

# African American Voices Lesson Plans

**Lesson Plan:** Political Cartoons in the Antebellum South

**Subject:** United States History

**Grade:** 11

**NGSSS-SS:** **SS.912.A.1.4-** Analyze how cartoons may be used to interpret the significance of time periods and events from the past.

**Description/  
Abstract of Lesson:** The students will study the role of political cartoons in shaping and reflecting public opinion about slavery in the United States during the antebellum (pre-Civil War) period. The students will demonstrate comprehension by creating a political cartoon on a critical issue reflective current times.



**Objective(s):** Students will:

- Identify both overt and subtle messages in political cartoons.
- Demonstrate comprehension by relating critical topics through various time periods.

**Materials:**

- Internet resources
- Books, magazines, newspapers and other resources made available by the school Media Center

**Duration:** 1 class period

**Lesson Lead In/  
Opening:** 1. The teacher will display 3 to 5 recent political cartoons on an overhead projector or smart board. Discuss with the students their actual meaning. The following websites are recommended:

<http://www.politicalcartoons.com/>

[www.loc.gov/rr/print/swann/herblock/cartoon.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/swann/herblock/cartoon.html)

<http://bendib.com>

<http://www.shmoop.com/antebellum/politics.html>

2. Have the students briefly describe what they believe each political cartoon means in writing.

3. Have the students share their descriptions and have a class discussion about it.

4. Explain the significance of political cartoons and how they have been

used throughout the nation's history to reflect and influence public opinion. Emphasize how most political cartoons have strong symbolic meaning. Show examples.

**Activity:**

1. Display evolving political policies and social attitudes towards slavery from different viewpoints using political cartoons. Discuss their meaning. The following websites are recommended:

<http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/scripts/sia/gallery.cgi>

<http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/cartoon/civilalbum.html>

<http://historyproject.ucdavis.edu/ic/>

2. On a blank sheet of paper, have the students create a political cartoon reflective of what they consider to be critical issues today. The students should be reminded to use symbolism in their pieces

3. Have the students share their work and post on the board/wall.

**Assessment:**

- Consider creativity grades for political cartoon exercise.
- Appropriate use of symbolism.
- Teacher observation and evaluation of student engagement/participation.

**Higher Order**

**Thinking Questions:**

1. Political cartoons that came from the south usually portrayed slavery as a condition that was enjoyable to the slaves and factory conditions in the north as being evil and oppressive. Why do you believe there was not a significant amount of political cartoons coming from the North that completely showed the reverse?

2. Is there a danger involved with making the leaders of this country look foolish through these cartoons? Explain.

3. What do you believe was the intention in portraying Blacks as a lazy and ignorant after slavery ended?

**Suggested Books  
In Lesson:**

Mankoff, R. (2000) The New Yorker Book of Political Cartoons,  
Bloomberg Press

Hess, S. (1996) Drawn & Quartered: The History of American Political  
Cartoons, Black Belt Press

**Web Resources:**

<http://www.cagle.com/teacher/>

## Life during Segregation



Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, July 1939: "Colored" water fountains were fixtures throughout the South during the Jim Crow era. Photo by Russell Lee.



"Every Saturday morning there was a matinee at these movies, and we would pay 15 cents ... but we were separated; we went upstairs, the white kids went downstairs."--Willie Wallace, Eyewitness Narrative, Natchez, MS

## Life during Segregation



**Philadelphia, 1889: Removing an African American from a Philadelphia Railway car--after the implementation of Jim Crow, the integration imposed by Reconstruction was stripped away by new laws.**



**Belle Glade, Florida, 1941: Living quarters and "juke joint" for migratory workers. Local police wanted to make sure that only blacks frequented this tavern and blues music hall. Photo by Marion Post Wolcott.**

## Life during Segregation



**Children of segregation at a school water pump, early 1960s.**



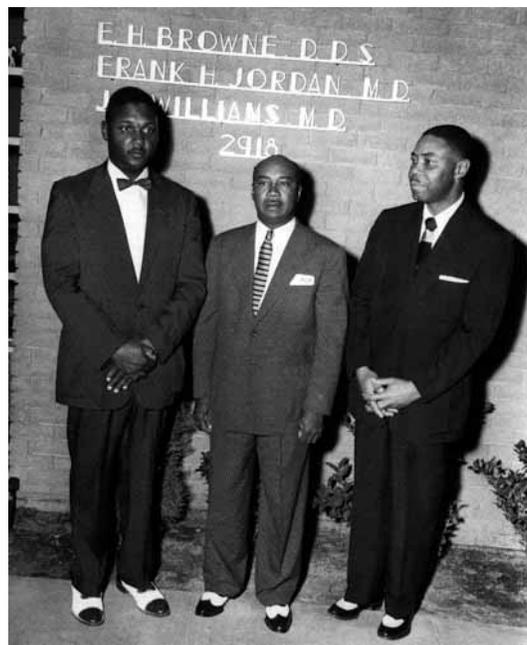
**White school boys posing for a black photographer, 1953: "White boys at a Clarendon County school pose for me, after I stopped my car near their school. They rode in buses to modern, well-funded schools. A lightpole in the background illuminated a playing field for nighttime activities."--Cecil J. Williams**

## Life during Segregation



Colored waiting room, 1952. "Those signs in downtown Dallas, the signs over the water fountains and in the bus stations, came down in 1955 or '56, and a couple of years later they began to adhere to the Supreme Court decision."--R. C. Hickman

*Photo courtesy of the R. C. Hickman Photograph Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.*



Medical Clinic, 1954. Left to right: Drs. Joseph Williams, Frank Jordan Sr., and E. Holmer Browne. "In the late 1940s black people were not admitted to the public hospitals in Dallas. So the black doctors created their own hospital."--R. C. Hickman

*Photo courtesy of the R. C. Hickman Photograph Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.*

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Protesting seating segregation at the Melba Theater, Dallas 1955.  
Photo courtesy of the R. C. Hickman Photograph Collection, Center for American History,  
University of Texas at Austin.

Image and text from [www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/who.htm](http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/who.htm)