

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT – 2009-2012

Possible Interpretations of American Imperialism Using Political Cartoons
(1896-1905)

Bill Powers, Windham High School, Willimantic, CT.

Grade- High School

Inquiry – How are symbols are being used in this cartoon? How are countries being portrayed?

What messages do you think the cartoonist is attempting to convey?

Objectives – Given the political cartoon “How Some Apprehensive People Picture Uncle Sam After the War” (Detroit News, 1898) the student will be able to 1) identify symbols, 2) describe how the symbols are being used, 3) explain what message(s) the cartoonist is attempting to convey by use of the symbols.

Materials – Primary Source - Political Cartoon entitled “How Some Apprehensive People Picture Uncle Sam After the War” (Detroit News, 1898). This cartoon is found at many sites. Search for the cartoon by its title.

Activities – Students are given a copy of the cartoon and asked to study it. Individually, students are asked to identify symbols and to record them. As a class, students are asked to share and support their results. Next students individually describe in writing how the symbols are being used. The class shares their descriptions. Individually students, based on their own interpretation, explain in writing the message(s) the cartoonist is trying to convey. The class shares and discusses students’ interpretations.

Assessment – Students are assessed on the basis of being able to accurately identify and describe symbols. They will also need to offer a plausible explanation of a message being conveyed to the audience by the cartoonist.

Connecticut Grade Level Expectations

Standard #1 –7 Analyze the influence of nationalism on American society

Standard #1 – 17 Explain imperialism’s causes and impact

Standard #2 – 5 Interpret political messages of cartoons