

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY – 2009-2012

Political Cartoon Interpretation - (1886) American Imperialism

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Grade – High School

Length of Class Period – 50 minutes

Inquiry – What symbols are being represented in this political cartoon? How are countries being portrayed? What messages do you think the cartoonist is attempting to convey?

Objectives – Given the political cartoon “The Cuban Melodrama: The Noble Hero (to the Heavy Villain)”, the student will be able to 1) describe the roles of the countries represented in the cartoon, 2) interpret the political message the cartoonist is attempting to convey, 3) discuss the symbols presented and how their interaction could be construed as “melodramatic”.

Materials – Primary Source – Political Cartoon entitled “The Cuban Melodrama” in *The Birth of the American Empire as Seen Through Political Cartoons (1896-1905)* Martinez-Fernandez, Luis, *OAH Magazine of History*, Spring 1998, pg.49. also search “The Cuban Melodrama cartoon”.

Activities – Students are given a copy of the cartoon and asked to study it. Individually, students are asked to identify symbols and to record them. As a class, students are asked to share and support their results. Next, students individually describe in writing how the symbols are being used. Students share and discuss. The concept of “Melodrama” is discussed with the class and modern examples given. Individually, students write their own interpretation of the political message of the cartoon. Interpretations are discussed as a class.

Connecticut Grade Level Expectations

Standard #1 – 7 Analyze the influence of nationalism on American Society

Standard #1 – 17 Explain imperialism’s causes and impact

Standard #2 – 5 Interpret political messages of cartoons