

TEACHER GUIDE

1904 DOC. #4: Teddy Roosevelt “New Diplomacy” Cartoon

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Should the U.S. act as the world’s policeman, bringing criminals and “rogue nations” to justice and establishing law and order in a world of conflict? This familiar question has its roots in the debate about the growing U.S. empire at the turn of the 20th century.

> **Project** the document.

The title of this cartoon is “The New Diplomacy.” It was drawn by the cartoonist Louis Dalrymple for the popular magazine *Puck* in 1904. It illustrates Roosevelt’s motto concerning American power in the world, “Speak softly and carry a big stick.” Roosevelt also believed in using different tactics for diplomacy with “less civilized” nations than he would with the “civilized” nations.

QUESTION Describe the messages this cartoon presents about Roosevelt’s foreign policy and explain how they are communicated.

SUGGESTED ANSWER The U.S. is the world’s policeman and Roosevelt is the strongman that other nations look to for assistance.

EVIDENCE Roosevelt dominates the globe with the U.S. Capitol at the center; badge and paper saying “tell your troubles to the policeman”

SUGGESTED ANSWER He is willing to use force and intimidation to get his way.

EVIDENCE Roosevelt’s “big stick” representing the U.S. military hangs over fearful countries while others negotiate with the “policeman,” who has his jaw set, nightstick ready

QUESTION The left portion of the cartoon shows Roosevelt and the nations he considered “less civilized,” including Turkey, Brazil, and the Philippines. What does it suggest about his attitude toward how to effectively deal with these countries? Give evidence.

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Teddy Roosevelt “New Diplomacy” Cartoon

PowerPoint Slide

SUGGESTED ANSWER	The U.S. should be willing to use force if needed.
EVIDENCE	the “big stick” of New Diplomacy is swung over their heads; he has a stern look directed down at them; his message facing this side announces that he is “the policeman”
SUGGESTED ANSWER	He threatens military force against the “less civilized” nations of Latin America and the Middle East, but uses traditional diplomacy with Europe, Russia and Japan.
EVIDENCE	the “big stick” is swinging menacingly above the fearful character representing Latin America and Middle East nations; the figures representing these nations are disheveled and undignified; “civilized nations” are illustrated as more dignified and even defiant, but still much smaller than the U.S.; they are demanding the policeman’s attention; Roosevelt’s body is positioned with the word “arbitration” towards Europe and the “big stick” on the other side
SEE NOTE →	
QUESTION	Would this be a pro- or anti-Roosevelt cartoon?
SUGGESTED ANSWER	It depends on your point of view. Those favoring the use of U.S. power in the world would likely approve and those opposing imperialism or favoring isolationism might oppose.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Is this cartoon racist? Does it reflect racism in Roosevelt’s foreign policy?

Does the U.S. still “speak softly and carry a big stick” in international relations? How might a similar cartoon about U.S. foreign policy be drawn today?

Should the United States play the role of policeman or judge in international conflicts? Why or why not?

ADDITIONAL INFO

Roosevelt appreciated the opportunity to wield power overseas in ways that he could not do at home. His foreign policy was relatively reserved given his earlier support for imperialism and war. He believed in control without colonizing and in using the threat of violence to “encourage” other countries, especially in the Americas, to heed U.S. economic interests.

His distinctions between “civilized” and “less civilized” nations were certainly based on racism. They also reflected economic differences, since he included the newly-industrialized Japan among his “civilized” list. He believed that “civilized” nations like the U.S. could intervene in “backward” nations’ affairs in order to preserve, for both parties, the order required for economic stability. It was during this period that Roosevelt oversaw the development of the U.S. Navy as a sea power to rival England and Germany.

NOTE

Arbitration is a way to solve disputes between two parties where each submits their arguments to an unbiased third party who will make a final decision.

CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

Cartoon
Foreign Policy
Race