Contents

Introduction

The Age of Revolutions

Accelerating technological, economic, and political change combined to make the years from 1750 to 1900 a time of revolutionary transformation on a scale never before seen. Hence, the term "age of revolutions" seems apt for this period.

In a way, the French Revolution's slogan "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" can be seen as a keynote for the political history of the entire nineteenth century—with "liberty" evolving into liberalism and democracy, "equality" giving birth to socialism and the various labor movements of the era, and "fraternity" taking the form of nineteenth-century nationalism. Meanwhile, the industrial transformation of Europe fueled these political movements and added to their strength and influence. It made possible an enormous increase in Europe's population, wealth, and power, adding also to the prestige and reach of Western culture and ideas. Colonial empires were extended into every region of the world, but non-Europeans responded to this dominance in a variety of ways. Some of these ways already indicated that the West's supremacy would not last long.

The twelve prints and cartoons in this booklet are meant to help bring this age of revolutions to life in a more vivid way. To help you use these illustrations most effectively in your history classes, we have grouped them into four lessons. Each lesson touches on one key aspect of this pivotal era in world history. Briefly, the lessons are as follows:

Lesson 1: Political Revolutions. The first print in this lesson makes understandable the anger of the French peasant just before the French Revolution. This revolution posed lofty ideals but also ended in terrible bloodshed. Meanwhile, a slower evolution of democratic ideals was finally bringing an end to slavery.

Lesson 2: The Industrial Revolution. This transformation inspired dreams of abundance, progress, and endless variety; anxiety about fragile, interconnected industrial economies; and horror at the living conditions of the new industrial working class. The prints in this lesson look at each of these three aspects of the Industrial Revolution.

Lesson 3: The West in Control. The first cartoon in the lesson portrays a crumbling and insecure China unable to withstand European "progress" any longer. The other two cartoons each use a gigantic figure to convey the West's sense of power as it established empires and imposed other forms of dominance around the world.

Lesson 4: Global Response to the West. Great Britain tamed the Indian tiger after the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, but at a high cost. China's humiliation by foreigners continued into the twentieth century. But Japan's response to the West—a rapid mastering of its scientific and technical prowess—pointed the way to the end of the era of Western supremacy in world history.

Using Political Cartoons and Other Prints to Teach World History

The political prints and cartoons of the late 1700s and early 1800s often have a cluttered look to modern eyes. That is certainly true of the one shown on page 9 in this booklet. Such prints are often full of seemingly obscure references. In part, they appear so to us because we lack the knowledge the artist could assume his audience of the time had; however, it may also reflect the fact that such illustrations were still directed at a small, well-educated reading public.

In time, however, the spread of democracy, literacy, and a mass market for newspapers and magazines had its impact on political art. So, too, did the wide gulf that often separated different subgroups within the audience for such art. As a result, political cartoons began to use simpler lines, more widely shared visual symbols, fewer words, and a more direct message. The "language" of editorial cartoons as we know it today emerged. It was a language that a huge mass audience could be expected to master.

The twelve prints and political cartoons in this booklet show some evidence of this evolution. In this way, they help illustrate the history of the era in their form as well as in their specific content. Keep in mind also that while many points of view are expressed in these twelve illustrations, all are Western in origin. However, the lessons in this booklet call attention to the cultural point of view of these illustrations as well as to their content. You will get the most out of the lessons if you focus on both aspects of these fascinating works of political art.

How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three cartoons per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND-INFORMATION SHEET

This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY PAGES FOR EACH VISUAL DISPLAY

Each page includes one image, and a sequence of questions is provided to help you plan an all-classroom discussion while examining the image. The questions take students step-by-step through an analysis of the visual. For students who require more support to answer the questions, you may hand them an entire discussion-activity page reproducible in order to provide more visual support. For students who need less support to answer questions, keep the page yourself, and ask the questions of the class as a whole in order to provide a listening and response-writing activity. In addition to these questions, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. The instructions for these activities are directed to the student. Some are individual assignments while others work best as small-group or all-class activities. You may reproduce any of these pages for classroom use. Answers to factual questions are also provided on the inside back cover of the booklet.

ILLUSTRATIONS AND OTHER VISUAL ART

Images are printed alongside discussion questions and follow-up activities on reproducible pages, making them readily available to students. Stand-alone versions of all images, also reproducible, can be found in the appendix. Using images without the text may prove useful for testing or to encourage students to formulate their own analyses before consulting the text.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will consider some of the causes of the revolutionary upheavals of the late 1700s.

2. Students will analyze the values underlying these revolutions and will debate any possible conflicts among these values.

Political Revolutions

Below are some brief points summarizing the three cartoons for this lesson. Reproduce copies of these summaries for your class, or use them to guide a discussion of the cartoons as you work with the three activity sheets that follow.

POINTS TO MAKE WITH YOUR STUDENTS

1. **Cartoon 1.** By the late 1700s, France's wars and imperial ambitions had led it to the brink of bankruptcy. The poor had to bear a growing tax burden that the nobility and the Catholic Church refused to help shoulder. This cartoon conveys the explosive anger the peasants felt about this and about their remaining feudal obligations to rich landlords. The fact that France's huge nobility had done little to develop its lands commercially (in contrast to Britain's landed gentry) added to a sense that the upper classes were contributing nothing to the nation. This cartoon shows the clergy, landed nobles, and royal officials all riding on the back of a peasant in chains. The image provides striking evidence that these ruling elites had lost legitimacy and were seen by many as worthless social parasites. This revolutionary anger was by no means confined to France as the 1700s drew to their dramatic close.

2. **Cartoon 2.** The French Revolution of 1789 was led by the professional and commercial middle classes, but it frightened France's rulers into submission by mobilizing the anger of the lower orders. Crucial to this support were the revolution's broad ideals, conveyed in this drawing by the cry of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." These phrases are a kind of keynote for Europe's political history in the century to come. For a time, the revolution ran furiously out of control. In this sense, the "Mort" ("Death") in this drawing is also prophetic. Keep in mind, however, that the French Revolution began the very week that George Washington was sworn in as the first U.S. president—thereby peacefully capping a very different revolution also destined to reshape world history.

3. **Cartoon 3.** The enslavement of Africans remains one of the West's most shameful legacies. The slave systems created were truly hideous, yet it is important to remember that slavery itself was a universal in human history. What was unique about the West was not its support for slavery but its emerging efforts to end slavery in the 1700s and 1800s. The British abolished slavery in their empire in 1833, but the Dutch, French, and others continued the trade secretly. Lord Brougham wanted slavery stamped out, but this 1844 drawing suggests his support was only half-hearted. Is the image of the slave here a stereotype? If so, perhaps it helps convey both the horror felt about slavery and the lingering racial attitudes that slavery had helped spawn.