Bell Ringer: The Gilded Age Part 1

Instructions: Examine the picture. Read the background information. Answer the questions below.

Background: William "Boss" Tweed was mayor of New York City in the late 1860s and early 1970s. Many believed he was a corrupt leader who used his office for personal gain rather than to help his citizens. In a corrupt deal, he charged the city $13,000,000.00 in taxpayer money to build a court house that really only cost $3,000,000.00. After Tweed paid the contractor, the contractor gave Tweed money back from the deal for Tweed to keep. This corrupt transaction meant the contractor got more money and Tweed illegally had access to the profits. Tweed was arrested for the corrupt deal; yet, he escaped and fled to Europe. He was later recaptured.

1. How does the artist want you to view “Boss Tweed,” based on the depiction the artist drew above?

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2. During his term in office, Tweed wanted to build a new court house. Yet, the way he did so was illegal. Explain how Tweed’s tactics in this transaction were corrupt and illegal.

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Answers:

1. How does the artist want you to view “Boss Tweed,” based on the depiction the artist drew above? The artist clearly wants you to view Boss Tweed as greedy, selfish, corrupt, and materialistic. This is why Tweed’s head is depicted as a money bag.

2. During his term in office, Tweed wanted to build a new court house. Yet, the way he did so was illegal. Explain how Tweed’s tactics in this transaction were corrupt and illegal. Tweed charged the city $13,000,000.00 in tax payer money to build a court house that really only cost $3,000,000.00. After Tweed paid the contractor, the contractor gave Tweed money back from the deal for Tweed to keep. This transaction meant the contractor got more money and Tweed illegally had access to the profits. Due to lying about the amount the court house actually cost and the fact that Tweed illegally got to keep profits from the deal, it is clear that this transaction was corrupt and illegal.