

## The U.S. and the Boxer Rebellion in Cartoons

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**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Subject:** U.S. and World History

**Objective:** Students will understand the involvement of the United States in the Boxer Rebellion and reactions to it as portrayed in cartoons in contemporary magazines. Students will also understand the legacy of the “Boxers” to the Chinese.

**Periods needed:** One or two 45 minute periods.

### Ohio American History Standards Met:

3 – Historians develop theses and use evidence to support or refute positions.

12 – As a result of overseas expansion, the Spanish-American War and World War I, the United States emerged as a world power.

**Background:** In the late 1800’s the United States was committed to making sure China remained open to all foreign trade, keeping an open door policy for the Chinese market. As the presence of foreign countries grew in China, some native Chinese wanted to expel all foreigners and in 1900 armed conflict erupted. Some Chinese fighters, who were practitioners of a form of martial arts which they believed would make them invulnerable to bullets, were called “The Boxers” by the foreigners in China. To protect their financial interests and put down the “Boxer Rebellion” many countries, including the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Japan sent troops to China. After the uprising was put down China had to pay an indemnity of 450 million taels of silver (worth 10 billion in 2017 prices) to the countries that sent troops. About 200-250 foreign nationals died and there are estimates as high as 100,000 Chinese dead, mostly civilians. Most of the Western world views the “Boxer Rebellion” as insignificant but it is very important to the Chinese becoming particularly so after the communist revolution, serving as a source of inspiration for Chinese nationalism and pride.

### Plan of instruction:

1. If students are not familiar with the backgrounds of both situations cover the essential facts in a mini-lecture or discussion. See *East Asia: A New History* by Rhoads Murphey.
2. Divide students into pairs or small groups.
3. Pass out one cartoon to each group
4. Have each group or pair answer the questions on the worksheet.

## The U.S. and the Boxer Rebellion in Cartoons

5. When all groups are finished have the students share their answers
6. Pass out *A Chinese historical view of the Boxer Rebellion (1976)* to each student.
7. Have each group or pair answer the questions on the worksheet.
8. When all groups are finished have the students share their answers

**For non-traditional learners, ESL students, slower paced classes:** Students draw pictures of, make collages of, or write poems presenting their interpretation of the Boxer Rebellion and the involvement of the U.S.

**For gifted and accelerated classes:** Students will write an essay comparing the actions of the United States in the Boxer Rebellion to the actions of the U.S. in the Caribbean and Philippines.

### References:

- Background

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Boxer-Rebellion>

Murphey, Rhoads. *East Asia: A New History*. Boston: Longman, 2010. Print.

- Cartoons # 1-4, 6

[https://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/boxer\\_uprising/pdf/bx\\_essay.pdf](https://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/boxer_uprising/pdf/bx_essay.pdf)

- Cartoon 5

<http://www.harpweek.com/09Cartoon/BrowseByDateCartoon.asp?Month=June&Date=9>

A Note on cartoons: *Harper's Weekly* was an American political magazine published from 1857-1916. *Judge* was a weekly American satire magazine published from 1881-1947. *Puck* was a weekly American humor magazine published from 1871-1918.

- Chinese View

<http://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/chinese-view-boxer-rebellion-1976>

## The U.S. and the Boxer Rebellion in Cartoons

### **Questions for Cartoon Analysis**

1. What are the significant elements of the cartoon?
2. What do the elements represent?
3. What action is occurring in the cartoon?
4. What is the central theme/message of the cartoon?
5. What is the opinion of the cartoonists concerning the role of the United States in the Boxer Rebellion

## The U.S. and the Boxer Rebellion in Cartoons

Cartoon 1: "Commerce vs. Conquest"

Caption: "Uncle Sam (to John Bull) — Don't scare him, John, the way those other fellows are doing. Tell him all we want is to have him open his harbors and markets to everybody!"

Puck, v. 42, no. 1091, February 2, 1898



Uncle Sam (to John Bull)—Don't scare him, John, the way those other fellows are doing. Tell him all we want is to have him open his harbors and markets to everybody!

COMMERCE VS. CONQUEST.

H. Lytton



# The U.S. and the Boxer Rebellion in Cartoons

Cartoon 3: "In the Chinese Labyrinth", Puck, September 6, 1901



## The U.S. and the Boxer Rebellion in Cartoons

Cartoon 4:

"Awakening of China"

Caption: "A Disturbing Possibility in the East."

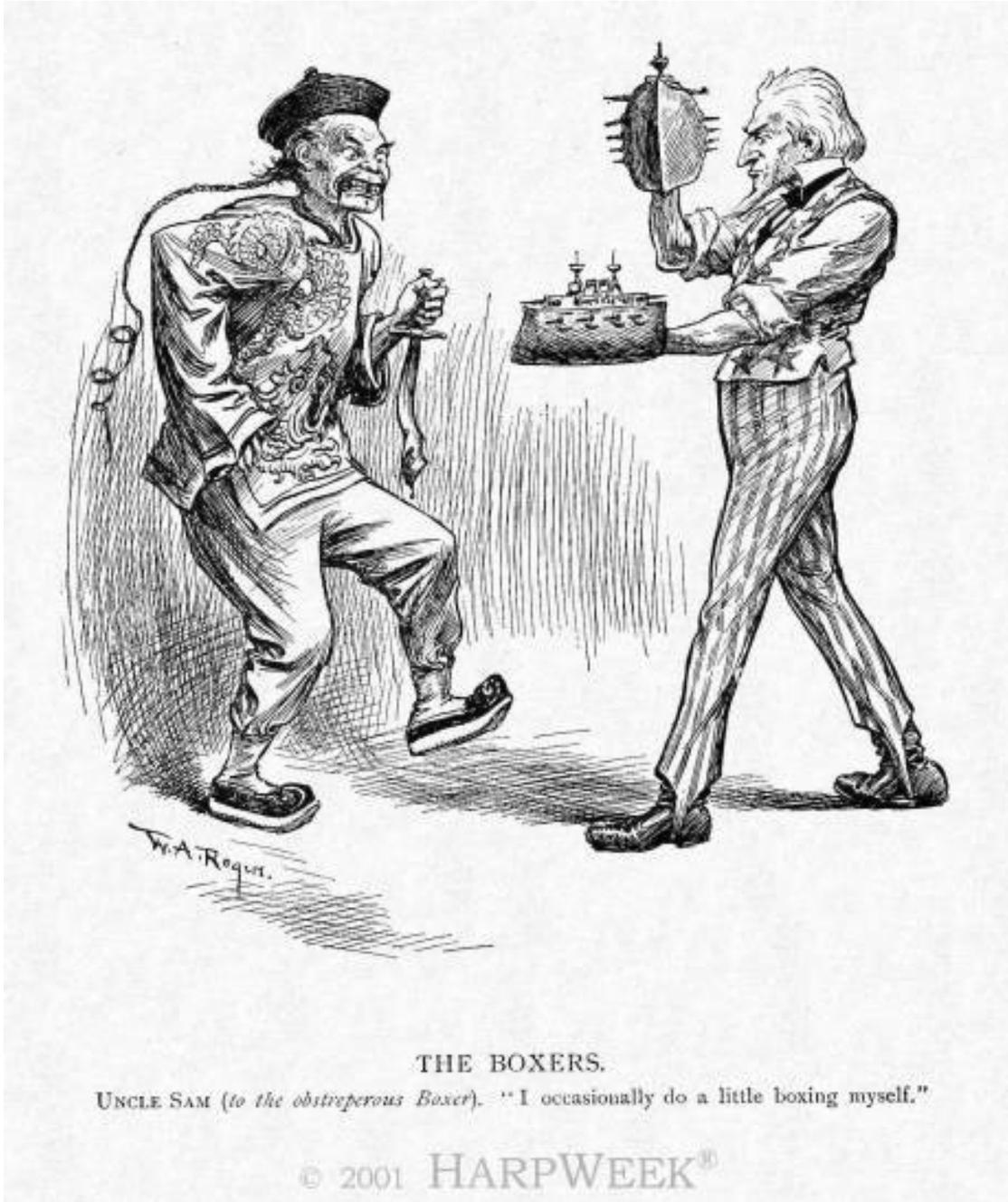
Puck, September 4, 1901



# The U.S. and the Boxer Rebellion in Cartoons

## THE BOXERS

Uncle Sam (to the obstreperous Boxer: "I occasionally do a little boxing myself."



## The U.S. and the Boxer Rebellion in Cartoons



Cartoon 6: "No Chance to Criticize."

Caption: "John Bull (to the Powers). — What are you mad about? We can't grudge him a light lunch while we are feasting!"

Puck, May 25, 1898

## The U.S. and the Boxer Rebellion in Cartoons

### A Chinese historical view of the Boxer Rebellion (1976)

Although Western historians and conservative Chinese historians have been critical of the Boxers, an alternative view in China sees the Boxers as patriotic defenders of China. This account appeared in China in 1976:

“The world-shaking Yi Ho Tuan Movement [Boxers] is the glory and pride of the Chinese people. It laid a cornerstone for the great victory of their revolution fifty years later. It gave the invaders a taste of the people’s heavy fist and shattered their fond dream of partitioning China. Earlier, they had arrogantly boasted that with 10,000 soldiers carrying modern arms they could subjugate all China.

Clamour for partition had filled the air. But after the Yi Ho Tuan mounted the political stage, this claptrap was no longer heard – not because the imperialists had changed in their aggressive nature and their desire to carve up China, but because the mighty Chinese people had taught them a bitter lesson through the Yi Ho Tuan...

To the Chinese people the Yi Ho Tuan Movement brought a better understanding of imperialism, strengthening them in attacks against its rule in China. The imperialist powers liked to pose as guardians of civilisation. The crimes of their soldiery on Chinese soil bared this lie, unmasking their real savagery for all to see.

Further, the Yi Ho Tuan Movement exposed the treasonous character of the Qing government. It both weakened the feudal ruling power and precipitated the subsequent growth of the revolutionary movement.

These great and historic merits of the Yi Ho Tuan can never be obliterated. Yet the Yi Ho Tuan Movement has long been abused and slandered by the imperialists and all reactionary forces. In its own day, the imperialists labelled it a manifestation of the ‘hostility of the yellow race towards the white race’ and of ‘Chinese hatred for European culture and civilisation’. Imperialist lackeys dubbed it ‘irrational’. And 50 years later... a US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, slandered it as an anti-foreign disturbance...

Not in vain did the Yi Ho Tuan heroes shed their blood. Their patriotism and dauntless courage will inspire the Chinese people forever. In the annals of the Chinese nation, the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal exploits of the Yi Ho Tuan will always be a lustrous chapter.”

## The U.S. and the Boxer Rebellion in Cartoons

### Questions on the Chinese View

1. What was the goal of the Westerners in China?  
(To partition China)
2. What is the view of the Qing dynasty?  
(It weakened the existing government and strengthened the revolutionary movement)
3. According to the author what lies did the Westerners tell about the Chinese?  
(The Westerners were the guardians of civilizations. The Chinese hated Europeans and the white race. The Boxers were irrational. The Boxer Rebellion was an anti-foreign disturbance.)
4. Why are the Boxers considered heroes?  
(They are sources of inspiration. They fought against imperialists. Various answers.)
5. Do the cartoons portray the Boxers as heroes? Evidence?  
(Various answers)
6. Do you think the Boxers were heroes? Evidence?  
(Various answers.)