

Title: The Formation of the NYPD: A New Mode of Managing Poor and Black People
Essential Question: What role did the media play in shaping the NYPD?

Essential Knowledge:

Common Core

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6: Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.10: By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

New York State

- 11.3 EXPANSION, NATIONALISM, AND SECTIONALISM (1800 – 1865): As the nation expanded, growing sectional tensions, especially over slavery, resulted in political and constitutional crises that culminated in the Civil War.

National Council for the Social Studies Themes

- Time, Continuity, and Change
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

C3

- D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
- D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.
- D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras

Learning Objectives:

- Students will understand the origins of the NYPD, as shaped by capitalism and the desire to center the city's businesses, including the institution of slavery.
- Students will understand that the institution of policing gained support in its tactic of controlling Black and poor people in large part because of the media.
- Students will learn that there was Black defiance and resistance to this institution from its inception.

Grade Level: 9-12

Time Needed: 60-90 minutes

Relevant Topics:

- Media bias
- Media literacy
 - Disinformation and misinformation

Key Vocabulary: Jim Crow, caricature

Materials/Additional Sources:

- [Lesson 2: Do Now Think, Wonder](#)
- [Lesson 2: The Role of Media Exploration](#)
- [Lesson 2: Role of Media](#)
- [Lesson 2: Evaluating POV](#)

Required Sources:

- [Lesson Citations](#)

Teacher Preparation/Background Knowledge:

This lesson examines how 19th-century New York City media shaped public perceptions of Black people. Students analyze how newspapers and popular media in the 1800s portrayed Black New Yorkers through stereotypes, biased language, and selective storytelling, and how these portrayals influenced public opinion, which they compare to contemporary media depictions of immigrants.

Implementation Notes & Disclaimers:

There are racist images and racist language present in this lesson.

Modifications**Individual Student Learning Needs:**

- Use structured discussion roles
- Pair students strategically for peer support
- Allow think-time before calling on students
- Accept written participation as an alternative to speaking

Language Support:

- Provide key excerpts from the primary and secondary sources in both English and the students' home languages.
- Offer sentence frames to help multilingual learners articulate their thoughts during discussion

Podcast Reflection: [If It Bleeds It Leads](#)

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

- Lead a discussion debriefing the episode. Use [Harvard Project Zero Thinking Routine: Claim, Support, Question](#) to lead discussion about the episode.
- Call on students to share observations, questions, and things that were surprising or shocking. Any curiosities they have.
- Then say that today they'll be exploring the media's role in shaping perceptions

Engage: Do Now: See, Think, Wonder

Suggested Time: 10 Minutes

- Students will spend 10 minutes independently reading this John H Van Evrie editorial and filling in the think and wonder graphic organizer. [Lesson 2: Do Now Think, Wonder](#)
 - [New York Almanac: Negroes and Negro Slavery Advertisement](#)
- Call on a few students to share their thoughts.

Explore: The Role of Media in Shaping Perceptions about Black People [Lesson 2: The Role of Media Exploration](#)

Suggested Time: 25 minutes

- Students will explore images, videos, and documents that portray Black people as "needing" extra policing in small groups
- They'll continue to fill out a graphic organizing noting their observations in groups

Explain: Direct Instruction on the lies of these images (slides)

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

- Explicitly state that the images are racist depictions and cartoonists used exaggerated features intentionally. [Lesson 2: Role of Media](#)
- Explain the history of racist tropes as a tool of the media to secure capital and wealth.
 - James Gordon Bennett and his role in the establishment of the NY police as we know as the department

Elaborate: Evaluate Media Bias

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

- Read this excerpt and answer the prompt [Lesson 2: Evaluating POV](#)
 - This activity could be continued as a HW assignment
 - How have media depictions of Black Americans changed and/or remained the same?

(Evaluate) Summary: The Legacy of Racist Media Representation

Suggested Time: Homework extension activity

- Ask students to bring in contemporary examples of media bias in fear mongering over non-white people, particularly Black people
- For further research, students could explore this website article on George Kirk's case
 - [The Little Known Abolitionists of Washington Heights](#)

Informed Action & Community Connection:

You might want students to engage in additional research around Bennett's legacy. For example, an FDNY award that was previously named after him was renamed after more was learned of his racist beliefs
[FDNY Renames Department Medal](#)