

**Title of Session:** Social Studies Forum - Abraham Lincoln Cartoons

**Moderator:** Michael Hutchison

**Guest Speaker:** Robert Kennedy

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**MichaelH:** Welcome to tonight's Social Studies forum

**MichaelH:** We have a very interesting topic tonight, especially in light of the Abraham Lincoln session we had a few weeks ago.

**MichaelH:** We'll be looking at some editorial cartoons focusing on Lincoln and the Lincoln Administration

**MichaelH:** Rob will show us some of the materials on the site in a second... but first...

**MichaelH:** Let's start our evening with some introductions

**MichaelH:** would everyone let us know who you are, what you teach, and where you are geographically?

**MichaelH** is a social studies teacher in southwestern Indiana

**RobGst6:** My name is Rob Kennedy, and I work for HarpWeek, a small Internet company based in Norfolk, Virginia.

**GaryML:** Hi, my name is Gary and I'm a seventh grade Texas History teacher in San Antonio, TX

**JeremG:** Hi my name is Jeremy. I teach US and world history in Chelmsford, MA which is right next to Lowell, MA. And I'm a Lincoln lover!

**CandyMo:** I am an AP in Corpus Christi Texas

**CandyMo:** I am working on my doctoral degree in ed. leadership and need to participate in chats for the course

**MichaelH:** do we get to grade you, Candy?

**CandyMo:** nope but thanks

**MichaelH:** Jeff, BJ, do you want to say hello?

**BJB2:** I teach remedial communication in Pennsylvania and love cartoons as a way of communicating

**BJB2** . o O ( I'm leading a discussion after this on graphic novels and storytelling )

**MichaelH:** cool, BJ

**MichaelH:** BJ mentioned a really interesting point... the use of cartoons as a form of communicating ideas.

**MichaelH:** Rob will be discussing exactly that in a historic context, a discussion of cartoons collected on the HarpWeek site that deal with the Lincoln years

**MichaelH:** Rob, why don't you start with a quick introduction of the site... the web address, and what's there...

**RobGst6:** Sure. Here's a brief intro. about HarpWeek. HarpWeek's main product is a database of Harper's Weekly (1857-1912), which has been scanned at high resolution, retyped to allow full-text searching, and manually indexed by a staff of historians and other scholars. The HarpWeek Index to Harper's Weekly is available at about 500 colleges and universities.

**RobGst6:** HarpWeek's main website, from which the free websites can be accessed, is: <http://www.harpweek.com/>

**RobGst6:** HarpWeek has also created a database of 49 Civil War era newspapers, which have been scanned at high resolution and retyped so that users can browse the issues or search the text: <http://lincolnanthecivilwar.com/>

**RobGst6:** It is from that database that I selected the Lincoln-related cartoons.

**RobGst6:** The homepage URL for the HarpWeek website "Abraham Lincoln Cartoons: Comic Portraits of His Presidency" is: <http://www.abrahamlincolncartoons.info/>

**RobGst6:** For this website, I selected and indexed more than 400 cartoons from about 20 of the Civil War era periodicals included in the HarpWeek "Lincoln and the Civil War" database. The vast majority of the cartoons include images of Lincoln, but a few only reference him textually.

**MichaelH:** Rob, let me remind everyone that the links we're pasting are "live"... they can click on the link and load the website... they might want to disable their pop-up blocker if they have one

**RobGst6:** thanks, Michael.

**MichaelH:** but, don't go just yet... let Rob finish his introduction

**RobGst6:** The images are indexed under the categories of People, Symbol, Topic, Place, Artist, and Publication.

**RobGst6:** The periodicals used include the three prominent American weeklies of the period—Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, Harper’s Weekly, and the New York Illustrated News; campaign newspapers such as The Rail Splitter, Campaign Plain Dealer, and Strong’s Campaign Pictorial; satirical publications such as The Comic Monthly, The Phunny Phellow, and Vanity Fair; and pro-Confederate journals published in the American South—Southern Illustrated News and Southern Punch—and in Britain—Fun and Punch.

**RobGst6:** The website also includes biographical sketches of 62 people who appear in the Lincoln cartoons.

**RobGst6:** Done with overview!

**MichaelH:** Ok, if you click on the [www.abrahamlincolncartoons.info](http://www.abrahamlincolncartoons.info) link, you'll go to the page... but don't stray too long... you'll miss the discussion

**MichaelH:** Rob, when they take a look at the site, do you have particular cartoons that are favorites of yours that you'd like to show them?

**RobGst6:** I chose 9 cartoons from 4 categories.

**MichaelH** checks to make sure everyone can load the site... you might look, though... it might be hidden behind this window or another window

**RobGst6:** The first two deal with the 1860 election.

**RobGst6:** Artist unknown, “The Last Rail Split by ‘Honest Old Abe,’” Wide Awake Pictorial, November 1860:

**RobGst6:**

<http://www.abrahamlincolncartoons.info/SubPages/Cartoon.php?UniqueID=375>

**RobGst6:** Jacob Dallas (?), “The Coming Man’s Presidential Career, a la Blondin,” Harper’s Weekly, August 25, 1860:

**RobGst6:**

<http://www.abrahamlincolncartoons.info/SubPages/Cartoon.php?UniqueID=163>

**MichaelH:** can everyone find the webpage?

**GaryML:** yes

**RobGst6:** With the first, you see Lincoln as a railsplitter, and the idea of the Democratic Party being split.

**CandyMo:** yes

**RobGst6:** The second puts the issue of slavery in the foreground as a delicate balancing act, with the Constitution as the balancing rod.

**JeremG:** I've got the pages

**RobGst6:** Charles Blondin was a famous tightrope walker at the time, known for crossing Niagara Falls

**MichaelH:** That's interesting that it's an August publication date... and they already have Lincoln and a "Presidential Career"

**RobGst6:** Well, after the split in the Democratic Party, the election outcome was increasingly apparent to most observers.

**MichaelH:** Rob, what do you see as the significance of the motto in the second cartoon ("Don't Give Up The Ship")

**RobGst6:** Good question. Lemme look again.

**JeremG:** who is the character (little girl) in the Rail Splitter cartoon

**RobGst6:** As far as I know, it's just a child.

**MichaelH:** here's one

<http://www.abrahamlincolncartoons.info/SubPages/Cartoon.php?UniqueID=375>

**MichaelH:** here's the other

<http://www.abrahamlincolncartoons.info/SubPages/Cartoon.php?UniqueID=163>

**CandyMo:** she is smiling it looks like

**MichaelH:** Jeremy, that might be a good discussion question if you used this in the classroom... Lincoln had sons... no daughters

**MichaelH:** so, maybe it's some other significance?

**RobGst6:** I would say the motto, Michael, emphasizes the importance of Union.

**MichaelH:** maybe the "ship of state" Rob?

**RobGst6:** Yes, good answer.

**RobGst6:** Would you like the next two cartoons?

**MichaelH:** sure, if you're ready, Rob

**JeremG:** Okay, still on the Rail Splitter it looks like the child is smiling while the dog

**RobGst6:** BTW, each cartoon may be increased in size by clicking the image.

**JeremG:** Fido (fidelity) is crying

**RobGst6:** The next two are about the Emancipation Proclamation. The view of Thomas Nast, and of a Southern artist.

**RobGst6:** Thomas Nast, "The Emancipation of the Negroes, January, 1863—The Past and the Future," Harper's Weekly, January 24, 1863:

**RobGst6:**

<http://www.abrahamlincolncartoons.info/SubPages/Cartoon.php?UniqueID=180>

**RobGst6:** Artist unknown, "King Abraham Before and After Issuing the Emancipation Proclamation," Southern Illustrated News, November 8, 1862:

**RobGst6:**

<http://www.abrahamlincolncartoons.info/SubPages/Cartoon.php?UniqueID=298>

**RobGst6:** Interestingly, HW editor John Bonner twice turned Nast's cartoon down before publishing it, a couple of weeks after the EP went into effect.

**GaryML:** wait..wasn't the EP issued on Jan 1 1863?

**MichaelH:** this would make for an interesting comparison study... how the northern press (Harpers) might have seen Lincoln compared to the southern press

**RobGst6:** The preliminary EP was after Antietam in September 62

**GaryML:** thanks

**RobGst6:** You're welcome.

**MichaelH:** Gary, check the scroll on the ground in front of Lincoln's feet, too

**CandyMo:** interesting-these are neat, I haven't looked at historical cartoons in a while

**CandyMo:** the scroll says 1863-yep

**RobGst6:** Thanks. I would think students would be very interested.

**CandyMo:** Jan also

**CandyMo:** yes-students would like these

**RobGst6:** Nast used a lot of comparison/contrasts in his cartoons, as on the left and right panels here.

**MichaelH:** It's so interesting how the southern press demonized Lincoln... even the actual caricature of his face is somewhat distorted

**RobGst6:** There are also a few British publications on the site, which are mainly anti-Lincoln.

**MichaelH:** Rob, you'd mentioned that some of the cartoons are used as DBQ resources for AP exams, right?

**RobGst6:** What is DBQ?

**JeremG:** I love the Nast cartoon. I use one for Reconstruction showing the White League and KKK hovering over a similar family - could be a good change over time.

**RobGst6:** Database questions?

**MichaelH:** sorry... DBQ=Document Based Questions

**RobGst6:** AHA!

**RobGst6:** Yes.

**MichaelH:** AP exams frequently include them... they'll have a list of documents, pictures, and cartoons, and ask students to write on a question based on their knowledge of US History and the documents

**RobGst6:** Which reminds me that Eric Rothschild, a national name in AP, has done a series of simulation games for HarpWeek, which can be accessed via our homepage.

**MichaelH:** cool

**RobGst6:** Yes, he's a great guy.

**MichaelH:** are those the "activities" listed on the HarpWeek site, Rob?

**MichaelH:** for example, Election of 1864, Antietam vs. Gettysburg, etc.

**RobGst6:** I believe they are under Educational Lessons.

**RobGst6:** Yes, you're right, Michael.

**RobGst6:** Here are the specific URLs to Eric's lessons:

**RobGst6:** Civil War Illustrations: Why Did the North Win the Civil War?

**RobGst6:** 1860: Lincoln's Campaign Manager: A Contest

**RobGst6:** 1861: Senate Investigating Committee on Fort Sumter

**RobGst6:** 1862: Antietam vs. Gettysburg

**RobGst6:** 1863: The Emancipation Proclamation Activity

**RobGst6:** 1864: The Election of 1864

**RobGst6:** 1865: The Reconstruction Convention

**RobGst6:** 1867: The Impeachment of Andrew Johnson

**RobGst6:** 1868 - 1871: The Ku Klux Klan Hearings

**MichaelH:** ok... there are also some simulation games as well listed, Ku Klux Klan hearings, Reconstruction Convention, etc.

**JeremG:** Were the Southerners already hanging people - or did they want to hang Lincoln - background of S. cartoon?

**RobGst6:** Opps. Didn't work.

**MichaelH:** the main HarpWeek page is <http://www.harpweek.com/>, and if you scroll down, you can see the games and activities

**RobGst6:** The left side shows the violence down to slaves.

**MichaelH:** Rob, are there any restrictions, copyright, etc on using any of the cartoons?

**RobGst6:** The cartoons may be used under terms of Fair Use, which should be fine for any classroom activity or assignment.

**RobGst6:** We would appreciate attribution, of course.

**MichaelH:** absolutely

**MichaelH:** are more cartoons and resources regularly added to the site, Rob?

**RobGst6:** The free websites have been created over about the last 8 years or so.

**RobGst6:** There is not one right now in development, but I think there are about 20 in all (not counting Eric's lessons).

**MichaelH:** These are really great resources, Rob... I suggested to the ALBC people that they link to your site, and I'll do so again (if they haven't already linked to you)

**RobGst6:** Most are based on images and text from HW, but our Presidential Elections site as well as the Lincoln cartoons use other periodicals of the period.

**RobGst6:** Thanks very much, Michael!

**MichaelH:** Was their specific criteria you used to evaluate whether a cartoon or resource should be included, Rob? For example, if there were several resources on the same event... having to pick one cartoon, etc. over another

**JeremG:** The Nast cartoon also reminds me of some aspects of Westward the Course of Empire: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/lewisandclark/images/ree0151s.jpg>

**RobGst6:** It depends on the website focus. For the Lincoln site, it was every cartoon I could find. For other sites, it would be the cartoon which the most compelling image to get across whatever point is being made.

**MichaelH:** It would be interesting to have students research the cartoons looking for various subjective views on an event or person, or maybe even purposely done inaccuracies

**JeremG:** Rob, have you looked at how Lincoln's image has changed over time - 1870s, 1880s, 1930s, etc.?

**RobGst6:** Only on an informal basis while looking through HW, etc.

**RobGst6:** However, here are three Nast cartoons just after Lincoln's assassination that should show how quickly he rose in stature.

**RobGst6:** Thomas Nast, "Abraham Lincoln: The Nation Mourns His Death," Harper's Weekly, April 29, 1865:

**RobGst6:**

<http://www.abrahamlincolncartoons.info/SubPages/Cartoon.php?UniqueID=204>

**RobGst6:** Thomas Nast, "Abraham Lincoln: Our Martyred President," Harper's Weekly, June 10, 1865:

**RobGst6:**

<http://www.abrahamlincolncartoons.info/SubPages/Cartoon.php?UniqueID=205>

**RobGst6:** Thomas Nast, "Our Arms Victorious," Harper's Weekly, June 24, 1865:

**RobGst6:**

<http://www.abrahamlincolncartoons.info/SubPages/Cartoon.php?UniqueID=206>

**RobGst6:** The first is essentially mourning Lincoln. In the second, he is the martyred president. In the third, he is already in marble, like a Roman emperor or god.

**MichaelH:** it's interesting in the third cartoon, though, that Grant is given a higher place of prominence than Lincoln

**RobGst6:** Grant was also a major hero of Nast's.

**MichaelH:** I'm trying to read some of the small inscriptions around the pictures... looking for clues about Lincoln and Grant

**RobGst6:** In 1868, Grant allegedly attributed his election as president to Nast's pencil and Sheridan's sword.

**DavidWe** smiles

**RobGst6:** Does enlarging them help?

**MichaelH:** A little... but it's still small... for example, I can tell around the bust of Lincoln that those are battles... I can see Antietam and Culpepper, for example.

**MichaelH:** Maybe I need to see an optometrist?

**RobGst6:** Shiloh, Wilderness, Vicksburg

**MichaelH:** I don't have that browser window expanded, either

**RobGst6:** Stone River, South Mountain

**RobGst6:** the larger images help a lot.

**MichaelH:** My bet is if I copied those pictures to a photo program, like Photoshop Elements, I'd be able to enlarge and point more detail

**MichaelH:** Rob, just curious... how did you get interested in collecting the cartoons? Was that your major area of study in grad school, or just a hobby or interest?

**RobGst6:** This is the retirement project of my boss, John Adler, the HarpWeek president.

**DavidWe:** Oh, cool!

**RobGst6:** I wrote my dissertation on George William Curtis, the longtime editor of Harper's Weekly.

**MichaelH:** I see. I have used the Harper's resources before, but I really don't know anything about the magazine

**RobGst6:** Of course, the Weekly and the Monthly are different.

**MichaelH:** I'm not sure I'm saying this correctly, but are the Harper's Weekly magazine pages site part of this site?

**MichaelH:** . o O ( that may be the Monthly, though )

**RobGst6:** The database we sell includes all pages of HW from its first issue in 1857 through 1912.

**JeremG:** Rob, did you have anything to do with the wonderful cartoons at the Lincoln Library and Museum?

**RobGst6:** The free websites contain selections from that database.

**RobGst6:** No, but I enjoyed them, as well.

**JeremG:** And what were the sizes of these originally?

**RobGst6:** 11 x 17

**MichaelH:** Rob, I wondered... how would you compare these illustrations as far as political statements, etc. compared to modern-day political cartoons?

**DavidWe** thinks older political cartoons were often vicious

**RobGst6:** I think they had more of an impact in the 19th century, partly b/c of their size and partly b/c of no competition from TV, Internet, Radio, etc.

**MichaelH:** of course, modern-day cartoonists tended to have a field day with some political figures, like Nixon...

**RobGst6:** Earlier today, I came up with a LONG list of questions for analyzing cartoons. Would you like me to post them?

**MichaelH:** sure... that would be great, Rob

**RobGst6:** Questions for Studying Cartoons from Archival Periodicals

**RobGst6:** Who is the cartoonist?

**RobGst6:** What are the name, type, and date of the periodical?

**RobGst6:** What are the political/ideological slants of the cartoonist and the publication? (They may not be the same.)

**RobGst6:** What is the issue or event addressed in the cartoon?

**RobGst6:** What is the historical context of the issue or event?

**RobGst6:** Who are the people depicted? Why did the cartoonist choose to include them?

**RobGst6:** Are the people depicted realistically or not? If they are caricatured with exaggerated features or unusual costume, is it in a positive or negative way?

**RobGst6:** What symbolism does the cartoonist use, and why?

**RobGst6:** Does the cartoon allude to any literary, mythological, or historical text, event, or person/character?

**RobGst6:** What does the choice of symbolism and allusion indicate about the cartoon's message, the intended audience, and the time period? For example, a lot of Thomas Nast cartoons make Shakespearean references. That is partly because Nast was personally very interested in the theater, but also because the plays of Shakespeare were at their height of popularity in 19th century America. Shakespearean plays were part of the popular culture, not merely high culture, and Nast (and other cartoonists) could assume his audience would be familiar with such allusions.

**RobGst6:** Besides caricature, symbolism, and allusion, are there other aspects of the composition of the cartoon—such as the arrangement, size, or shading of people and objects—that affects your reaction to the cartoon?

**RobGst6:** What is the cartoonist's point of view expressed in the cartoon?

**RobGst6:** Does he approve or disapprove of the subject?

**RobGst6:** If the cartoon presents a problem or criticism, is there a stated or implied solution?

**RobGst6:** Is the cartoon's topic still important today? If so, how is it relevant? Do we understand the continuing issue differently today?

**RobGst6:** If the topic was particular to the time period in which it was published, do we understand, interpret, or remember it differently today?

**RobGst6:** Although all the Lincoln cartoons on the HarpWeek website have been cropped, a question to ask if looking at a cartoon in the context of its page and periodical issue would be do the cartoon's size (e.g., ¼-page, ½-page, single page, double page) and placement (e.g., cover, interior, back page) make a difference in the impact of the image and its message?

**RobGst6:** I would argue, for example, that editorial cartoons had more of an impact in the 19th century, not only because print periodicals did not have today's competition from other media (radio, television, Internet), but also because of their often large size (Harper's Weekly was 11 x 17) compared to today's relatively small editorial cartoons.

**RobGst6:** Well, maybe not so long.

**JeremG:** The older cartoons seem to incorporate more architectural elements and try to tell a larger story. Of course, they were larger

**RobGst6:** Also, some of the cartoonists had been trained as artists, or were familiar with the art of their day, which often emphasized symmetry, etc.

**RobGst6:** Nast's lifelong goal was to be known as a history painter, which is how he listed himself in the census.

**JeremG:** Modern cartoons usually seem to try to compare one event to one other event or issue.

**BJB2** wonders if everyone is familiar with [www.cagle.com](http://www.cagle.com) ?

**RobGst6:** 19th century cartoons used a lot of comparisons, too. For example, images of the Am. Rev. appeared frequently in cartoons circa. 1860 and the Civil War.

**MichaelH:** Rob, before we call it a night, did you want to post any contact info... I didn't know if you would assist teachers or researchers with specific requests or with information?

**MichaelH** has heard of Cagle

**MichaelH:** we tried to get them in a session, but they didn't reply, BJ

**BJB2** nods to Michael

**RobGst6:** Sure, my email is [robkennedy@msn.com](mailto:robkennedy@msn.com)

**BJB2:** good resource to compare old cartoons to contemporary cartoons

**MichaelH:** this has certainly been an interesting session, Rob.

**RobGst6:** Thanks, very much, Michael and everyone. I've enjoyed it.

**JeremG:** I get a Cagle delivery every day. Good stuff.

**MichaelH:** I'm sure there are probably some things that we might be able to cover in a follow-up session sometime if you are interested in joining us again

**BJB2:** Thanks, Michael and Rob.

**MichaelH:** Thanks, BJ.

**RobGst6:** You're welcome.

**DavidWe:** Thanks, Rob, Michael

**BJB2:** The next SSForum is?

**GaryML:** Thanks for the information and the great websites!

**MichaelH:** April 11

**MichaelH:** PBS has redesigned their original TeacherSource site

**MichaelH:** it's now just PBS Teachers

**MichaelH:** Donelle will be back with us to demonstrate the new features on that site

**BJB2** waves bye and heads for the Storytelling discussion.

**MichaelH:** I'm not having a late March session... because... it's **SPRING BREAK** for me!

**MichaelH** waves