

TEACHER GUIDE

1872 DOC. #1: "Greeley and Tweed" Nast Cartoon

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Occasionally an editorial cartoonist will be closely associated with a candidate whom he attacks. A modern example of this is the cartoonist Herblock whose images of Richard Nixon as a shady character with shifty eyes contributed to Nixon's reputation as "Tricky Dick." A century earlier, the cartoonist Thomas Nast continually attacked Horace Greeley.

Greeley was publisher and editor of the major newspaper, the *New York Tribune*. He had gotten his start in publishing and in politics by editing *The Log Cabin* newspaper for William Henry Harrison's campaign three decades earlier. Nast did not trust Greeley's associations with other wealthy and powerful men of the time and he made his suspicions clear in his biting and effective cartoons.

> **Project** the document.

This cartoon entitled "Diogenes has found an honest man" was one of many that Thomas Nast drew during the 1872 campaign. The figure on the left is Horace Greeley. The figure on the right is Thurlow "Boss" Tweed. Tweed had been the most powerful man in New York's Democratic Party and the boss of Tammany Hall, the Democratic political machine in New York City.

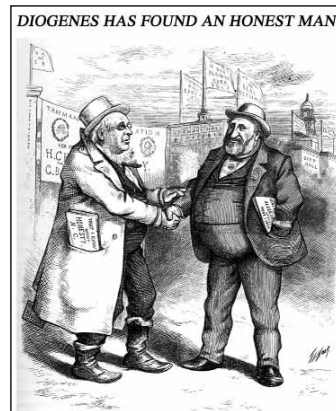
Tweed was sentenced to prison in 1872 for 104 counts of stealing public funds. Nast's cartoons were instrumental in associating Tweed with corruption. Tweed said, "I don't care what they print about me, most of my constituents can't read anyway – but them damn pictures!" (Hoff 77).

QUESTION **What messages are conveyed about Horace Greeley? What is your evidence?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER He is a dishonest man and a friend to crooks.

EVIDENCE Greeley is pictured shaking hands with "Boss" Tweed, himself a symbol of corruption; the text, "what I know about honesty," brings into question the integrity of both men

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PowerPoint Slide

SEE NOTE →

QUESTION **Is this cartoon pro-Republican or anti-Democrat and why?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER It is anti-Democrat.

EVIDENCE there is no mention at all of Grant or the Republicans; the only references are to Tammany Hall, a Democratic Party institution

QUESTION **How does the cartoonist use irony or satire to convey his message?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER “What I know about honesty” papers, “It has blown over” and “We are the real Reformers” on the banners above Tammany Hall are all ironic. It is clear from Tweed’s arrest and conviction that he was neither honest nor a reformer, and that the scandal had not blown over.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

What concerns might be raised today about the presidential candidacy of an owner of a major media outlet like a television network or a newspaper chain?

Are honesty and corruption still issues in contemporary presidential campaigns?

NOTE

Diogenes was a Greek Cynic philosopher of the 4th century B.C. said to have wandered around Greece with a lantern searching for an honest man. Cynics believe that all people are motivated by self-interest.

ADDITIONAL INFO

Thomas Nast was a brilliant cartoonist, giving us the symbols of both the Republican elephant and Santa Claus. Albert Paine, author of a 1904 biography of Nast, named the presidential campaign of 1872 “The Campaign of Caricature” (Cornog 122). Nast was relentless in his attacks on Greeley, accusing him of being a traitor both to his Republican roots and to the country by associating him with attempts to bail out Confederate leader Jefferson Davis.

One of Nast’s cartoons showed Greeley shaking hands with John Wilkes Booth over Lincoln’s grave. Given the power of these charges even Tweed was astounded that any men “outside of a Lunatic Asylum, would nominate Greeley for President.” Some have suggested that Nast’s constant attacks may have contributed to Greeley’s death shortly after Election Day.

CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

Cartoon see Herblock’s “Landslide” cartoon about Nixon and corruption, (1972 doc. #4)