

Assessing Political Machines

Investigation Materials Packet

Introduction and Instructions

You will be working in a team to investigate the role of the political machine in American society and government. You will be looking at several pieces of evidence to assess the benefits of political machines to turn of the century Americans and their government. Read the attached pieces of evidence carefully and complete an analysis form for each source. Once you have read and analyzed each piece of evidence, you will come together as a team to answer the essential question: **Were political machines more beneficial or detrimental to turn of the century Americans society?** You will share your answer with the whole group and will put your answer to this question and your recommendations in a **final product** that will be submitted.

Assessing Political Machines

Exhibit A

The Alderman...bails out his constituents when they are arrested, or says a good word to the police justice when they appear before him for trial; uses his "pull" with the magistrate when they are likely to be fined for a civil misdemeanor, or sees what he can do to "fix up matters" with the State's attorney when the charge is really a serious one. Because of simple friendliness, the Alderman is expected to pay rent for the hard-pressed tenant when no rent is forthcoming, to find jobs when work is hard to get, to procure and divide among his constituents all the places which he can seize from the City Hall....

The question does, of course, occur to many minds, Where does the money come from[?]....He...sells out the city franchises...he makes deal with the franchise-seeking companies...he guarantees to steer dubious measures through the [City] Council, for which he demands liberal pay....

Jane Addams, Chicago Reformer

Assessing Political Machines
Exhibit A – Analysis Form

1. Classify this exhibit. What type of evidence is it? (i.e. newspaper article, legal document, government document, personal writing such as a journal entry, image etc...)

2. What specific information, details, and/or perspectives does this evidence provide?

3. Who is the author/creator of this evidence? Briefly describe the creator (i.e. his/her occupation, location, perspective) and his/her purpose in creating this document.

4. What is the purpose or subject of this exhibit?

5. When and where was this piece of evidence produced?

6. What perspectives or points of view are present in this piece of evidence?

7. What evidence beyond this exhibit is needed to answer the essential question?

8. How useful is this source in answering the essential question? Explain.

Assessing Political Machines
Exhibit B

Boss Magee's idea was not to corrupt the city government, but to be it; not to hire votes in councils, but to own councilmen; and so, having seized control of his organization, he nominated cheap or dependent men for the select and common councils. Relatives and friends were his first recourse, then came bartenders, saloon-keepers, liquor dealers.... Businessmen came almost as cheap as politicians, and they came also at the city's expense....The manufacturers and the merchants were kept well in hand by little municipal grants and privileges....

Lincoln Steffens on corruption in Pittsburgh, 1904
Muckraker, Journalist

Assessing Political Machines
Exhibit B – Analysis Form

1. Classify this exhibit. What type of evidence is it? (i.e. newspaper article, legal document, government document, personal writing such as a journal entry, image etc...)

2. What specific information, details, and/or perspectives does this evidence provide?

3. Who is the author/creator of this evidence? Briefly describe the creator (i.e. his/her occupation, location, perspective) and his/her purpose in creating this document.

4. What is the purpose or subject of this exhibit?

5. When and where was this piece of evidence produced?

6. What perspectives or points of view are present in this piece of evidence?

7. What evidence beyond this exhibit is needed to answer the essential question?

8. How useful is this source in answering the essential question? Explain.

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Exhibit C

An army led by a council seldom conquers: It must have a commander-in-chief, who settles disputes, decides in emergencies, inspires fear or attachment. The head of the Ring is such a commander. He dispenses places, rewards the loyal, punishes the mutinous, concocts schemes, negotiates treaties. He generally avoids publicity, preferring the substance to the pomp of power, and is all the more dangerous because he sits, like a spider, hidden in the midst of his web. He is a Boss.

Lord James Bryce

Assessing Political Machines
Exhibit C Analysis Form

1. Classify this exhibit. What type of evidence is it? (i.e. newspaper article, legal document, government document, personal writing such as a journal entry, image etc...)

2. What specific information, details, and/or perspectives does this evidence provide?

3. Who is the author/creator of this evidence? Briefly describe the creator (i.e. his/her occupation, location, perspective) and his/her purpose in creating this document.

4. What is the purpose or subject of this exhibit?

5. When and where was this piece of evidence produced?

6. What perspectives or points of view are present in this piece of evidence?

7. What evidence beyond this exhibit is needed to answer the essential question?

8. How useful is this source in answering the essential question? Explain.

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Exhibit D

What tells in holdin' your grip on your district is to go right down among the poor families and help them in the different ways they need help. I've got a regular system for this. If there's a fire in the Ninth, Tenth, or Eleventh Avenue, for example, any hour of the day or night, I'm usually there with some of my election district captains as soon as the fire engines. If a family is burned out I don't ask whether they are Republicans or Democrats, and I don't refer them to the Charity Organization Society, which would investigate their case in a month or two and decide they were worthy of help about the time they are dead from starvation. I just get quarters for them, buy clothes for them...and fix them up till they get things runnin' again. It's philanthropy but politics too – mighty good politics.... The poor are the most grateful people in the world, and, let me tell you, they have more friends in their neighborhoods than the rich have in theirs...

Another thing, I can always get a deserving man a job. I make it a point to keep track of jobs, and it seldom happens that I don't have a few up my sleeve ready for use.

I hear a young feller that's proud of his voice...I ask him to join our Glee Club. He comes up and sings, and he's a follower of Plunkitt for life. Another young feller gains a reputation as a baseball player in a vacant lot. I bring him into our baseball club. That fixes him. You'll find him working for my ticket at the polls next election. I rope them all in by givin' them opportunities to show themselves off. I don't trouble them with political arguments.

George Washington Plunkitt, Politician
New York City, 1889

Assessing Political Machines
Exhibit D Analysis Form

1. Classify this exhibit. What type of evidence is it? (i.e. newspaper article, legal document, government document, personal writing such as a journal entry, image etc...)

2. What specific information, details, and/or perspectives does this evidence provide?

3. Who is the author/creator of this evidence? Briefly describe the creator (i.e. his/her occupation, location, perspective) and his/her purpose in creating this document.

4. What is the purpose or subject of this exhibit?

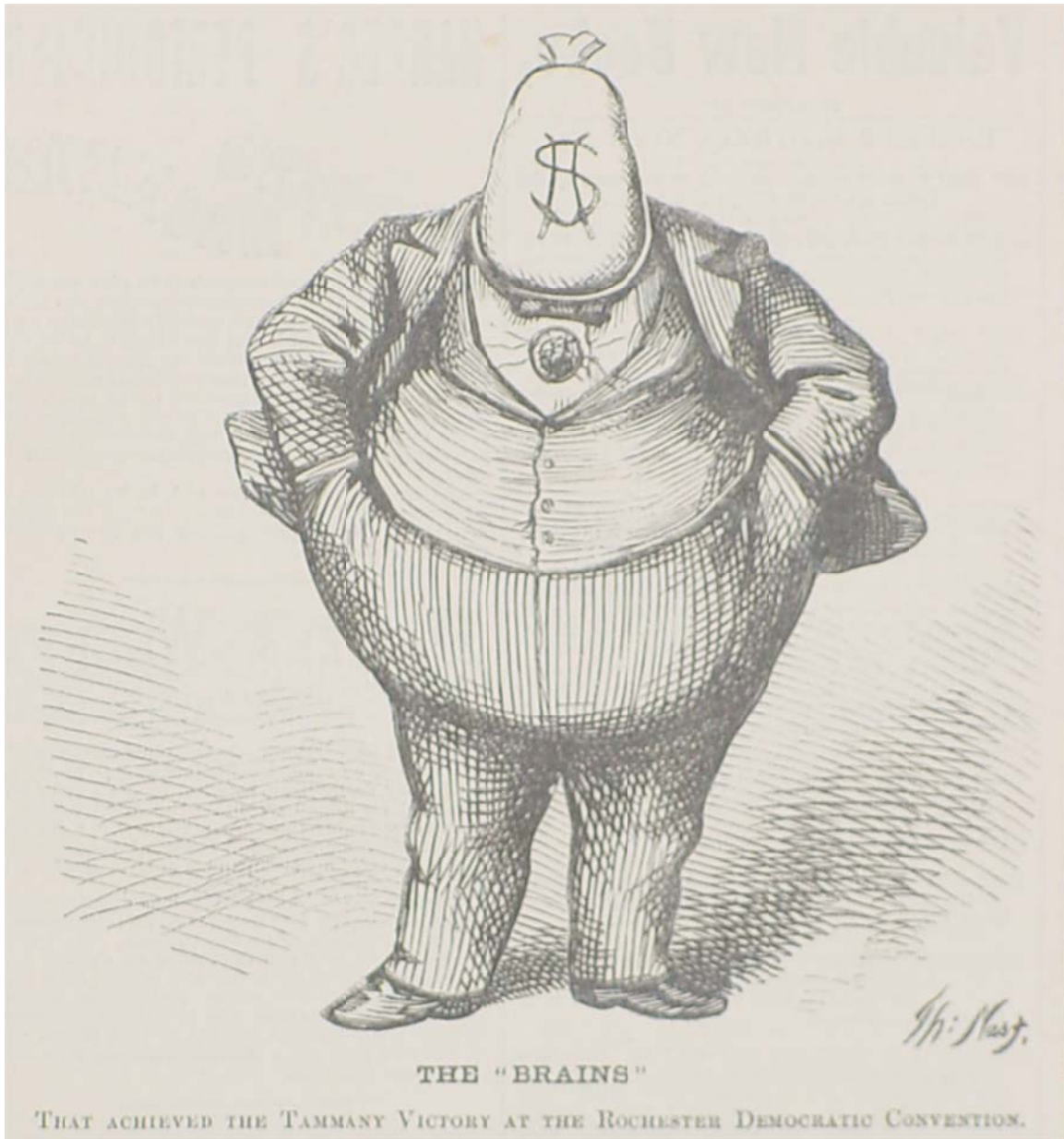
5. When and where was this piece of evidence produced?

6. What perspectives or points of view are present in this piece of evidence?

7. What evidence beyond this exhibit is needed to answer the essential question?

8. How useful is this source in answering the essential question? Explain.

Assessing Political Machines
Exhibit E



<http://cartoons.osu.edu/nast/tweed.htm>

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Exhibit E Analysis Form

1. Classify this exhibit. What type of evidence is it? (i.e. newspaper article, legal document, government document, personal writing such as a journal entry, image etc...)

2. What specific information, details, and/or perspectives does this evidence provide?

3. Who is the author/creator of this evidence? Briefly describe the creator (i.e. his/her occupation, location, perspective) and his/her purpose in creating this document.

4. What is the purpose or subject of this exhibit?

5. When and where was this piece of evidence produced?

6. What perspectives or points of view are present in this piece of evidence?

7. What evidence beyond this exhibit is needed to answer the essential question?

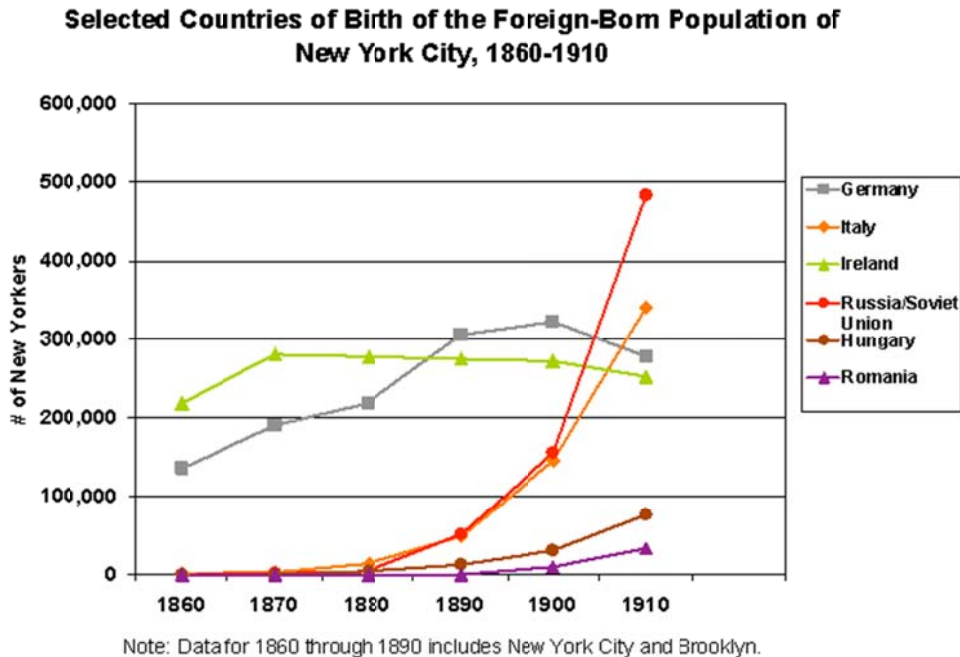
8. How useful is this source in answering the essential question? Explain.

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Exhibits F, G & H

“I seen him [Judge George Barnard] in there from six o’clock at night until after midnight signing them papers. With Tammany in power and Barnard on the bench, immigrants became citizens quick.”

Anonymous Tammany Hall worker, 1869



www.fordham.edu

Invoice: New York Printing Company

Printed: 105,000 blank applications for naturalization of immigrants

Printed: 69,000 certificates of naturalization

Invoice from the New York Printing Company (owned by William Tweed), 1868

Assessing Political Machines
Exhibits F, G & H Analysis Form

1. Classify these exhibits. What type of evidence are they? (i.e. newspaper article, legal document, government document, personal writing such as a journal entry, image etc...)

2. What specific information, details, and/or perspectives does this evidence provide?

3. Who are the authors/creators of this evidence? Briefly describe the creators (i.e. his/her occupation, location, perspective) and their purpose in creating this documents. (Note: you do not know the creator of the chart and invoice. Take an educated guess – who could have created these exhibits?)

4. What is the purpose or subject of these exhibits?

5. When and where were these pieces of evidence produced?

6. What perspectives or points of view are present in these pieces of evidence?

7. What evidence beyond this exhibit is needed to answer the essential question?

8. How useful are these exhibits in answering the essential question? Explain.

Assessing Political Machines
Corroborating the Evidence

After analyzing all of the exhibits, complete the questions below.

1. What similarities and differences exist between the exhibits?

2. What conclusions can you draw from your interpretations of all exhibits presented?

3. After consulting all of the evidence, were political machines more beneficial or detrimental to turn of the century American society? Back up your answer with specific references to the evidence you studied.
