

Progressive Era Editorial Cartoons

See a lesson plan related to this material on the Wisconsin Historical Society website.



Political Cartoons - Cartoon Analysis

Adapted from *Using and Analyzing Political Cartoons* by the Department of School and Group Services – The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation



The Elements of Political Cartoons

Introducing the Concept	Editorial cartoons are NOT just like other comics. They may be funny, but their main purpose is to offer an opinion or point of view about some issue or problem in the news.
Symbolism	A symbol is any object or design that stands for some other thing, person, or idea.
Exaggeration and Distortion	Changes in size or shape often add to the cartoon's point. Distorting an object means changing it in some way to make it look funny, ugly, etc.
Stereotypes	A stereotype is a simplistic view of some group. It is often insulting, but it can also help the cartoon make its point quickly
Caricature	Caricature is a portrayal of an individual's features in an exaggerated or distorted way.
Humor and Irony	Humor is important in many editorial cartoons. Irony is one kind of humor. In it, a viewpoint is expressed in such an odd way as to make that view actually seem ridiculous.
Captions	Words are used to reinforce the cartoon's nonverbal features. Words help the other parts of the cartoon make one overall point. Famous sayings, slogans, song lyrics, and well-known phrases can be used as captions.

See more classroom materials and lesson plans on the Wisconsin Historical Society website.