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ABSTRACT

The Progressive Era, as the period in history at the turn of the 20th century has come to be known, was a time of tremendous social, economic, and political changes, and the presidential election of 1912 typified the reform spirit of the period. Among the choices for president in 1912 were three major candidates, each of whom laid claim to successful reform measures. The reform candidates were Robert M. La Follette (later replaced by William Howard Taft), Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson. With reform-minded candidates as the top contenders, it was only a matter of time before the varied goals of the groups within the Progressive Party, from labor issues to conservation measures, would be addressed through legislation. This lesson relates to the goals of the Progressives at the state and federal levels and the significance of the election of 1912. It lays the groundwork for study of the 16th, 17th, and 19th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The primary sources are four political cartoons of the era by Clifford K. Berryman. The lesson correlates to the National History Standards and to the National Standards for Civics and Government. It offers historical background about the Progressive Era and the Election of 1912 (with four resources). It suggests teaching activities for classroom implementation, including interpreting the documents, creating cartoons, connecting to the newspaper, third-party statistics, role playing, and extension activity about cartoonist Clifford K. Berryman. Appended are a cartoon analysis worksheet and the Berryman cartoons. (BT)

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THE CONSTITUTION COMMUNITY

The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

Political Cartoons Illustrating Progressivism and the Election of 1912

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The Constitution Community is a partnership between classroom teachers and education specialists from the National Archives and Records Administration. We are developing lessons and activities that address constitutional issues, correlate to national academic standards, and encourage the analysis of primary source documents. The lessons that have been developed are arranged according to historical era.

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Political Cartoons Illustrating Progressivism and the Election of1912

Constitutional Connection

This lesson relates to the goals of the Progressives at the state and federal levels and the significance of the election of 1912. It lays the groundwork for study of the 16th , 17th , and 19th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

This lesson correlates to the National History Standards.

Era 7 -The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

- **Standard 1B** -Demonstrate understanding of Progressivism at the national level.

This lesson correlates to the National Standards for Civics and Government.

Standard III.E.4. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions about the roles of political parties, campaigns, and elections in American politics.

Cross-curricular Connections

Please share this exercise with your history, government, and language arts colleagues.

List of Documents

All are political cartoons by Clifford K. Berryman.

1. Anti-Third Term Principle

2. Progressive Fallacies

3. Ohio, The Mother of Presidents

4. How They're Acting and How They Feel

Historical Background

The Progressive Era, as the period in history at the turn of the 20th century has come to be known, was a time of tremendous social, economic, and political changes, and the presidential election of 1912 typified the reform spirit of the period. Beginning in the late 1800s with the challenge to the "spoils system" of machine politics, progressivism gathered momentum between 1900 and 1916, as the desire for reform permeated the minds of the American people. Reformers themselves were a diverse group, frequently with different views, but always the same general purpose-- to reform America. Among them were politicians, labor leaders, religious leaders, and teachers, men and women who believed the federal government needed to address the ills of a modern industrialized society. Among their choices for president in 1912 were three major candidates, each of whom laid claim to successful reform measures.

The more famous reform leaders of the day reflected the diversity within the various reform groups. Robert M. La Follette, the senator and former governor of Wisconsin, and Theodore Roosevelt, the former governor of New York and president of the United States from 1901 to1908, were members of the Republican Party. Woodrow Wilson, former governor of New Jersey and president from 1912 to 1920, was a member of the Democratic Party. Each man had a history of challenging the status quo and enacting change while in office. Yet, they opposed each other during a campaign year that captivated the American people and challenged the two-party system. In their opposition they brought to the forefront of American politics those problems that needed rapt attention, and they succeeded in addressing many of them, regardless of party affiliations.

As president from 1901 to 1908, Theodore Roosevelt believed it was his duty to define the major problems of the day and to offer solutions. He believed the dominant issue before the federal government was its relationship with big business. He pressed for government regulation of corporations and an end to unfair pricing practices. He considered labor unions and farmers' cooperatives advantageous as a means of keeping the actions of big business in check. Roosevelt carried out 44 antitrust prosecutions, all the while assuring tense businessmen that he was only against enterprises which misused their size and economy of scale to discriminate against competitors and deceive consumers. Other important issues for which he attempted to garner support included a

graduated income tax and an inheritance tax; initiative, referendum and recall measures; direct primaries; and conservation.

Having stated in 1904 that he would serve no more than two terms, Roosevelt endorsed Senator William Howard Taft as the Republican nominee in 1908. However, Taft proved more conservative than Roosevelt had anticipated, and eventually he regretted his endorsement. In Roosevelt's eyes, Taft had too frequently sided with the corporate giants and political bosses he had so relentlessly battled.

Taft was also criticized by Senator La Follette who had vied with him for the Republican nomination in 1908. La Follette was arguably the most fervent reformer in the country with an impressive record of achievements in Wisconsin, among them pure food acts, child labor and compulsory education laws, and workmen's compensation insurance. His own larger reform platform, which eventually would be called the "Wisconsin idea," included the dictum of direct election of U. S. senators. As the highest profile Republican other than Theodore Roosevelt, LaFollette believed himself to be the natural choice for the party's nomination in 1912, and progressive Republicans supported him, including Roosevelt.

In January 1911 at La Follette's home in Wisconsin, a de facto Republican nominating committee reorganized as the National Progressive Republican League outlined their new platform, which called for 1) the direct election of U.S. senators, 2) direct primaries, 3) the direct election of convention delegates, and 4) a constitutional amendment for initiative, referendum, and recall at the federal level. If Roosevelt would not seek a third term, then La Follette was their obvious choice for leader. However, by late in that year, the members abandoned La Follette as their candidate when the immensely popular Roosevelt finally threw his hat back in the ring. "Fighting Bob's" success had shown that the party was viable, but Roosevelt's notoriety and national appeal made his chances of winning much greater.

The first two featured documents, both political cartoons, satirize Roosevelt's reversal of his anti-third term promise and his assumption of leadership of the Progressive Party. Both LaFollette and Roosevelt lost the Republican nomination to the incumbent, Taft, who still controlled the national convention delegates. Roosevelt, however, had swept 9 of the 12 states with primaries, including Taft's home state of Ohio. This primary battle is characterized in the third featured document, a political cartoon picturing Ohio as the "Mother of Presidents." Victories in these primaries made Roosevelt and his progressives confident that they represented the will of the people. They officially announced their Progressive Party and challenged Taft and the Democratic candidate, Woodrow Wilson. The fourth featured document, another political cartoon, displays the three candidates shortly before election day in 1912.

As opponents, Roosevelt and Wilson had almost as much in common as they did in conflict. They both rejected the Republican's platform of status quo and opposed radical groups such as Eugene Debs's Socialist Party of America. They both ran on records of political and economic reform, and they both supported stronger democratization of the

political process. Yet Wilson, a Democrat, remained concerned for states' rights, disagreeing with Roosevelt's mandate for federal control of industry. Rather, he advocated more precise business laws and prosecution for unfair business practices. He also called for a reduced tariff, something he associated with the protection of monopolies and special interests and the rising cost of living. Overall, Wilson was for limiting government power and was in stark opposition to such Roosevelt social welfare programs as workmen's compensation and the minimum wage.

The election of 1912 was the most memorable election of the Progressive Era and one of the most unique of the 20th century. With reform-minded candidates as the top contenders, it was only a matter of time before the varied goals of the groups within the Progressive Party, from labor issues to conservation measures, would be addressed through legislation. In fact, several important constitutional issues were near resolution during the campaign year. The 16th and 17th Amendments to the Constitution were passed during Taft's administration and ratified early in Wilson's first term. Thus, Congress gained the power to collect income taxes, and U. S. Senators would be elected by the people. In addition, women gained voting privileges when the 19thAmendment was ratified in 1920.

Resources

Aaseng, N. *America's Third-party Presidential Candidates* . Minneapolis, MN: The Oliver Press, Inc., 1995.

Blum, J. M. *The Progressive Presidents*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton &Company, 1980.

Peterson, A. *The Election of 1912*. Lakeside, CA: Interaction Publishers, 1992.

Understanding and Creating Political Cartoons. Madison, WI: Knowledge Unlimited, 1998.

Teaching Activities

Interpreting the Documents

1. Share a current political cartoon with students to introduce the ideas of symbolism, humor, exaggeration, and caricature in editorial cartoons. Use the Cartoon Analysis Worksheet for by small groups of students. Begin by assigning the same cartoon, the Anti-Third Term Principle, to each group. In addition to the worksheet, use the questions below to aid students in delving deeper into the art of editorial cartoons. Lead a whole-class discussion of the cartoon. Then assign small groups to independently analyze one of the three remaining featured documents. Require groups to share their observations with the rest of the class.

Editorial Cartoon Questions:
a. Symbols are used in cartoons to visually present abstract ideas. Many such as Uncle Sam are widely recognized. What symbols are used in this cartoon? Can you think of any other symbols you have seen pictured in editorial cartoons?
b. Cartoonists employ humor to make powerful statements in an effective, less heavy-handed manner. Does this cartoon use humor to make its point? If so, how? Is it sarcastic? Ironic? Ridiculing?
c. Exaggeration is what sets editorial cartoons apart; they must grab the reader and deliver a message in a few seconds. What is exaggerated in this cartoon, and what purpose does it serve? Caricature exaggerates or distorts a person's prominent feature(s) to allow the viewer to identify him or her quickly. How is caricature used in this cartoon?

The following information about the documents may be helpful:

Document 1 , Anti-Third Term Principle, is an excellent introduction to the study of political cartoons. It is a straightforward criticism of Roosevelt's reversal of his promise to adhere to the two-term principle established by George Washington. (Roosevelt later countered that he only promised to refuse three consecutive terms.)

Document 2 , Progressive Fallacies, is a close companion to the Anti-Third Term Principle. In the foreground is Roosevelt; in the background the dejected and deserted La Follette. Of particular interest here is that this original cartoon was somewhat softened before publication. "Progressive Fallacies" became "Progress Sweet Progress" in the final version. What might have influenced the cartoonist to make this change? Does it modify the overall message or tone?

In Document 3 Roosevelt and Taft are depicted as battling for the Ohio state primary election, one of only 13 state primaries in 1912. In addition to being Taft's home state, Ohio also sent a large number of delegates to the national convention. Roosevelt won the primary, Taft the nomination.

Published in November 1912, Document 4 depicts the public faces of the candidates and speculates as to the uneasiness they might be feeling before election day.

Creating Cartoons

2. After analyzing the four featured documents, make a list of the issues that were most important during the election year of 1912 as revealed in the documents and as described in the students' textbooks. Since each candidate did not publicly address all of the same issues, match the topics with the appropriate candidates. For example, Roosevelt and Wilson had distinctly different views on the extent of power assumed by the federal government. Eugene Debs, the Socialist candidate, had even more extreme ideas. Business regulation, working conditions, the tariff, direct election of senators, and the income tax were other debated topics. Instruct students to create their own political cartoons and to accompany each with a written explanation of the cartoon's main idea and the techniques used to convey that idea. Provide the following advice: Start with a single,

clear idea. Avoid cluttering the cartoon with too many elements (unless centralto its meaning). Use words and visual elements to make a single point. Be sure that the most important visual element stands out. Exaggerate for a reason, and don't overdo it. Avoid using too many words, and make sure the ones you use are legible.

Connecting to the Newspaper

3. Organize students into small groups and direct them to brainstorm current issues being debated at the local, state, and national levels. Record their results on three lists and display the lists where the entire class can view them. As a whole class, identify those issues that could be considered reform ideas. Set a time frame of one to two weeks and assign students the task of looking through newspapers and periodicals for political cartoons relating to these issues. Instruct them to mark the source and date on each cartoon. Encourage them to add to the list as they encounter cartoons about issues not previously identified. Collect and post the cartoons on a bulletin board and at the end of the designated period, discuss their findings and how they might relate to the issues of the Progressive Era.

Third-Party Statistics

4. The election of 1912 was the most successful bid ever made by a third-party candidate. Roosevelt finished second in Electoral College and popular votes. Looking at the numbers, a student could speculate that had Roosevelt not run, Taft would have maintained the Republican Party votes and beaten Wilson. The Federal Register's Electoral College web page at http://www.nara.gov/fedreg/elctcoll/index.html#top contains detailed presidential election statistics from 1789 through 1992. Direct students to the web page to find the voting results of the election of 1912 and to calculate the percentage of votes each candidate received. Lead a discussion of the impact Roosevelt's candidacy may have had on the outcome. Encourage students to survey the web site for other presidential races that involved a significant third-party candidate and to compare his impact mathematically to that of Roosevelt's. Finally, discuss why third-party candidates vie for the office of president when history has shown repeatedly that their chances of winning are negligible.

Role Playing

5. The featured document, "How They're Acting and How They Feel" alludes to the public and private faces of politicians. Discuss with students who or what each candidate might have been nervous about (losing the election, damaging his reputation, future of the country, future of his party, each other, etc.) Instruct students to work in pairs to create scenes in which they role play one of the candidates. The dialogue in the scene should reflect the public and private person as of one of the candidates depicted in the cartoon. Direct students to concentrate on the candidate and the issues they understand the best and to support their inferences and conclusions with factual information.

Extension Activity about political cartoonist Clifford K. Berryman

6. Clifford Kennedy Berryman was a Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist whose graphic commentaries spanned the first half of the 20th century. The National Archives NAIL database <http://www.nara.gov/nara/nail.html> contains a large collection of Berryman's cartoons focusing on Congress and American politics from the late 1890s through the 1940s. Building on prior cartoon analysis activities, challenge students to locate another Berryman cartoon by conducting a NAIL digitized copy search. Direct them to use the Cartoon Analysis Worksheet and the questions introduced in activity 1 to analyze the cartoon and then to present their findings in a written essay format. (Using the search term "Berryman" will result in100 cartoons, but narrowing the search with such words as war, president, a politician's name, or a specific event will result in a more manageable number. For example, a search as specific as "Berryman" and "NATO" will result in one cartoon.)

The documents included in this project are from Record Group 46, Records of the United States Senate, Office of Senate Curator. They are available online through the National Archives Information Locator (NAIL) database, control numbers NWL-46-BERRYMAN-B058, NWL-46-BERRYMAN-A016, NWL-46-BERRYMAN-A024,andNWL-46-BERRYMAN-A003. NAIL is a searchable database that contains information about a wide variety of NARA holdings across the country. You can use NAIL to search record descriptions by keywords or topics and retrieve digital copies of selected textual documents, photographs, maps, and sound recordings related to thousands of topics.

This article was written by Mary Frances Greene, a teacher at Marie Murphy School, Avoca District 37, Wilmette, IL.

Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

Visuals	Words (not all cartoons include words)
Level One: 1. List the objects or people you see in the cartoon.	1. Identify the cartoon caption and/or title. 2. Locate three words or phrases used by the cartoonist to identify objects or people within the cartoon. 3. Record any important dates or numbers that appear in the cartoon.
Level Two: 2. Which of the objects on your list are symbols? 3. What do you think each symbol means?	4. Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so? 5. List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.
Level Three: A. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon. B. Explain how the words in the cartoon clarify the symbols. C. Explain the message of the cartoon. D. What special interest groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?	

Designed and developed by the
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Document 1: Anti-Third Term Principle

Document 2: Progressive Fallacies

Document 3: Ohio, the Mother of Presidents

Document 4: How They're Acting and How They Feel

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