

LESSON 3

Propaganda Against Japanese Americans Prior to and During World War II

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Time

3 class periods (45 minutes per period)

Overview

Lesson 3 introduces students to two methods of analyzing the political cartoons created during World War II. These political cartoons underscore how influential propaganda was in promoting the wartime hysteria that greatly influenced the World War II Japanese American experience.

Objectives

- Students will analyze political cartoons.
- Students will recognize propaganda and talk about what the propaganda is trying to convince readers to think about and do.
- Students will discuss their thoughts and ideas with a partner.

Enduring Understanding

Diversity in the United States helps democracy to function.

Essential Questions

- How does racism affect the American experience?
- Is it more important to have safety or liberty?

Materials

- Three political cartoons must be downloaded and printed onto overhead transparencies:
 - “Honorable Fifth Column” can be downloaded from the Mandeville Special Collections Library at the University of California, San Diego <http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/dspolitic/Frame.htm> (accessed August 3, 2009)
 - “This Is the Enemy” can be downloaded from the Spring Hill Unified School District <http://www.usd230.k12.ks.us/PICTT/publications/cartoons/1944/m.html> (accessed August 3, 2009)

- “All Packed Up” can be downloaded from the Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco <http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist8/editorial4.html> (accessed August 3, 2009)
- “Cartoon Analysis Worksheet” can be downloaded from the National Archives and Records Administration http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon_analysis_worksheet.pdf (accessed August 3, 2009)
- *Overhead 3-1: Think, Pair, Share Instructions*, printed on overhead transparency
- *Handout 3-1: Questions for Dr. Seuss Political Cartoons*

Assessments

- Cartoon Analysis Worksheet
- *Handout 3-1: Questions for Dr. Seuss Political Cartoons*
- Essay Question and Double-Circle Debate

Background

Wartime hysteria contributed to negative media treatment of Japanese Americans prior to and following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In fact, propaganda against Japanese Americans after the attack on Pearl Harbor was fairly common in the press nationwide; this negative portrayal is also evident in political cartoons generated by Dr. Seuss (whose real name was Theodor Seuss Geisel). Before he became a successful children’s book author, Dr. Seuss was a political cartoonist for the New York periodical *PM* from 1940 to 1943. Many of these cartoons have been collected in the book *Dr. Seuss Goes to War* by Richard Minear.

Instructional Strategies/Skills

Day 1:

- Show students the overhead transparency (downloaded from the Web) of the Dr. Seuss cartoon entitled “Honorable Fifth Column.”
- Download, print, and distribute copies of the Cartoon Analysis Worksheet. At first, have students complete

Level One only and then discuss answers as a class. Continue to Level Two only, then Level Three, with a discussion between each section.

Day 2:

- Explain that in addition to the Cartoon Analysis Worksheet, there are other ways to analyze political cartoons.
- Share *Overhead 3-1: Think, Pair, Share Instructions* and explain that students will use this method to analyze three cartoons.
- Distribute copies of *Handout 3-1: Questions for Political Cartoons* to each of the students.
- Show students three overhead transparencies (downloaded from the Web) of the political cartoons “Honorable Fifth Column,” “This Is the Enemy,” and “All Packed Up” and have them answer the corresponding questions using the “Think, Pair, Share” method.
 - Give students 3 to 4 minutes to individually analyze each cartoon they see on the overhead and answer questions for each cartoon on their own paper.
 - Then, one cartoon at a time, have students discuss their responses in pairs.
 - After a cartoon has been discussed in pairs, have the entire group discuss each cartoon. Write the group’s ideas on the board or a blank transparency.

Day 3:

- Have students respond to this essay prompt:
 - Do you think race had anything to do with the removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast during World War II? Why or why not? Show at least three examples from the cartoons.
- Conduct a Double-Circle Debate:
 - Have class divide into “yes” and “no” groups depending on how they answered the questions in their essays.
 - Create two circles of desks, an inner circle and an outer circle.
 - The inner circle group is given three minutes for

anyone to discuss their opinions.

- The outer circle then has three minutes.
- Next, anyone in the inner circle has two minutes for rebuttal.
- The outer circle is then given two minutes for rebuttal.
- Have groups freely discuss with each other for two to three minutes.

Extensions

- Have students draw their own political cartoon about a current issue. Then ask partners to evaluate the cartoon to see if it meets the criteria of a political cartoon and if it shows the artist’s intent.
- Have students evaluate current event political cartoons in the same manner as the historic cartoons were analyzed.
- Read aloud to the class Dr. Seuss’s book *The Sneetches*, which was published in 1961, 20 years after the creation of the cartoons that were just analyzed. Discuss why Dr. Seuss’s opinions of Japanese Americans may have changed in that time.

References

- National Archives and Records Administration. “Cartoon Analysis Worksheet.” http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon_analysis_worksheet.pdf (accessed August 3, 2009).
- National Education Association. “Dr. Seuss’s Biography.” <http://www.nea.org/grants/20224.htm> (accessed August 3, 2009).
- Minear, Richard H. *Dr. Seuss Goes to War: The World War II Political Cartoons of Theodor Seuss Geisel*. New York: The New Press, 1999.

“Think, Pair, Share”

Overhead 3-1

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For each cartoon, answer the questions on your own piece of paper. You will have four minutes.

When time is called, turn to your assigned partner and discuss your answers. You will have two minutes.

When time is called, we will discuss answers as a class.

Questions for Political Cartoons

Handout 3-1

Name _____ Period _____

Use the “Think, Pair, Share” method to answer these questions.

Questions for “Honorable Fifth Column”

1. What do you think the “Fifth Column” is? _____

2. How are Japanese Americans drawn in this cartoon? _____

3. What is the major message the artist is trying to send? _____

4. In what ways is this message conveyed? _____

Questions for “This Is the Enemy”

1. How is the “enemy” shown? _____

2. How does this compare to the previous cartoon? _____

3. Do you think most Americans would understand the differences between the Japanese “enemy” and Japanese Americans? What might cause the public to see them as the same? _____

Questions for “All Packed Up”

1. What is implied about Japanese Americans leaving California? _____

2. What is implied about Japanese Americans who are fighting the forced move? _____
