**Model: The Election of 1876**

**Introduction:**

Why: I chose my topic because the year 1876 sounded interesting because I realized it was the centennial year. I also knew that it was a contested presidential election year and wondered if it was similar to the 1824 corrupt bargain, or like what happened in the 2000 and 2016 presidential elections.

Compelling Questions:

1. Did Reconstruction fail?
2. If Tilden had taken office would Reconstruction have ended?
3. Why did Tilden give in even though he was clearly the choice of the people?

Explanation & Overview: the 1876 election was notable because it kind of represented the final battle of the Civil War. It resulted in an end to Reconstruction. Reconstruction was the post-Civil War period in which politicians from the North and their Southern sympathizers tried to control and reform the former Confederate states. Among the goals of Reconstruction was to create a safe and free environment in which former slaves could live in the South. The period was marred by the work of the Ku Klux Klan who routinely threatened and carried out violence against former slaves.

**Background of 1876:**

1. Nation’s centennial year
2. Radical Republicans in Congress were losing power
3. People in North growing tired of Reconstruction in the South
4. Many resources were devoted to controlling the South
5. Republicans were losing power; Grant’s residency was hurt by financial scandals
6. South was solidly Democratic; White conservatives regaining control in the South
7. Millions of Americans attended the Centennial Fair in Philadelphia
8. People anxious to put the Civil War behind them

**Rutherford B. Hayes**

1. Born in 1822; Republican from Ohio
2. Lawyer – attended college
3. Graduated from Harvard law school
4. Lieutenant General in Civil War; Wounded in battle
5. Served in House of Representatives; Governor of Ohio 1876-77
6. First telephone installed in the White House; First President to visit the West coast
7. He and his wife were devout Methodists and prayed together every morning

**Samuel Tilden**

1. Born in 1822 – very successful lawyer and protégée of Martin Van Buren
2. In the 1850s he was a Free-Soiler but did not join the new Republican Party
3. Democrat – did not support the Civil War
4. Broke up the infamous tweed ring in New York; a notorious criminal gang
5. Was Governor of New York
6. Very intelligent but not an especially powerful or forceful politican
7. Known for fighting corruption in the state
8. Lost election of 1876 185 to 184 in electoral votes
9. Tilden opposed “radical reconstruction”
10. Left $3 million which was used to start the famous New York Library

**Disputed Election**

1. Tilden wins more than 250,000 more votes than Hayes
2. No clear winner in electoral votes – 20 were in dispute
3. All disputed electoral votes except one were from Louisiana, Florida and South Carolina
4. All states former Confederate states
5. Democrats had won the 3 states, but elections were marred by violence at the polls
6. Congress sets up a special commission to settle the crisis
7. Southern Democrats agree to elect Hayes in return for ending Southern Reconstruction
8. Special commission awards all disputed electoral votes to Hayes
9. Hayes would be nicknamed “His Fraudulency”

**Conclusion:**

What went well? It was easy to learn about much of the topic from the textbook. There was a lot of information on the topic at Grolier and at PBS.

What could you do to improve? I should have learned more about what else was going on in 1876. The presidential election wasn’t the only thing happening. I could have focused more on what the average person of the time was thinking. I did mention the 1876 Centennial fair and wish I had learned more about that as background.

Final Thoughts: The project to “reconstruct the South along ideals of universal equality and freedom was a noble one and speaks to many of the decent tendencies of American history. However, the way in which the project ends is a story told again in and in history. One may say it was a compromise between competing groups, but the cynic will claim it was one more corrupt bargain with entrenched power. It was a deal to deny full liberty and equality for all and in that sense showed reconstruction to be a failure. This would be born out by nearly 100 years of African-Americans being relegated to second class citizens.