

Political Cartoons as Muckrakes: Reform Through Late 19th Century Editorial Art

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Abstract

High school American History students examine political cartoons in this multiple day lesson to expand their knowledge base of muckraking. The popularity of political cartoons to encapsulate the American opinions of the masses emerged in this era and the cartoons were used as vehicles for reform. This mini-unit has students gaining a basic understanding of muckraking, media, and political cartoons. Students work with partners to examine a particular political cartoon with an accompanying history of the topic. The partners have been given a cartoon based on a topic from the era which relates to reform. Partners then present the pervasive political cartoons along with a set of notes to the class in a jigsaw to better understand the pervasive issues of the Reform Era.

Essential Questions/Enduring Understandings

1. What were the reform movements from the Progressive Era?
 - a. What were the different opinions of the issues at hand?
2. How were the reform movements from the Progressive Era linked to each other?
3. How were political cartoons effective means of communication?

Assessment

1. Muckraking PowerPoint notes
2. Political cartoon primary source analysis sheet.
3. Partner presentation and completion of notes.
4. Graphic Organizer of Progressive Era reform movements

Setting the Purpose

Students will begin this unit by having a K part of a KWL chart discussion. The teacher will introduce a PowerPoint about Muckraking by asking students what they know about the term or the words in the term. The teacher could bring in a rake and some homemade muck to help the class visualize what muckraking is.

Analysis of Local Primary Sources

Students will be looking at various issues that muckrakers exposed through political cartoons. While the option to cruise through microfiche at the University of Illinois' History Library would be the best option to find local political cartoons during the Era of Reform, the best way to analyze local sources would be to look outside of the boundaries of a political cartoon. There are a few local primary sources about Prohibition, including a picture and some Op-Ed articles. A couple student groups will be given the local primary sources to present to the class after the general political cartoons have been presented.

Ties to National Primary Sources

The primary sources/political cartoons are tied to national movements but may reflect a local sentiment. For example, many Minnesotans could have cared less about Boss Tweed, but the movement of corrupt individuals into the spotlight was a national movement and a tenet of the Progressive Era.

Procedures

1. Teacher should introduce topic of muckraking by completing a K chart along with the class (KWL w/o the W and L) – 10-20 minutes
2. Teacher should then transition to PowerPoint and notes about the issues that will be discussed in the lesson. Students will complete notes sheet along with the PowerPoint. – 1-2 class periods
3. Teacher should divide class into pairs and explain jigsawing project.
 - a. Divide class – 10 minutes
 - b. Pass out political cartoon, accompanying Wikipedia entry about the topic, political cartoon analysis sheets, political cartoon analysis sheet transparency, and transparency marker – 10 minutes
 - c. Explain to class how they will present their issue to the class along with their cartoon with a full explanation of the topic – 10 minutes
4. Allow class one period to address their cartoon, analysis sheet, and Wikipedia article – 50 minutes
5. Have all pairs present 5 minute presentations about their topic. - 100 minutes
6. Use remainder of time to complete Web of Muckraking issues graphic organizer. Allow students to decide which issues are connected to which other reforms. – 20 minutes

Sources

<http://www.cartoonstock.com>

<http://rationalrevolution.net/images/childlab.png>

<http://www.authentichistory.com>

<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/trials/haymarket/cartoonhistory.JPG>

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<http://www.picturehistory.com>

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/media/lessons/suffrage/electionday.jpg>

http://amhist.ist.unomaha.edu/module_files/Muckraking.gif