WISHISTORY

UNDERSTANDING BIAS

Enduring Understanding

By using the past to inform the present, students learn critical thinking skills necessary to detect bias in media as well as obtaining a deeper understanding of the ideas of citizenship, free speech, civil rights, suffrage, women's history, and more.

Essential Questions

- What is bias and how can it be used to influence opinions?
- How are bias and propaganda linked?
- How do political cartoons reflect social struggles?
- How can individuals' choices on media sources influence their understanding of issues?

The Hook

Bad Romance Woman's Suffrage is a political parody featuring lyrics and images about the suffrage movement set to the tune of Lady Gaga's *Bad Romance*. Note that YouTube links contain advertisements outside the control of the original poster or the Wisconsin Historical Society.

BAD ROMANCE
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE



Exercise:

Given a series of political cartoons, posters, and pamphlets, students are asked to sort them for publication in three different "newspapers" of the day. Students then must explain their reasoning.

- **The Right Stuff:** A newspaper whose editorial board maintains a position against woman suffrage view when reporting the news of the day. "Change for the sake of change is pointless."

- **The Changing Times:** A newspaper whose editorial board maintains a view in support of woman suffrage reporting the news of the day. "Forward, because one foot in the past is too many."

- **The Balanced Diet:** "Report the facts, not the opinions."

Before students begin:

Background on Women's Suffrage:

After seven+ decades of struggle, the fight for women's suffrage, or women's right to vote, ended in victory with the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution. Through protest marches, letter writing campaigns, and state-level victories, women succeeded in their pursuit of this inalienable right of citizenship. As in any social movement, there were men and women on both sides of the issue, and political cartoons of the time reflected this divide.

Understanding Political Cartoons:

Teachinghistory.org provides an excellent resource designed to help students understand what political cartoons are and how they are used. Consider going over the ideas below before beginning this exercise.

"Students need to understand that political cartoons are expressions of opinion. They use all sorts of emotional appeals and other techniques to persuade others to accept those opinions. They cannot be treated as evidence either of the way things actually were or even of how everyone else felt about the way things were. **They are evidence only of a point of view, often a heavily biased point of view.**"

UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL CARTOONS

Vocabulary

- bias
- fact
- inalienable
- influence
- opinion
- ratification
- suffrage
- suffragette
- suffragist

Extension

Studies have shown that students are more engaged when the lessons of the past apply to their current lives. In the case of bias, PBS has created an engaging lesson to help students identify bias in current media.

- PBS Newshour (MediaOcracy): IDENTIFYING BIAS IN THE MEDIA

- Allsides.com: For independent analysis research, Allsides.com is a news site that chooses current stories and places analysis from the left, center, and the right side by side to invite comparison: ALL SIDES BALANCED MEDIA

Image Resources

Notes:

- Remove "For; Against; and Open for Interpretation" before presenting to students.
- All images are open to interpretation; the following categories are suggestions only.

For:

- https://wisconsinhistory.org/record/image/W0129YK/kansas-equal-suffrage
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b49106/
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b49099/
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.28028/
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b23212/
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.26363/

Against:

- https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM1932
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b49134/
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b49095/
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b49087/
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.27952/
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.28055/

Open for interpretation:

- https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b49085/
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b49105/
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b49090/
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3a51845/
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/ds.05624/
- https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.70917/

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The Changing Times Forward, because one foot in the past is too many.	**The Balanced Diet** Right, wrong, or somewhere in-between	**The Right Stuff** Change for the sake of change is pointless.