



LESSON PLAN

Level:	Grades 10 to 12
About the Author:	This unit was created by Todd Solar as part of a Media Education course taught by John Pungente at the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, 1992.

Political Cartoons

Overview

In this lesson, students decode and explain the relevance of editorial cartoons. The class begins with a teacher-led deconstruction of a political cartoon, after which students decode editorial cartoons that they have selected. Suggested activities include having students create their own cartoons; a comparison of how editorial cartoons from different countries address the same issue; a current events timeline composed of editorial cartoons collected throughout the school year; and a visit to a cartoonist's studio.

Learning Outcomes

- to enable students to
- decode political cartoons and explain their relevance
- discuss similarities and differences between various cartoons, grouped thematically or chronologically.
- create their own political cartoons
- describe the process of designing a political cartoon

Materials

Collect political cartoons from newspapers. The larger your collection, the easier it will be to carry out the unit.

Procedure

Activities

1. Decoding and Understanding the Political Cartoon

(With the entire class)

- Define "political": that which is concerned with public affairs or government
- Define "cartoon": a sketch or drawing that interests or amuses by portraying persons, things, political events or situations etc. in an exaggerated way



(With full class participation or small-group discussion)

- Show students a political cartoon and ask them to answer the following questions:
 - What's your emotional reaction to this cartoon? Does it make you laugh, or feel angry, sad or concerned? Do you feel only one emotion or several at the same time?
 - Identify the message or main idea in the cartoon that triggered your emotional response. Decode the message by using the following method:
 1. Scrutinize the characters. Can you name them by drawing on your knowledge of local and world events?
 2. Examine the characters' attire and other visual clues. For example:
 - **facial expressions:** does the character's face convey anger, fear, intrigue etc.?
 - **complexion:** describe the character's facial appearance (clean-cut and shaven, scruffy etc.)
 - **body expression and appearance:** describe the character's physical appearance (slouched, arms waving frantically, small stature, broad and bold body etc.)
 - **attire:** what is the character wearing? (suit and tie, underwear, hats etc.)
 - **exaggeration of facial or physical characteristics:** compared to a photograph (e.g., chins, mouths, bulging eyes, long noses etc.)
 3. Identify objects you see in the cartoon (buildings, fences, something the character is holding). Notice words on the objects and background features (sky, walls, water).
 4. Discuss the main ideas expressed in the cartoon's text. Is there a common theme?
 - Pulling it together Do categories 1-4 complement each other? If so, how? Identify the main issues. Are they local, regional or global? Do you notice any use of stereotypes or relevant symbolism?
 - What effect does the cartoon have upon the audience? (Remember your first reactions and compare them with your classmates'.) What message is being conveyed by the media? (Positive? Negative?) Discuss.
 - Do you notice any other outstanding qualities that have not been mentioned?

2. Lecture or small groups

Present a selection of political cartoons relating to a central theme. (For example: national unity, the economy, situation in Bosnia, perceptions of a Prime Minister.) Examine the cartoons, as in Activity 1. Keep the ideas in chronological order. Note the similarities and differences between cartoons and the ways in which they relate to the main theme.

3. Individual

Have students collect political cartoons of personal interest and examine them, according to the questions set forth in Activity 1.



4. Individual

Have students pick a theme and draw a political cartoon, using the questions in Activity 1 as a guideline.

5. Small-group or open-ended class discussion

Examine political cartoons from various local papers, regions of Canada or foreign countries. Do the papers have similar or differing views of issues? Why? Compare and discuss what the cartoons from various regions or countries say about the audience, media and themes addressed.

6. Class project

Collect political cartoons for the entire school year beginning with day one and place them on the walls as a time line chart. (Note the date and newspaper for future reference.)

7. Take a field trip to observe a cartoonist designing a political cartoon from origin to publication.

(Alternatively, you could bring her/him as a guest speaker to your school.) Ask students to develop, in advance, the questions they would like answered.

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated through individual marked assignments, class participation and a political cartoonist log of the entire unit.

Feedback

Monitor students constantly for little yawns of boredom, smiles or signs of excitement, as a way to rate your success. Redesign the program if unsuccessful. Keep up the good work, if all goes well!

