

11.7 Teacher Key

A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF “COME, LET US TAKE COUNSEL TOGETHER!”, 1944

Language: First, notice the words and phrases included on the poster and jot notes below.

- What text (or kind of text) do you see?

Information (locations, time and date, name of group, title of event), some persuasive language (“Come, let us take counsel together!”), “Jim Crow,” etc.

- What is the NAACP?

“National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,” a group that wants to help people of color, to fight for equality, etc.

- What is the meaning of “Jim Crow”?

Jim Crow is the phrase used to describe the racial caste system that legally, socially, and violently oppressed African Americans from the 1870s to the 1960s (in students’ own words).

- What do you think is meant by the phrase, “Come, let us take counsel together”?

Again, students might have a range of interpretations here. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “take counsel” means “to consult, deliberate.”

Image: Next, consider the images on the flyer and jot notes below.

- What images do you see?

A hand squeezing a crow’s neck over fire, flags on the crow’s feet.

- What might the various components symbolize, and how do they relate to one another?

This is where it is important to tie the textual and visual together. The hand is that of the NAACP (those fighting for equality), and the crow represents unjust “Jim Crow” laws. The flags on the crow’s feet represent Nazi Germany and Japan. Because the NAACP hand is holding the crow (and its feet) as one entity over the fire, the poster shows the NAACP’s opposition to both foreign fascist movements that promote racism and domestic racism (which are all related to one another).

- What do you notice about color, placement, or other artistic choices related to the images?

The colors are black, white, and red, which are reminiscent of terror and of the Nazi party. This increases the urgency of the poster, as does the centrality and large size of the violent image. In sum, these artistic choices invoke an emotional response based on fear.

Text Features: Finally, think about *how* the text is presented on the page and jot notes below.

- What do you notice about text size, placement, use of bold or italics, capitalization, color, etc.?

Responses may vary here, but one of the more striking text feature choices seems to be the red lettering in “TOTAL,” which emphasizes the overall message of the poster that peace abroad is not enough (racism needs to be snuffed out at home as well). Students might also talk about the size and capitalization of “Jim Crow” (and other elements intended to get attention) versus the smaller details of the event specifics.

Evaluating the Overall Effect.

- What do you think are the goals of this poster?
- What message is the NAACP trying to send?
- Who might be the audience?

Responses will vary, but students can write about how this poster is intended to highlight the hypocrisy of fighting for peace abroad while ignoring deep injustices at home and to rally more people to support the NAACP cause of advancing equity for people of color in the United States. The audience may be those who are already aware of injustices at home and ready to take action with the NAACP, but may also be those who are already sympathetic to the war efforts abroad but who may not yet recognize the ways injustices are perpetuated domestically.