

Contents

Introduction	2
Lesson 1	Industry, Science, and Technology.	4
Lesson 2	Democracy and Totalitarianism	8
Lesson 3	World War and the End of European Dominance.	12
Lesson 4	Independence and Global Interdependence	16
Appendix	Cartoons and Illustrations	21

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Introduction

The Twentieth Century

The technological advances of the twentieth century have brought the entire world closer together. And, in so doing, opportunities have multiplied both for creative interaction and for rivalry and conflict. The focus of this third booklet in the *World History in Caricature and Cartoon* series is on both aspects of the history of this era.

Accelerating scientific and industrial advances improved life in impressive ways for millions of people, but it also enhanced enormously the power of the state. This enhancement was made clear by the rise of several fearsome totalitarian systems and by two horribly destructive world wars. In the face of these threats to freedom, however, struggles to preserve human rights, win independence, and even extend democratic freedoms continued.

After World War II, history was dominated by an ideological Cold War conflict intensified by a nuclear arms race. In the Cold War's aftermath, it is clearer that another clash also was playing itself out—one between the nation-state (including national and ethnic rivalry) and growing economic and cultural global interdependence.

The twelve political cartoons in this booklet are meant to help bring twentieth-century history to life in a vivid way. To help you use these cartoons 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: Industry, Science, and Technology. Two cartoons present opposing views of a burgeoning industrial capitalist system and its powerful corporate leaders. A third raises questions about the impact of this system and its many side effects on the entire human race.

Lesson 2: Democracy and Totalitarianism. The Bolsheviks gave the world a new and powerful kind of totalitarian state, but, as one illustration in this lesson makes clear, Communism also raised huge hopes. The cartoon on Mao portrays communist dictatorship in a far less glowing light. Another focuses attention on the sometimes hesitant response of the democracies to the dictators of the twentieth century.

Lesson 3: World War and the End of European Dominance. Stalin and Hitler together helped end that dominance by taking the fateful step that launched World War II. The British and other colonial empires collapsed soon after the war, leaving behind a divided world with two non-European superpowers facing off in a new global showdown. The cartoons in this lesson highlight these developments.

Lesson 4: Independence and Global Interdependence. The Cold War was frozen in place for decades, in part because of a deadly nuclear stalemate. With the collapse of Soviet and East European Communism, one side in this conflict emerged victorious. Nevertheless, the world continued to confront the challenge of living at peace in an increasingly interconnected global community of nations.

Using Political Cartoons and Other Prints to Teach World History

The political cartoon came into its own in the twentieth century. In our fast-paced world of mass communication, political cartoons have an immediacy that catches the eye and instantly appeals. Visual imagery in general conveys information on several levels at once, not in a linear sentence-by-sentence manner. In political cartoons, this compression of meaning is often intensified through the use of clean lines, concrete but meaning-rich visual symbols, simple compositions, and stark contrasts.

As a device for teachers, the political cartoon can help bring an era to life and give students a feel for issues as the people of the time saw them. The use of concrete images and symbols helps political cartoons capture both the meaning and the emotional impact of abstract issues and complex political and social trends. The danger, of course, is that political cartoons also lend themselves to gross oversimplification and propaganda. Yet, at their best, cartoons are not at all simplistic or superficial. Posters, placards, and billboards may use unambiguous words or images to state views and urge us to take action, but political cartoons at their best are more complex than this. They rarely state an opinion in so many words. Their aim is to instruct, as well as to exhort. They invite us to take part in a dialogue by showing us the reasons for the opinions they present.

All this makes the political cartoon an ideal medium with which to introduce your students to the key issues of this century, as well as to the earlier eras covered in the World History in Caricature and Cartoon series.

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.

Booklet III: The Twentieth Century

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will consider some of the positive and negative consequences of technological progress in this century.
 2. Students will better understand the debates about industrial capitalism in this century.
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Industry, Science, and Technology

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 early 1900s, the age of the railroad, steel, and electricity had knit an international economic order that gave a huge competitive advantage to large-scale industry. The rise of big business in the form of giant corporations and powerful industrialists inspired awe and respect in some, fear and hostility in others. In response to the power of the owners, trade unions and workers' political organizations also grew rapidly. Many socialist, or other radical cartoons and posters, expressed in a harsh and grotesque way the fears of those who saw in industrial capitalism an unjust social system, one whose ruling class gained its power from wasteful and greedy exploitation of everyone else.
- 2. Cartoon 2.** Not many of capitalism's critics viewed it as harshly as did certain radical communists and socialists. In fact, many others saw the great industrialists more as heroic "captains of industry" than as "robber barons." The truth is that the fruits of large-scale industrial production made life better for millions in the twentieth century. Most Americans, for example, viewed Henry Ford's innovations in the positive way they are presented in this cartoon. Through Ford's assembly-line techniques, the automobile became an item of mass consumption, not a frivolous luxury. Mass-consumer society has had its share of abuse, but few people have seemed willing to forgo its benefits.
- 3. Cartoon 3.** Science and technology made possible a huge increase in material well-being for millions around the globe, yet in these very successes lay the seeds of some huge problems. This cartoon deals with perhaps the biggest of these problems in the twentieth century: a new, far more destructive, mechanized warfare. The top two panels in the cartoon refer to the Napoleonic wars in Europe and the American Civil War. Both were horribly destructive. Yet for much of the 1800s, the modern industrial nations of the West believed they were too civilized to unleash their vast military powers on one another. In 1914, this belief collapsed. All of Europe descended into mass slaughter on a scale never before seen. Because of Europe's huge overseas empires, this conflict soon engulfed the entire globe in what has been known ever since as World War I.