



LESSON PLAN: POLYGAMY AND POLITICAL CARTOONS

Becoming Utah: A Peoples' Journey

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KEY STATE STANDARDS:

7th Grade Utah Studies Core Standards

UT Standard 2.7: Students will identify the political challenges that delayed Utah's statehood and explain how these challenges were overcome. (civics)

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Students will analyze national political cartoons to explain the impact that polygamy had on Utah's struggle for statehood.

GUIDING QUESTION:

What is a political cartoon? How do political cartoons help us understand historical issues?

VOCABULARY:

- Political Cartoon
- Symbols
- Exaggeration
- Labels
- Analyze

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- *Becoming Utah: A Peoples' Journey*, Video
- [Political Cartoon Slide Deck](#), featuring:
 - Political Cartoon Graphic Organizer
 - Mormon Octopus
 - An American Harem
 - Polygamy Tree
 - Mormon Elder-Berry

PRIOR TO THIS LESSON:

Students should have background knowledge about Utah's struggle for statehood. This background knowledge could come from a discussion using *Becoming Utah: A Peoples' Journey* and key concepts presented in it or by covering information presented in the instructional materials above.



BACKGROUND:

During this time anti-polygamy and anti-slavery (abolitionist) ideas were closely linked. Many Americans outside Utah believed that polygamy was much like slavery—especially for women—and they worked to abolish it from the nation.

Those who were working against polygamy at this time usually held strong Protestant religious values. Most Americans at this time belonged to Protestant faiths, such as Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Baptist. They favored more traditional views about marriage, and believed that polygamy was immoral. They also believed that people who were not Protestants (such as Catholics, Jews, Mormons, and people from non-Christian countries) were too different to be included as “Americans.”

These political cartoons were created by anti-polygamy activists and were published in national newspapers and magazines. They were intended to influence how Americans viewed members of the LDS church, and to build public support for ending polygamy in Utah. The authors worked to create fear in the eyes of Americans, and to show that LDS practices such as polygamy were a threat to “American” values.

LESSON

This lesson is designed for a 45-minute time-frame but can be adjusted as needed.

4 minutes - **Starter** - Ask students to brainstorm a list about the following questions: “Why did Utah struggle to become a state?” and “Why do people like cartoons?” After students brainstorm these lists, have students discuss why Utah struggled to become a state (to activate background knowledge). Then have students discuss “Why do people like cartoons?” as a hook and jumping point into political cartoons.

1 minute - **Objective** - Take a moment to discuss the objective of the lesson. Explain to students that you will be learning about political cartoons and a concept called polygamy. Take a moment to pre-teach expectations about what to do if a student feels uncomfortable discussing this topic.

10 minutes - **Learning Activity 1** - Pre-teach students these vocabulary words: symbols, exaggeration, labels. Give examples of these terms in political cartoons that are relevant and current. Find several political cartoons that are current and increase in levels of complexity. As a class have students examine these cartoons for the vocabulary words and elements. Ask students to make inferences about what these different elements mean.



10 minutes - **Learning Activity 2** - To begin this activity, display one of the polygamy cartoons without callouts. Model for the class the symbols, exaggeration, and labels. Then display a copy with callouts, to show explanations for each of these terms. This provides students a modeled explain. Explain to students that you are going to look at political cartoons about polygamy. Divide students into small groups and distribute to each group a polygamy cartoon without callouts. Ask them to circle places that they see symbols, exaggeration, and labels. Have students write a description for each of these elements that they find in the cartoon. Then come back together as a whole group and discuss the elements and symbols seen. Wrap up this activity by discussing with students: "How do you think political cartoons about polygamy shaped the way Americans understood Utah?"

10 minutes - **Check for Understanding** - Explain to students that you will now have them create their own political cartoon. Distribute the political cartoon graphic organizer. Students should include the checklist requirements as listed on the graphic organizer.

EXTENSION IDEAS:

- Students can make an additional political cartoon about other struggles for statehood.
- Students could pick a contemporary Utah issue and create a political cartoon about it.
- Students could use their political cartoons in a classroom gallery walk. Have students give a notice and a wonder for each cartoon. Then discuss additional questions.

