http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2007684705/

Learning about the Gilded Age (1869-1896) through Political Cartoons

Overview/Prior Knowledge

The Gilded Age (1869-1896), as Mark Twain dubbed this historical period, was marked by a veneer of prosperity, but also deep-seated political, social, and economic problems including racism and corruption. It was during this same period that editorial cartoons reached a high-level of sophistication. Students can learn about this historical period through the analysis and interpretation of cartoons.

Objectives

- TSW define the techniques of *symbolism*, *exaggeration*, and *labeling* as used in political cartoons.
- TSW identify the cartoonist's use of *symbolism*, *exaggeration*, and *labeling* in political cartoons of the Gilded Age.
- TSW accurately interpret editorial cartoons of the Gilded Age.
- TSW rank the effectiveness of a Gilded Age political cartoon.

Time Required

50 minutes

Recommended Grade Range

11th

Subject/Sub-Subject

United States History

Standards

Social Studies

US.2
Industrialization:
> Analyze industrialization and its impact on the United States in the late 19th and early 20th century.

US.3
Progressive Movement:
> Evaluate causes goals and outcomes of the Progressive Movement.

English Language Arts
-Literacy in History/Social Studies-Grades 11-12.

-Reading in History/Social Studies-Key Ideas and Details.

> 12.1. Cite specific evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

> 12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source: provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

> 12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Library of Congress - Teaching with Primary Sources Skills:

- Examine primary sources closely to form conjectures about their meaning and intent
- Model primary source analysis that includes observing, reflecting, and questioning
- Use primary sources that connect to the subject/topic under study
- Provide for students of varying abilities, learning styles and interests to learn with primary sources

Highlighted Strategies:

- Social Studies Skill Builder (Teachers' Curriculum Institute)

Credits

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Materials

- Primary Sources – See Resource Guide at the end of this document.
- LCD Projector
- Analysis Sheet

Procedures

Introduction

1. As students walk into the classroom, they will see a piece of jewelry or other ornament (available to the teacher) prominently displayed that is gilded. The teacher will pick-up the jewelry or ornament, define the term *gilded* (something that looks valuable on the outside, but that is corrupt on the side), and then reveal the object's gilding.
    A. Ask students: Have you ever opened a present, which—because of the wrapping or packaging—seemed very valuable or desirable on the outside, but once you opened it you were disappointed by its content?
    B. Have students note that the Gilded Age, which lasted from 1869-1896, was a period of great growth, expansion, and industrialization, but it was also a historical period with many serious problems. This historical period was dubbed, "The Gilded Age," by Mark Twain.
2. Project the political cartoon, "Murder of Louisiana" (https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.11785/) on the screen.
    A. Instruct students to examine the cartoon looking from side-to-side and top-to-bottom for 60 seconds. Then, ask students to identify one thing they see in the cartoon while you note their comments on a Smartboard or acetate board.
    B. Next, model for students the analysis of a political cartoon (please use "Murder of Louisiana Cartoon Analysis Guide" for a detailed breakdown of this cartoon) by defining the terms *symbolism*, *exaggeration*, and *labeling* and providing examples of their usage in the cartoon. Also, be sure to identify the key figures in the cartoon:
        1) Newly Freedmen
        2) President Ulysses S. Grant
        3) Attorney General George Henry Williams
        4) Louisiana Governor, William P. Kellogg
        5) Northern Businessmen
        6) Women (the embodiment of the states)
    C. Then, ask students, by a show of hands, the following questions:
        1) Does the cartoonist support or oppose Ulysses S. Grant and Radical Reconstruction?
        2) What pieces of evidence support your interpretation of this cartoon?
    D. Inform students, the cartoon employed racial stereotypes as part of a critique of the Grant administration, which sent federal troops to enforce a court-order recognizing the Republican candidate, William P. Kellogg, as the victor of the 1872 gubernatorial campaign in Louisiana.

During

1. Pair students with student desks side-by-side, so the pairings can analyze and interpret other examples of Gilded Age cartoons.
2. Distribute copies of the cartoon analysis worksheet from the National Archives (see link below) and the following cartoons to each student pairing:

A. "The Bosses of the Senate" (http://cdn.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3b50000/3b52000/3b52000/3b52004r.jpg)
B. "The Great Presidential Puzzle" (http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2007684705/)

3. Instruct the pairings that they can work together, but that each student is to complete the cartoon analysis worksheet for both cartoons.
4. Next, the teacher will ask students to point out examples of *symbolism*, *exaggeration*, and *labeling* used in each cartoon. Finally, the teacher will lead a discussion about the meaning of each cartoon.

Wrap-up/Closure

Project "The Bosses of the Senate" cartoon on the screen. At the bottom of the screen, place individual numbers (5-4-3-2-1) on single sheets of 8 ½ by 11" paper. Then, ask students to rate the cartoonist's effectiveness in using *exaggeration* (i.e., overdoing the physical characteristics of people or things to make) to make his point in this political cartoon:

5 = Very Effective

4 = Effective

3 = Neutral

2 = Somewhat Effective

1 = Ineffective

Have students line-up in front of the number, which matches their rating thereby creating a human bar graph.

Assessment

Formative:
Discussion questions about the political cartoons.

Completed cartoon analysis worksheets.

Differentiation

− Strategically partner students of varying ability levels.
− Provide extended time (as needed).
− Have accelerated learners complete an additional political cartoon analysis on their own.

Supplementary Materials

- https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/activities/political-cartoon/cag.html
- https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon_analysis_worksheet.pdf

Teaching with Primary Sources Resource Guide

Title: Learning About the Gilded Age (1869-1896) Through Political Cartoons

Historical Background:

The Gilded Age (1869-1896 was marked by a veneer of industrialism and prosperity, but also included deep-seated political, social, and economic problems including racism and corruption.

Primary Source 1:

Title: "Murder of Louisiana"

Link: https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.11785/

Purpose: The teacher will model an analysis of this political cartoon, which employs *symbolism*, *exaggeration*, and *labeling* to criticize the Grant administration for its interference in the gubernatorial election of 1872.
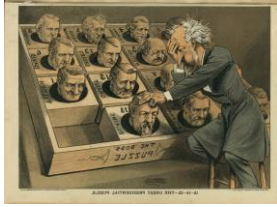
Primary Source 2:

Title: "The Bosses of the Senate"

Link: https://www.loc.gov/item/2002718861/

Purpose: Students will analyze this political cartoon, which contains a scathing rebuke of big businesses influence on the U.S. Senate.

Primary Source 3:

Title: "The Great Presidential Puzzle"

Link: http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2007684705/

Purpose: Students will analyze this political cartoon, which critiques Roscoe Conkling, an influential U.S. Senator from New York and the leader of the Stalwart faction of the Republican Party, and his influence over presidential politics of the era.