

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT
Lesson Title - African American Anti-Woodrow Wilson Editorials
From Russell T. Hart

Grade – 10/11 Civics or Modern U.S. History

Length of class period – Variable (1 or 2 hrs.)

Inquiry – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

Students will analyze and evaluate the validity of criticisms about President Wilson in a pair of primary source editorial columns.

Objectives (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

1. Students will read for information, research the issues mentioned in the editorials, and substantiate an opinion on Woodrow Wilson's record on dealings with African American citizens.
2. Students will defend their opinions in both written and oral formats.
3. Students will understand the importance of newspaper editorial columns in shaping public perception of government leaders and social issues.

Materials (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?) – (please attach)

1. Vocabulary for Wilson editorials (to administer as homework the night prior to the activity)
2. Editorial Column to the Cleveland Advocate - October 21, 1916.
Vol. 3, Issue 24, Pg. 8 - "Woodrow Wilson Must Go"
3. Editorial Column to the Union - June 7, 1919.
Vol. 13, Issue 23, Pg 1 - "I Pity the Man Who Does Not Read the Bible Every Day"
4. Document Specific Question sheet
5. Computer access for further research (either in school library, computers on wheels, at home or via public library-as time and resources allow)

Activities (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

1. Teacher will assign the vocabulary sheet activity as homework, the night before this activity. This homework includes challenging terms students will encounter in the reading. Knowledge of these definitions will greatly enhance the effectiveness of their reading comprehension and discussion.
2. Students will be divided into groups of 2, 3 or 4 (based on class size/teacher preference.)_
3. Students will receive copies of the 2 Editorial Columns mentioned above and a sheet of Document Specific Questions.
4. Students will then read and discuss the 2 relatively short sources for about 15-20 min. Discussion should be directed by and notes taken according to the Document Specific Questions. Note taking should be incentivized by reminding students that they will complete a 2 page paper on the topic for homework and that ideas formulated in discussion will provide excellent content for their papers.
5. Depending on availability of class computers, either in class or at home, students will use computers to research the answers to their questions, particularly those contained in # 6-8.
6. Before embarking on their research, teacher should thoroughly explain the expectations and provide students an opportunity to ask any questions.
7. The following day, students will share their papers and engage in class discussion/debate regarding Wilson's policies as they pertained to African Americans.

Central Point: Was Pres. Wilson a racist or simply a product of his times/environment?

As an a lesson extension, students may research 3 or more other campaign slogans similar to Wilson's "Peace and Prosperity" and see a) how successful they were in getting the candidate elected and b) how closely they were adhered to if the candidate was elected.

How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?

1. Each student will complete a 2 page paper, graded according to the teacher's chosen rubric.
2. Teacher will observe and evaluate learning in the classroom discussion to follow.

Standard 1.9 - Understand the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizens

Standard 2.2 - Interpret information from a variety of primary sources

Woodrow Wilson Editorials Vocabulary

Define the following terms:

1. acquiescence
2. befog
3. chagrin
4. disenfranchisement
5. futile
6. Jim Crow
7. mossback
8. pejorative
9. pious
10. yoke

Woodrow Wilson Must Go

As President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson must go. The catch slogans of "peace and prosperity" must not be fog the main issue. Especially is this true as the situation concerns the Negro citizens of the country.

As a college president, Woodrow Wilson may have been a success; as the chief executive of a great nation of cosmopolitan makeup Mr. Wilson has demonstrated a spirit of narrowness that riles the blood of those who love high-minded and even-handed justice. (Even so far as college life is concerned, Princeton is the one great school in the east that says to the Negro student, "Thou shalt not.")

Mr. Wilson is the chief representative and spokesman of a party that from the beginning has fastened the yoke of oppression around the neck of the Negro. Four years ago there was some hope that Mr. Wilson, because of the environment of northern life, might measure up to a higher standard than the average Democrat in dealing justly with our people. Some trusted him. The bitter records of yesterday tell how futile was that trust. History records no greater demonstration of misplaced confidence, and it is certainly a pitiful memory, the chagrin of his enthusiasts!

What has Mr. Wilson said or what has he done to place inspiration and hope in the breast of the Negro? Nothing, absolutely nothing. In discrimination, segregation, deprivation, oppression, humiliation and acquiescence, the administration of President Wilson has been a gigantic object lesson for the Negroes of the United States.

Were it not for the restraining influence of Republican members in Congress, today, in this year of our Lord 1916, not only would we be deprived of citizenship rights, but uncloaked of all the attributes of manhood rights and reduced once more to the degrading standard of mere serfdom. Let him who doubts the truth of this assertion refer to the Congressional Record and behold the startling nature of some of the bills introduced into Congress by southern Democrats!

To the end that the Negroes of the United States—or that portion not yet disfranchised by the southern mossbacks—may let the world know their feelings about the present Democratic administration, above all things else, this year our votes will be VOTES OF PROTEST AGAINST WOODROW WILSON AND BOURBON DEMOCRACY.

WOODROW WILSON MUST GO as President of the United States.

And after the 4th of next March, once again under the Stars and Stripes we can breathe the air of freedom, when Charles Evans Hughes is President.

"I Pity the Man Who Does Not Read the Bible Every Day---Woodrow Wilson.

And we pity the man who reads the Bible every day and then fails to do unto others as he would have them do unto him. We judge from the pious remarks quoted above of President Wilson that he reads the Bible every day and that reminds us of his famous phrase, "Making the World Safe for Democracy." Judging from the disfranchisement, segregation and butchery of colored people here, America is not a part of the world. We also recall his statement to the committee that called upon him when he was nominee for the Presidency to enquire how he would treat colored people if elected. He replied, "I will treat them like Christian gentlemen." Thousands of colored people voted for him. He was elected. Possibly their treatment under his administration accords with his views as to the treatment requisite for Christian gentlemen. If so, God forbid that they should get any more of the Wilson Christian gentleman treatment for in the history of America for the last fifty years there has in national affairs never been such segregation. The Negro has been Jim Crowed from the white House even down to, and including, the Government toilet rooms.

DABNEY.

Document Specific Questions for African American Anti-Woodrow Wilson Editorials

- 1. In the "Dabney" editorial, what does the author mean by "America is not part of the world?"**
- 2. How does Dabney use the word "pious" as a pejorative term?**
- 3. In the "Woodrow Wilson Must Go," editorial, what Ivy League school once had Mr. Wilson as President? What was unusual about its acceptance policy in 1916?**
- 4. What does the author of "Wilson Must Go" expect will happen on March 4? Why does he choose that date?**
- 5. Compare and contrast the 2 editorials. Which supplies more evidence? Does this make either editorial more credible?**
- 6. What suggestion does the author of "Wilson Must Go" suggest to those who doubt the truth of his assertions?**
- 7. Can you find a "Pro-Wilson" editorial? If so, print it out and share it with the class tomorrow for extra credit.**
- 8. Research Woodrow Wilson's administration's policies regarding African Americans. Draw your own conclusions and support them in a 2 page paper.**
 - Include specific historical examples explaining both sides of the argument.**
 - Explain why the authors decided to publish their sentiments.**
 - What do you suppose was Wilson's response upon reading these letters?**
 - Do you think these letters were effective at shaping public opinion? Why?**
 - How might you have revised these letters? Why?**
 - Do you consider Wilson a "racist" or merely a product of his environment?**