

Visual Literacy and Political Cartoons

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Standards

IL-ISBE-ELA-CC-2010.K-12.W.R.6

Production and Distribution of Writing: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

IL-ISBE-ELA-CC-2010.K-12.SL.1

Comprehension and Collaboration: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

IL-ISBE-ELA-CC-2010.K-12.SL.2

Comprehension and Collaboration: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

IL-ISBE-ELA-CC-2010.7.R.L.7

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (e.g., lighting, sound, color, or camera focus and angles in a film).

IL-ISBE-ELA-CC-2010.7.R.I.7

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium's portrayal of the subject (e.g., how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of the words).

Resources

[The Cartoon Analysis Checklist](#)

This checklist, developed by Jonathan Burack, will aid students in becoming skilled interpreters of political cartoons and see the relationship of them in history. The core components this checklist includes are: 1. Symbol and Metaphor 2. Visual Distortion 3. Irony in Words and Images 4. Stereotype and Caricature 5. An Argument Not a Slogan 6. The Uses and Misuses of Political Cartoons

[Teacher Core Concepts Notes and Discussion Questions](#)

Using this handout, the teacher can show the cartoon to the students and then explain the meaning behind the cartoon. Then explain how the cartoon relates to the checklist students will be given to evaluate the cartoons they are comparing. Dissuasion questions are also included to spark a classroom discussion.

Overview and Rationale

Political cartoons are more than entertainment, they portray an important time in history. They were designed to impact and shape the public opinion, show support for the cause, expose the

opponent, share a person's belief and motivate others. They offer insights to the public's mood of the time period and provide the underlying assumptions of the attitude towards events of the past.

Teaching students to understand and read political cartoons is highly important for student's to understand symbolism, literary allusions and exaggerations. Looking towards the past, the students will also be able to witness and understand the class and racial biases, customs of the time period and social attitudes. They will be able to make connections and compare and contrast events from the past to current events. When they compare the past to the present, students will be able to see the social differences and make inferences as to how and why the society has changed.

Within this lesson, students will be comparing past and present political cartoons and explain their affects on society.

Objectives

Students will:

1. Compare and contrast political cartoons of the present and past.
2. Explaining the central meaning the political cartoon is portraying.
3. Provide an explanations of the core concepts (1.symbol and metaphor, 2.visual distortion, 3.irony in words and images, 4.stereotype and caricature, 5.an argument not a slogan and 6.the uses of misuses of political concepts) using the Cartoon Analysis Checklist.

Materials

- Political cartoons of the past (15)
- Present political cartoons (15)
- Cartoon analysis checklist (26)
- Teacher handout (Teacher core concepts and discussion questions) (1)
- Vinn Diagram template (15)
- Teacher example handout (26)
- Projector, overhead, or SmartBoard (To show the political cartoon examples from the teacher core concepts notes and discussion questions)

Procedure

Introductory Activity/Anticipatory Set:

1. Start with a class discussion to see if they read the local newspaper or if anyone reads the cartoon section. How often?
2. Show them a political cartoon from the local newspaper (**NOTE** The Peoria Journal Star had political cartoons in the newspaper and online)

3. Ask them to interpret what the cartoon is trying to portray? Point out that people may have different opinions and see different things in the cartoons.
4. Ask them why they think politics use cartoons to spread messages? (Connect that a lot of people read the cartoon sections of the newspaper)

Lesson:

1. Introduce the lesson using the teacher core concepts notes and discussion questions. Go over each of the political cartoons and explaining how to use the components of the checklist and explain how to interpret them. (**NOTE**The political cartoon examples should be shown on a PowerPoint, smart board, projector or overhead so the students will be able to see the cartoon clearly)
2. Break the students into groups of two.
3. Have the groups choose one of the political cartoons of the past and one present political cartoon.
4. Using the cartoon analysis checklist (one for each student) have the students evaluate each of their political cartoons in each of the categories and write their responses on a separate piece of paper. Also, have the students discuss with their partner the central message of the cartoon.
5. Using a Venn diagram template, have the students compare and contrast the similarities and differences between the past and present cartoons. (Each group will complete one diagram together)

Closure:

1. Provide each student with the student sample handout (found below) of the political cartoon and discussion questions (Teacher made)
2. Have a short discussion about that political cartoon and answer the discussion questions
3. For homework, have the students research and find their own political cartoon using the Library of Congress website. Then write a short summary answering questions similar to the discussion questions from the teachers example.

Analysis

What do you see?

What is happening?

What did you see first?

What are the emotions of the individuals?

Any cultural differences?

Time period?

What do you feel when you look at this photo?



Critical Thinking

Does this picture tell a story?

Is this an important picture?

Why is this picture important?

Summarize what you see.

Adaptations

- For students who have visual impairments, larger printed handouts will be provided
- For students who have learning disabilities, a more detailed list of step by step instructions will be provided with a greater teacher assistance
- For students who have time management issues, a checklist of the step by step process will be provided

Assessment

Assessment will be taken from:

- Cartoon Analysis Checklist Responses (group project, individual response)
- Venn Diagram (group project)
- Political Cartoon Research Project (individual homework)

This activity will be considered a success if each of the three projects have been completed with more than 75% accuracy from 90% of the students.