

Discussion Guide



Directions: Discuss the following questions with your partner(s).

1. What problems did Boss Tweed and his political machine attempt to address in New York? Why did he have the opportunity to provide corrupt services to the immigrants of New York?
2. Boss Tweed held a large number of political offices in the local and state governments. Do you think he was interested in public service to serve the public good and health of civil society, or did he have a different motive in mind?
3. What services did he provide for the immigrants of New York? Did it matter to the immigrants if these services were provided legitimately or whether they were part of the corruption of the Tweed Ring?
4. What are some examples of the avarice of the Tweed Ring? How did the greed of the Tweed Ring contribute to the corruption of the political system? How were projects that benefitted the city and its inhabitants associated with the corruption of the Tweed Ring?
5. In what ways did the people of New York continue to benefit from Tweed's projects even after the Tweed Ring was exposed and removed from power?
6. Did Boss Tweed accept justice for his greed and illegal activities? Did he take responsibility for his actions? Or, did he seek to evade justice and responsibility to the end of his life? Explain your answers.
7. How did the press help put an end to the corruption of the Tweed Ring? What is the role of a free press in a free society and constitutional republic? To what extent do you think that journalists in newspapers, television, and on-line have maintained high standards of professional journalism and the commitment to a healthy, free society? In what ways have they succeeded or failed? Give examples to support your answer.
8. Political cartoonists like Thomas Nast still question the integrity of the public actions and personal actions of politicians today. Look at some examples of recent political cartoons and think about the following items:
 - a. What symbols do they use that are recognizable by most Americans?
 - b. What topics are they targeting in their satires?
 - c. What are some common themes from the commentary about today's politics and society?
9. Why is avarice, or greed, so destructive to a healthy political system and civil society?