Name Date

Thomas Nast: Political Cartoonist

Many people think Thomas Nast was one of the most important American political cartoonists who ever lived. His cartoons appeared in many national publications, and thousands of people saw them. Nast commented on issues he felt Americans should be concerned about. Like all political cartoonists, he used humor to get his point across. His symbols and caricatures (drawings of people with exaggerated features) attracted attention and helped explain important ideas.

The cartoon below is Nast's drawing of William Marcy "Boss" Tweed. Nast was determined to put a stop to Tweed's corrupt politics, so he set out to show the people what a wicked man Tweed was. Study the image and its caption and figure out what Nast was trying to say about Tweed. **Remember, to understand a political cartoon you must first consider what the symbols represent, and then try to make sense of the overall meaning.**

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

1. Who was Boss Tweed, and why did Nast dislike him? _____
_____

2. What does the money bag symbolize? _____

3. Looking at how the different parts of the cartoon work together (including the caption), what do you think Nast was trying to say in this cartoon? _____
_____

4. Why was Tweed more concerned about these negative cartoons than he was about the nasty articles and editorials published in the same newspapers? _____
_____

5. Imagine that you are a citizen of New York City in the 1870s. Using the back of this sheet, write a letter to the editor of the newspaper in which this cartoon appeared. In your letter, answer the question posed in the caption. Do you support or oppose Tweed and his political machine? _____