

ALBUM INQUIRY STARTER SET - HANDSHAKE DEALS: HOW CARTOONS TOLD THE STORY OF RECONSTRUCTION

Album Description



Political cartoons, often overlooked as mere satire or humor, are powerful historical artifacts that offer unique insights into the societal attitudes, political climates, and cultural tensions of their time. During the Reconstruction era, following the Civil War, these cartoons played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and conveying complex ideas through vivid imagery and symbolism. Artists like Thomas Nast used their craft to comment on the turbulent and often violent political landscape, where the struggle for African American rights clashed with the resurgence of white supremacy. The cartoons from this period capture not just the events of the time, but the emotions and power dynamics at play, making them invaluable tools for understanding history beyond the written word.

The political cartoons in this lesson all feature handshakes as a prominent visual element, symbolizing agreements, alliances, or betrayals that defined the Reconstruction era. These images, while simple at first glance, reveal deeper themes of compromise, racial tension, and the complex relationship between the North and South in the aftermath of the Civil War. The handshakes depicted are not mere gestures of unity but are laden with the weight of broken promises, violent oppression, and the ongoing battle for civil rights. By analyzing these cartoons, students will uncover the hidden narratives of Reconstruction, gaining a richer understanding of how the era's challenges and failures continue to resonate in America's political landscape today.

Guided questions:

- What symbols are present in the cartoon?
- Who are the key figures in the cartoon? What do they represent?
- What is the historical context of this cartoon? How does it reflect the issues of the time?
- How does the cartoon convey its message? Is it effective?
- What emotions or reactions might this cartoon have evoked in its original audience?
- How was the theme of the handshake used to symbolize agreements or conspiracies that impact African Americans during Reconstruction?

Inspired by this video

InquiryStarterSet CivilWar 9 - 12 13+

COMPROMISE WITH THE SOUTH - DEDICATED TO THE CHICAGO CONVENTION / TH. NAST.



Reference Link: <http://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3a00743/>

Summary

- Picture showing Confederate and Union soldiers shaking hands over grave. Tombstone reads: In Memory of the Union-Heroes who fell in a use-less war. Columbia is kneeling at the grave. This cartoon may refer to the Democratic Party Convention during the 1864 presidential election.

Created / Published

- 1864.

Notes

- - Wood engraving after Nast.
- - Illus. in: Harper's Weekly, 1864 Sept. 3, p. 572.
- - Ref. copy may be in LOT 4419.
- - This record contains unverified, old data from caption card.

Repository

- Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

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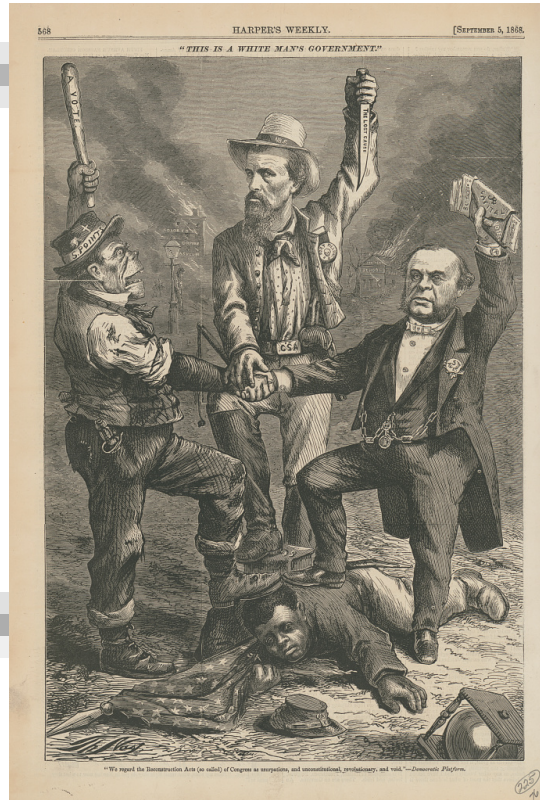
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<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

Digital Id

- [cph 3a00743 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a00743](http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a00743)
- [cph 3a02886 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a02886](http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a02886)

"THIS IS A WHITE MAN'S GOVERNMENT" "WE REGARD THE RECONSTRUCTION ACTS (SO CALLED) OF CONGRESS AS USURPATIONS, AND UNCONSTITUTIONAL, REVOLUTIONARY, AND VOID" - DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM // TH. NAST.



Reference Link: <http://www.loc.gov/item/98513794/>

Summary

- Cartoon showing man with belt buckle "CSA" holding a knife "the lost cause," a stereotyped Irishman holding club "a vote," and another man wearing a button "5 Avenue" and holding wallet "capital for votes," with their feet on an African American soldier sprawled on the ground. In the background, a "colored orphan asylum" and a "southern school" are in flames; African American children have been lynched near the burning buildings.

Created / Published

- 1868.

Genre

- Ethnic stereotypes--1860-1870
- Periodical illustrations--1860-1870
- Wood engravings--1860-1870

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Notes

- - Illus. in: Harper's weekly, v. 12, 1868 Sept. 5, p. 568.

Repository

- Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA
<https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

Digital Id

- ppmsca 71958 <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsca.71958>
- cph 3c21735 <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c21735>

THE UNION AS IT WAS THE LOST CAUSE, WORSE THAN SLAVERY // TH. NAST.



How easily wicked and treasonable organizations may gain the control over the peaceable and the industrious members of society has always been signally apparent at the South. A Tennessee, venture even to denounce the murderers or the violators of the laws; or if any Northern journal, roused to a proper indignation by the wrongs inflicted upon peaceable settlers

Reference Link: <http://www.loc.gov/item/2001696840/>

Summary

- Man "White League" shaking hands with Ku Klux Klan member over shield illustrated with African American couple with dead(?) baby. In background, man hanging from tree.

Created / Published

- 1874.

Genre

- Periodical illustrations--1870-1880
- Wood engravings--1870-1880

Notes

- - Illus. in: Harper's weekly, v. 18, no. 930 (1874 Oct. 24), p. 878.

Repository

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- **Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA**

Digital Id

- **cph 3c28619 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c28619**

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Teaching Notes:


Wow, power inquiry set  Peter Pappas ! I wonder if you might share how you went about finding and selecting cartoons to add to the set?

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Teaching Notes:

I would retitle the Primary Source Set as "Handshake and Whiskey Deals." A county in Georgia was literally formed when the town fathers got the Union militia commander drunk and he agreed to sign a document creating the county.

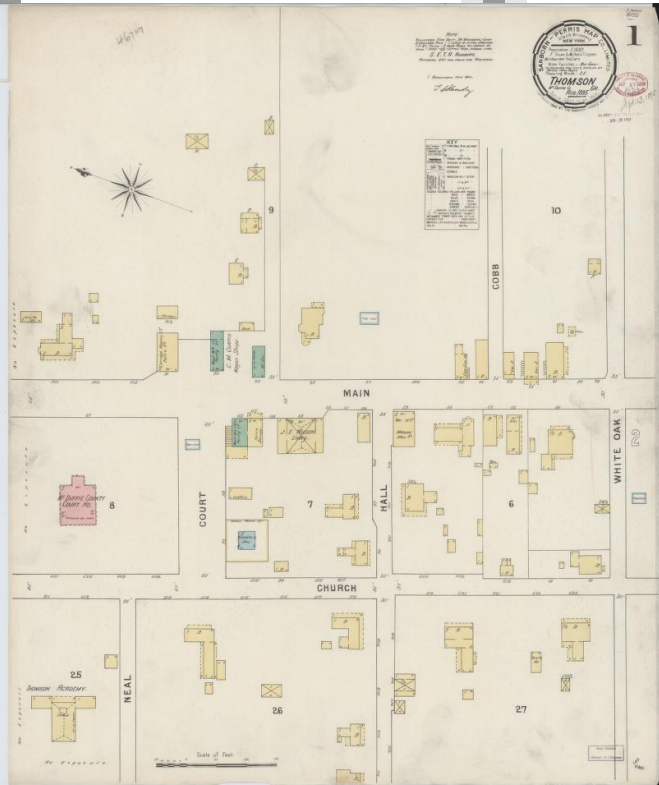


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Teaching Notes:

Somewhere between curation and plagiarism? At the bottom of the post I give the source. A video that I stumbled on. The video does a great job of deconstructing the “Union as it was” and then ties it to a number of other cartoons. I narrowed selection of images, added some context / questions and turned into an Inquiry Set.

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Teaching Notes:

Thanks for pointing out the link to the video—I didn't notice that the first time round—it's definitely worth a watch. And I would call your creation a primary source mashup. :-)