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Rhode Island GSEs:

- HP 1-1; HP 1-2; HP 1-3; HP 2-1; HP 2-2; HP 2-3
- C&G 1-1; C&G 1-2; C&G 3-2

Skills:

- Critical analysis
- Critical thinking
- Discussion
- Evaluating arguments
- Historical analysis
- Interpretation
- Making inferences and drawing conclusions
- Online research
- Representing ideas and information orally, graphically and in writing
- Using primary sources
- Writing skills

Preparation Instructions:

- The night before the class students should be instructed to read and take notes on the introduction to the digital edition of the Thomas Wilson Dorr's Prison correspondence. Students should also watch the short documentary on the homepage of the Dorr Rebellion Project website and take a look at the [description](#) from the Library of Congress for the famous political cartoon included above.

Lesson Activity #1 (30 minutes):

- Since there are 15 letters Thomas Dorr sent to his mother Lydia, students should be paired up and one letter assigned to each group. Students should make three columns on a sheet of paper. The first column should be labeled "*Health.*" Students will find that Dorr often spent a spilled a considerable amount of ink describing his physical ailments. Students should chart the level of detail Dorr went into with his mother, taking careful note of the mention of physical afflictions and pain, along with mentions of the actions of physicians and the prison warden. The second column should be labeled "*Family.*" The prison correspondence offers a unique glimpse into the Dorr family. Students should look for mention of Dorr's father Sullivan, his brothers Henry and Sullivan, Jr, along his sisters and brother-in-laws. Sullivan Dorr, Sr. was working actively behind the scenes for the release of his son. The third column on the sheet should be labeled "*Politics.*" A political animal by nature, Dorr could not help but follow the political events in Rhode Island and the nation at large. In terms of national politics, Dorr's imprisonment became part and parcel of the 1844 presidential election. An important element of the discussion in many of the letters is the various groups that were attempting to secure Dorr's release from prison. Students will notice that female Dorrites were actively working for Dorr's liberation. Students should pay attention to what conditions Thomas Dorr demanded for a release order to happen.

Lesson Activity #2 (25 minutes):

- Once the students have completed their work in pairs, a representative should post 1-2 items of importance from each of the three columns on the main board in the class. The teacher will need to write out the three categories. Once each group has added to the large board, the teacher should lead a discussion based on the information on the board.

Lesson Activity #3 (20 minutes):

- Upon completion of the board activity, students should be directed to use their textbooks to find out information about the Democratic party from 1844-1860. Students should try to see if they can make any connections between the Dorrite ideology of the right of the people's to alter and abolish a form of government and major national issues. A point of focus should be Lewis Cass's run for the presidency in 1848 and the efforts of Senator Stephen Douglas to use popular sovereignty to settle the question of the westward expansion of slavery in 1854.

Lesson Extension:

- For homework students should read the essay by Erik J. Chaput and Russell J. DeSimone on Newport County and the Dorr Rebellion. Chaput and DeSimone devote considerable attention to the year 1844 in their essay. A link to the essay can be found in the Resources Section of the website.