go down the yellow brick road, which can be seen as gold bricks. This can be known as gold money. In this time, it was clear that silver vs. gold was important to the farmers involving the economy. The silver was supposed to be available for the working class, and would increase the amount of money for the working class. In the text, Dorothy meets the Scarecrow, the Tinman, and the Cowardly Lion.

The Scarecrow represents the western farmers, and how their hardships and troubles from inflation caused them to have doubts and problems with their money. The Tinman represents the American worker who mostly has populist views. He also represents how the worker felt dehumanized and was helpless. In addition to this, the Wicked Witch of the East put a spell on him that every time he swung his axe, he would chop a piece of him off. This would make his body smaller, in relation to his work being minimized by the government.

The Cowardly Lion represents William Jennings Bryan. He supported the free silver movement. Bryan had a large impact during the Populist movement and fought for the rights of the common people. He wanted to make silver available as money for the working class, and not only support the industry and the rich. Together, all four of them took the yellow brick road to Emerald City. Emerald City represents Washington, D. C. The city is green and stands for money, and the economy. The green spectacles could be used as propaganda to cloud American people mind.

When they get to the Wizard, he is a powerful and majestic character that seems to hold many powers. He orders Dorothy and the rest to kill the Wicked Witch of the West and bring back her broomstick. In the text they go through many obstacles due to the Wicked Witch. Soon after Dorothy, kills the Witch with water. It shows that the Wicked Witch of the West represents the untamed, and dry, drought plains in the West. When they returned back to the Wizard of Oz to bring back the broomstick, it was revealed that the Wizard was a regular, ordinary man, who really didn't hold great power like his title.

He represents a president, presumably from Grant to McKinley. It shows he fooled people into thinking he's something that he's not. He helps the scarecrow, the tinman, and the cowardly lion by giving them a brain, a heart, and courage. At the end of the story, it showed the wizard provide objects of self-illusion to clearly make the scarecrow, the tinman, and the lion feel better about themselves. The Good Witch of the South tells Dorothy that all along she had what it takes to go home, and by tapping her shoes three times she was able to go home.

The fact that they had to have a “ wizard” “ fix” them and then at the end for Dorothy to lose her silver shoes showed that in the beginning, populism was strong but after the election of 1896, McKinley won, the issue of silver decreased. In conclusion, this story showed that the characters and events depicted in the text relate to American history. It showed problems with American society, economy, and politics. It therefore shows in some way that this is a political parable.