

**Lesson Plan**  
**The Mexican War**  
**Political Cartoons**  
**By Robert Pobjecky**

**Essential Question:** How did the different cartoonists reflect the feelings and mood of the American people and politicians during the Mexican War?

**Brief Introduction:** After defeating Henry Clay in the election of 1844 on a platform of Manifest Destiny, President Polk did not hesitate in his efforts to expand the boundaries of the United States. Although many Americans felt that we should annex Texas, Polk also wanted to purchase the territory of California from Mexico for \$25 million. When the Mexicans turned down his offer and when the Mexicans also went north to defend their boundary with the new state of Texas, which they had only felt was a territory in revolt before it gained statehood, conflict was inevitable. Many Whig politicians considered the war just an excuse to gain more states for slavery while other politicians felt that this was a truly justifiable and necessary war.

**Primary Subject and Grade Level:** 11<sup>th</sup> Grade US History, Average, Honors, or Advanced Placement

**Key Terms:** Palo Alto, Manifest Destiny, amputation, infection, flying artillery, James K. Polk, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Zackary Taylor. .

**Procedures:**

- 1) Teachers will pair up students using a Kaegan strategy.
- 2) Students will look up and review key terms.
- 3) After reviewing the cartoons below, students will choose whichever 5 illustrations they would like to work with in more detail.
- 4) Using the worksheets, they will complete one worksheet per illustration working only on the questions for that class level.
- 5) When finished, small teams will share with the whole class with instructor acting as the facilitator.

**CARTOON #1 (Battle of Palo Alto, May 13, 1846)**



*At THE BATTLE OF PALO ALTO, the Americans  
greatly distinguished themselves, as well for their bravery, as their humanity toward their unfortunate adversaries. In the heat of the  
battle they were frequently seen handing their cartridges and rations to the wounded - Mexicans.*

**CARTOON #2 (Battle of Palto Alto, May 13, 1846)**



Reproduced by permission of the War Office from the original copy of the Political Sketches of the American Journal of the British.

**A NEW RULE IN ALGEBRA.**

*Five from Three and One remains !!*

*or*

*"The Three Mexican Prisoners, having but one leg between them all."*

*Series No 2.*

**CARTOON #3 (Battle of Palto Alto, May 13, 1846)**

**ON TO THE CHARGE!**



*Inscribed to the memory of*  
**MAJOR RINGGOLD.**  
LATE OF THE U.S. LIGHT ARTILLERY. BY  
**JOHN E. HEWITT.**

*When the gallant Ringgold covered the retreat on the battle of Big Run, which required the saving of his all his faithful companions, some of his wounded partners carried him, when he exclaimed "Lead on my Boys! There is work for every man to do!"*

Reprint of Andrew Dickson.

BALTIMORE Published by ED BENTZEN.

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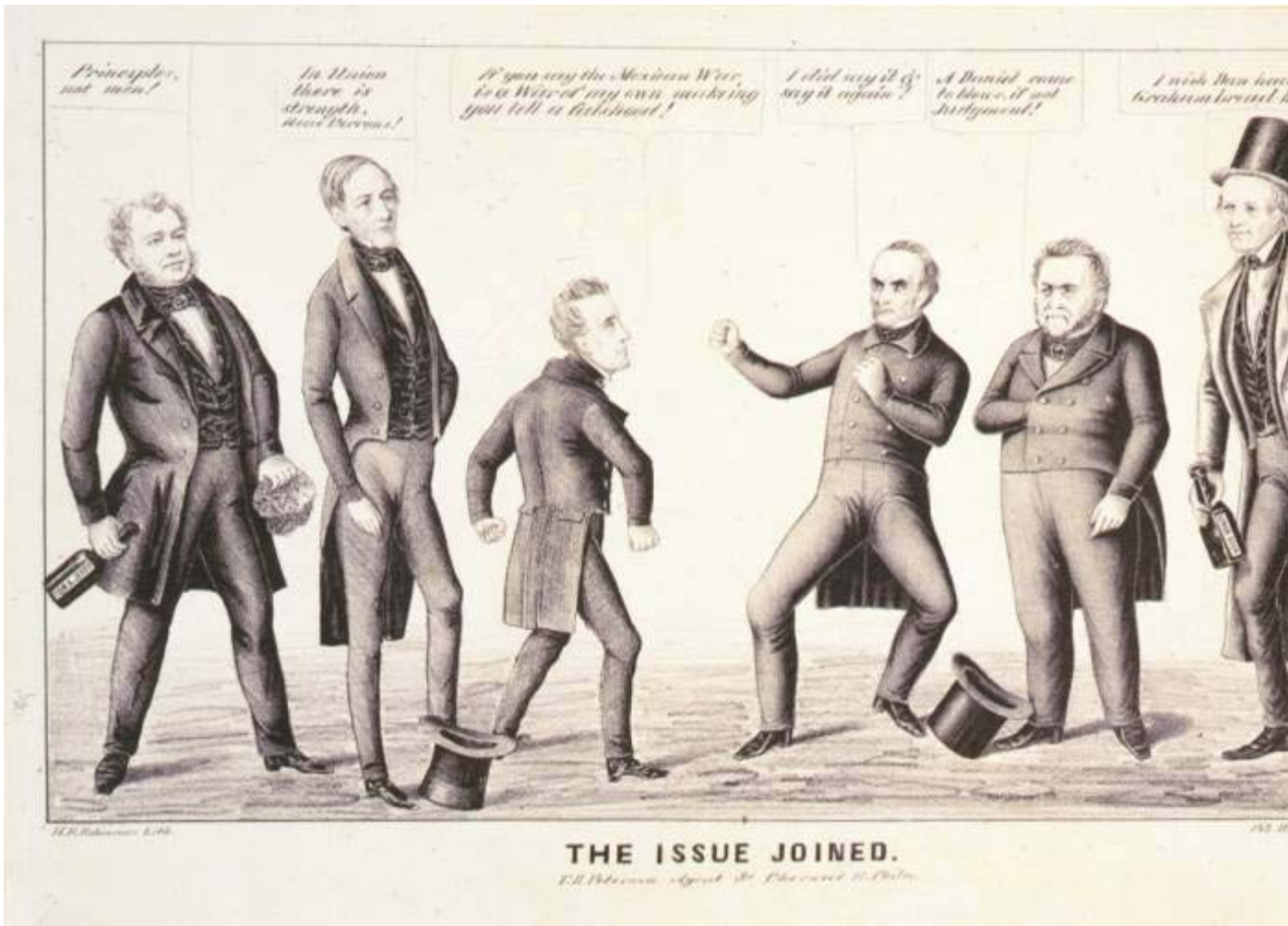
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1846-34

**CARTOON #4 (1846)**



**CARTOON #5 (Daniel Webster & President Polk, May, 1846)**



**CARTOON #6 ( Henry Clay being two faced, November, 1847)**



**CARTOON #7 (Zachary Taylor for President, 1848)**



**AN AVAILABLE CANDIDATE.**  
THE ONE QUALIFICATION FOR A WHIG PRESIDENT.



# Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

## Level 1

Visuals

Words (not all cartoons include words)

1.

List the objects or people you see in the cartoon.

1.

Identify the cartoon caption and/or title.

2.

Locate three words or phrases used by the cartoonist to identify objects or people within the cartoon.

3.

Record any important dates or numbers that appear in the cartoon.

## Level 2

Words

Visuals

2.

Which of the objects on your list are symbols?

4.

Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so?

5.

List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.

3.

What do you think each symbol means?

## Level 3

A.

Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.

B.

Explain how the words in the cartoon clarify the symbols.

C.

Explain the message of the cartoon.

D.

What special interest groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?

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