

Two In-Class Comparison Activities

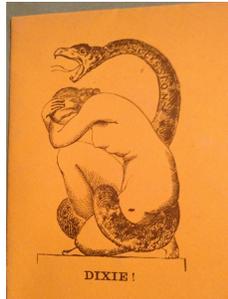
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Part of an in-archives exercise at <http://www.teacharchives.org/exercises/civil-war-envelopes>

TWO NUDES

Civil War envelope *Dixie!*



Dixie! from Scrapbook of Civil War envelopes, 1861-1865; William Irwin Martin Civil War envelopes, 1974.259, box 1; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Hiram Power's *Greek Slave*



Hiram Powers, *Greek Slave*, one of six life-sized versions, 1843-1866, Brooklyn Museum.

Say to students: Take a few minutes to look at the sculpture *Greek Slave* by Hiram Powers and the envelope illustration *Dixie!*.

- What do these two images have in common?
- How are they different?

Differences include medium (print/sculpture) and size. Both allude to Christianity and slavery. Discussions usually focus on the differing symbolism of the women's nude bodies, and on viewership and display (both images reached a wide audience in the nineteenth century).

ALLEGORIES OF AMERICA



Theodor Galle, *Vespucci Discovering America*, circa 1580, engraving after a drawing by Jan van der Straet (circa 1587).

Ask students: How does the artist depict America and why?
Next, look at more allegories, such as:



Thomas Crawford's bronze sculpture of *Freedom* on the Capitol dome, 1863.



Details from decorated envelopes, Scrapbook of Civil War envelopes, 1861-1865; William Irwin Martin Civil War envelopes, 1974.259, box 1; Brooklyn Historical Society.



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Ask students to notice how personifications of America change over the years, and to consider why.

America is first represented as a vulnerable and inviting Native American princess and eventually becomes more westernized. I like to end with the envelope illustration of a westernized Liberty looking down at America, which may reflect the enforced dependency of native people on the federal government during the 19th century.

Ask students to compare the above Civil War envelopes featuring different allegories of America with each other and with personifications of liberty, freedom, or Columbia in American visual culture.