Supporting Information for Cover Analysis


- This *Harper's* illustration responded to a bill in the New York legislature that proposed to fine and imprison anyone who hired Chinese contract workers. It accompanied a column dismissing the alleged threat of a “Chinese invasion.”
- The female figure dressed in a classically draped gown is Columbia, a figure favored by the illustrator to personify America (much like how Uncle Sam is used to personify the U.S. government) resembling a Greek or Roman goddess. In more recent times, the Statue of Liberty is used to personify America instead of Columbia.
- Nast utilizes a technique where he plasters current controversy on a wall of public protest; the text on the wall behind the Chinese man and Columbia represents popular hate speech common at the time (dictionaries may be useful for this analysis)
- The figure in front of the mob on the right side of the illustration is supposed to look like a typical tough Irish labor leader, but dressed in unusually fancy clothes
- The sign on the right reads, “If our ballot will not stop them coming to our country, the bullet must.”

“The First Blow at the Chinese Question” – 5 December 1877 by George Frederick Keller for *The San Francisco Illustrated Wasp*

- The readers of the Wasp (WASP = White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) were terrified that cheap Chinese labor would lead to widespread White unemployment. They expected the Wasp to reflect their views.
- This was the cover of the weekly’s labor issue and was its first (of many) anti-Chinese, pro-White labor cover.
- The Chinese figure on the far left likely represents a bystander rather than a poster.
- The man throwing the punch is wearing a trade apron, demonstrating he is a laborer.

Questions to consider as you view each cover:

- What is “the Chinese question” and how does this illustration attempt to answer it?
- What do you see? Who do the figures represent?
- Are the figures drawn in ways that are not realistic? How do their depictions reveal ethnic/cultural stereotypes of the time period?
- Consider the ways that bodies are positioned and that facial features, clothing, and other details may be drawn. Are any features or characteristics exaggerated? Why?
- Are there any symbols present? What is the significance of the symbol(s)?
- Compare the images in the forefront to what is in the background. Is this significant? Do another comparison that examines the images on the left side and the images on the right side.
- What is the message the illustration is delivering? What text supports this message?
- These illustrations are done in black in white. Look at them again and find places where the contrast between black and white are very strong. Do you think this was done intentionally? Why?
Source Citations

The First Blow at the Chinese Question, "The San Francisco Illustrated Wasp," December 5, 1877 by George Frederick Keller