**The Gold Standard representation of the story**

See also: [Political interpretations of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_interpretations_of_The_Wonderful_Wizard_of_Oz)

Baum did not offer any conclusive proof that he intended his novel to be a political allegory. Historian Ranjit S. Dighe wrote that for sixty years after the book's publication, "virtually nobody" had such an interpretation until [Henry Littlefield](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Littlefield), a high school teacher.[[31]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wonderful_Wizard_of_Oz#cite_note-Dighex-33) In his 1964 [*American Quarterly*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Quarterly) article, "The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism",[[32]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wonderful_Wizard_of_Oz#cite_note-Dighe2-34) Littlefield posited that the book contained an allegory of the late 19th-century [bimetallism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bimetallism) debate regarding monetary policy.[[33]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wonderful_Wizard_of_Oz#cite_note-Littlefield50-35) At the beginning of the novel, Dorothy is swept from her farm to Oz by a cyclone, which was frequently compared to the [Free Silver](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Silver) movement in Baum's time.[[32]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wonderful_Wizard_of_Oz#cite_note-Dighe2-34) The [Yellow Brick Road](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_brick_road) represents the [gold standard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_standard) and the [Silver Shoes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver_Shoes) which enable Dorothy to travel more comfortably symbolizes the [Populist Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Populist_Party_%28United_States%29)'s desire to construct a bimetallic standard of both gold and silver in place of the gold standard. She learns that to return home, she must reach the [Emerald City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emerald_City), Oz's political center, to speak to the Wizard, representing the President of the United States.[[32]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wonderful_Wizard_of_Oz#cite_note-Dighe2-34) While journeying to the Emerald City, she encounters a scarecrow, who represents a farmer; a woodman made of tin, who represents a worker dehumanized by industrialization; and a cowardly lion, who represents [William Jennings Bryan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Jennings_Bryan), a prominent leader of the silverite movement.[[34]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wonderful_Wizard_of_Oz#cite_note-Hansen255-36) The villains of the story, the Wicked Witch of the West and the Wicked Witch of the East, represent the wealthy railroad and oil barons of the American West and the financial and banking interests of the eastern U.S. respectively. Both these groups opposed Populist efforts to move the U.S. to a bimetallic monetary standard since this would have devalued the dollar and made investments less valuable. Workers and poor farmers supported the move away from the gold standard as this would have lessened their crushing debt burdens. The Populist party sought to build a coalition of southern and midwestern tenant farmers and northern industrial workers. These groups are represented in the book by the Good Witches of the North and South.[*[citation needed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed" \o "Wikipedia:Citation needed)*] "Oz" is the abbreviated form of ounce, a standard measure of gold.

Littlefield's thesis achieved some popular interest and elaboration[[35]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wonderful_Wizard_of_Oz" \l "cite_note-37) but is not taken seriously by literary historians.[[36]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wonderful_Wizard_of_Oz#cite_note-38)[[37]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wonderful_Wizard_of_Oz#cite_note-39)

Bradley A. Hansen, a professor of economics at the [University of Mary Washington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Mary_Washington), disagreed that the novel is a monetary allegory. He argued that the numerous intersections between both the individuals and happenings in the novel and those in the [1896 presidential election](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_1896) are the central evidence upon which proponents of the allegory depend. Further stating that research has shown that neither Baum's works nor his life history indicate that he supported Populism, Hansen concluded that "the true lesson of *The Wizard of Oz* may be that economists have been too willing to accept as a truth an elegant story with little empirical support, much the way the characters in Oz accepted the Wizard's impressive tricks as real magic".[[34]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wonderful_Wizard_of_Oz#cite_note-Hansen255-36)