

Lesson 6.1

"BLACK AND WHITE": NINETEENTH CENTURY RACISM

Objective: Students will examine Thomas Nast's illustration "Black and White" and will articulate how it illustrates racism. They will then find and analyze images that illustrate contemporary stereotypes based on race.

Materials:

- **Doc 6.1:** Copies of Thomas Nast's illustration "Black and White: The Ignorant Vote—Honors are Easy?" *Harper's Weekly*, V.XX, No.1041, December 9, 1876
- Newspapers and magazines for cutting
- Scissors, blank paper

Timing: One class period with a longer assignment

Background Reading and Information:

- Thomas Nast was an illustrator for *Harper's Weekly* and other popular magazines in the mid-1800s. He became one of the most influential illustrators of the period. He is the creator of the well-known elephant and donkey, representing the Republican and Democrat party, respectively.

Procedure:

1. Tell students you will be studying racism in the nineteenth century and discussing how it affected politics. Ask students to offer definitions of racism. Write them up on the board. Have a student look up the definition of racism afterwards and write that on the board as well.
2. Hand out copies of Thomas Nast's illustration "Black and White," or put it up on an overhead projector.
3. Ask students to examine the illustration and voice their observations. Use questions like the following:
 - What do you notice about this picture?
 - How did Thomas Nast draw the face of the black man? Why is he barefoot? What features did he exaggerate?
 - How did Nast draw the face of the white man? What kind of animal does he look like? Why do you think this is?
 - What ethnic group is the white man supposed to represent? (Irish)
 - What are they sitting on? What is the significance of the scale? Why is it balanced?
 - Why is one side of the scale labeled South and the other labeled North?
 - Why do you think Nast titled the cartoon "The Ignorant Vote--Honors Are Easy"?
 - What could that mean?
 - If you could write the message of this cartoon in one sentence, what would it be?

- What does this illustration say about the attitudes of people in the north and south during the 1800s? Do these attitudes persist today?
 - Do people still stereotype Irish Americans in the same way today? Why or why not? What about African Americans? Why or why not?
4. Racism still exists today, but it tends to be more subtle than in Nast's illustration. People still stereotype each other based on race in derogatory ways. Ask students: What are some racial stereotypes that you can think of?
- All black people are good athletes.
 - All Arabs are terrorists.
 - All Asians are smart.
 - All white people are wealthy and well-educated.
 - All Latino people are illegal immigrants.
 - A black person driving a nice car must have stolen it.

Make a list together on the board. Discuss how stereotypes are false and how they can easily turn into misconceptions about other people and groups.

5. **Homework:** Have students scour newspapers and magazines, either in class or at home, for images that stereotype people by race. Ask them to cut one image out, paste it on a blank sheet of paper, and write a paragraph about the stereotype it implies.

Evaluation: Grade student images and analyses based on their understanding of what stereotype is and how it is demonstrated through images. Students may choose to include their image and analysis in their Unit Two portfolios.

Follow-up Activities:

- Have students do a long-term media watch for stereotypes based on race, class, gender, or sexual orientation. Have them bring in images or keep a record of stereotypes they see on TV. Have them make a collage from the images the class brings in.
- Search newspapers for political cartoons about current events and make a class scrapbook, including cartoons with short explanations of them below.
- Portfolio option: Have students draw their own political cartoons based on events that occur in Chapter Six (i.e. the June Riot of 1855). Make sure their cartoon clearly represents a specific point of view, not just illustrates an event.

Alignment with the Learning Results:

Grade Level: **9th–dipl.**

Content Area: Social Studies: **HISTORY**

Standard: **Individual, Cultural, International, and Global Connections in History**

Students understand historical aspects of unity and diversity in the United States and the world, including Native American communities.

Descriptor **E2a**: Identify and critique issues characterized by unity and diversity in the history of the United States and other nations, and describe their effects.

Grade Level: **6th-8th**

Content Area: Social Studies: **HISTORY**

Standard: **Individual, Cultural, International, and Global Connections in History**

Students understand historical aspects of unity and diversity in Maine, the United States, and various world cultures, including Maine Native Americans.

Descriptor **E2b**: Identify and compare a variety of cultures through time, including comparisons of native and immigrant groups in the United States, and eastern and western societies in the world.

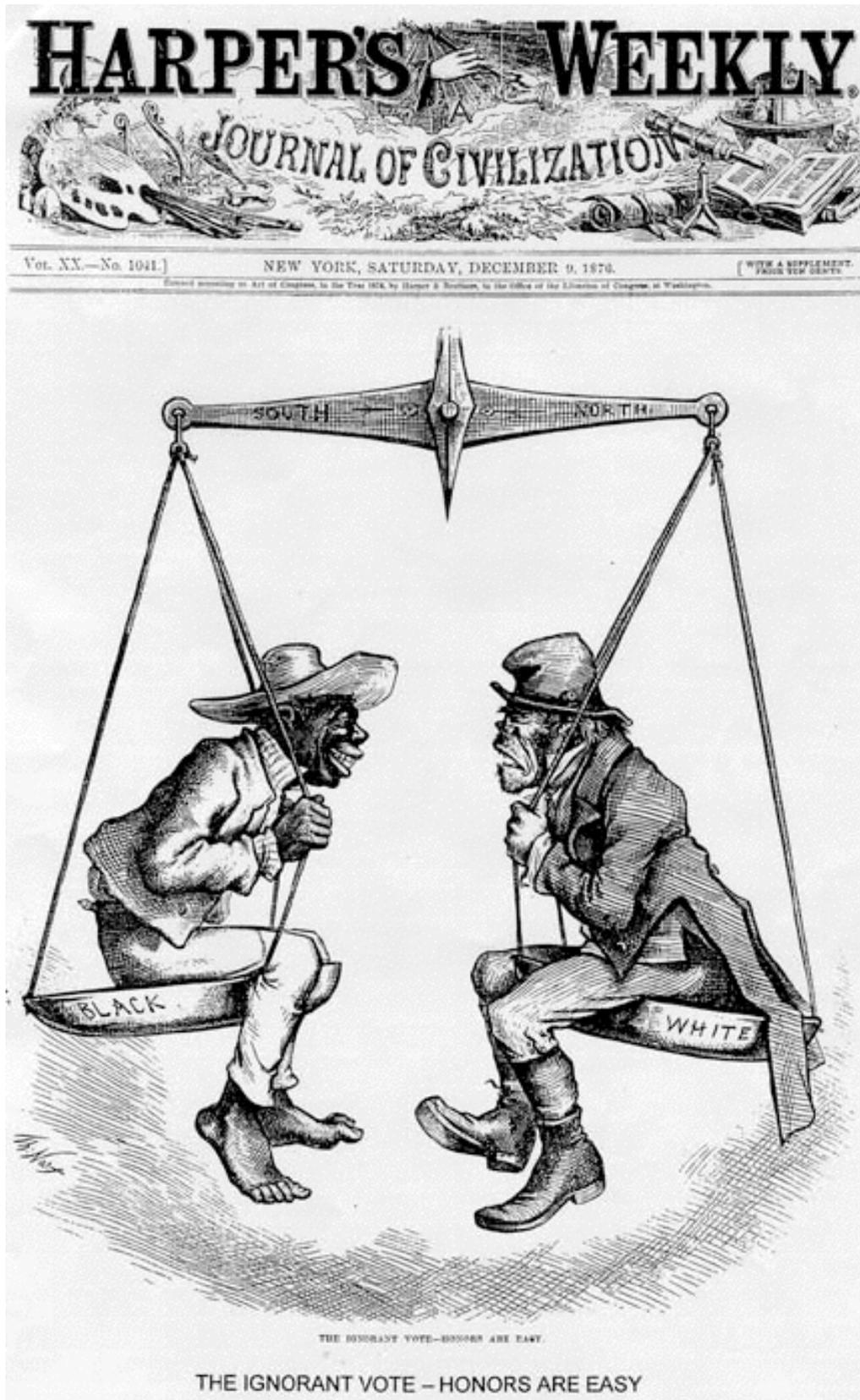


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