

The Right to Arm Bears: Political Cartoons on the Topic of Gun Violence

PURPOSE

To identify, analyze, and use the persuasive techniques employed in political cartoons.

GRADE LEVELS

Middle School
High School

CONTENT AREAS

English/Language Arts
Social Studies
Art

TIME

1 class period

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Students will define persuasive techniques associated with creating political cartoons.
- Students will analyze political cartoons for use of persuasive techniques and symbolism.
- Students will use critical thinking skills and persuasive techniques to create a political cartoon.

STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS

Fine Arts State Goals 25A, 26A, 26B, 27A, 27B
English Language Arts State Goals 1C, 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B, 3C
Social Sciences State Goals 16A, 18A

LEARNING STYLES

Visual/Spatial
Interpersonal
Intrapersonal

MATERIALS

Cartoon Analysis Worksheet
Cartoon Analysis Worksheet Teacher's Guide
Cartoon Examples
Cartoon Examples Teacher's Guide
Political Cartoon Project handout

VOCABULARY

Political Cartoon
Symbolism
Captioning and Labels
Analogy
Irony
Juxtaposition
Exaggeration
Caricature

ASSESSMENT

Political Cartoon Project

ACTIVITIES

Anticipatory Set

- Ask students to draw one or two symbols with which they are familiar. Have students silently exchange their drawings and try to identify the meanings of each other's symbols. (Ideas: Dollar sign to represent money, golden arches to represent McDonald's, swoosh to represent Nike, etc.) Discuss the use of images by asking the following questions:
 - How can images sometimes be more powerful than words?
 - How can pictures convey a message?
 - What is a symbol? (Define.)

Lesson:

- Explain that symbolism is one component used to create meaning in political cartoons and that students will be learning about other techniques used.
- Define the following terms and have students copy into their notes:
 - **Political Cartoon:** an illustration or comic strip containing a political or social message, that usually relates to current events or personalities
 - **Symbolism:** using an object or image to stand for an idea
 - **Captioning and Labels:** used to emphasize or clearly state a message
 - **Analogy:** a comparison between two different things that share certain characteristics
 - **Irony:** a difference between what takes place in reality and what is expected
 - **Juxtaposition:** positioning images or objects side by side to compare or contrast them
 - **Exaggeration:** overstating or enlarging a problem, feature, or habit to emphasize it; when done with physical features of a person, this is called **caricature**.
- Pass out the **Cartoon Analysis Worksheet** and work through it as a class, using the **Cartoon Analysis Teacher's Guide**.
- Pass out the **Cartoon Examples** handout and have students work in groups to complete an analysis of each cartoon, referring to their **Cartoon Analysis Worksheet** and the definitions in their notes.
- Go over the examples as a class, using the **Cartoon Examples Teacher's Guide** for reference.

Debrief/Assessment:

- Debrief by asking students why political cartoons may be useful for making people think about political and governmental issues and current events:
 - They provide readers with additional viewpoints on a given topic other than their own
 - They assume readers have enough background information to understand the message
 - They emphasize one side of an issue or concern
 - They utilize humor to draw attention and communicate their message
 - They rely on visuals and symbols to make their point
- Pass out the **Political Cartoon Project** handout and read the instructions as a class. You may wish to have students create their political cartoons for homework or set aside an additional class period for students to work on them. The assignment offers students two options for students to create their cartoons: draw (recommended for art classes) or use an online generator site: <http://www.funnytimes.com/playground/pghelp.php>
- Be sure to allow students to share and analyze each other's finished cartoons.

Resources:

For art classes or students who will be creating their cartoon by hand, you may wish to provide the following tips:

- Experiment with your figures by enlarging or stretching part of an image to draw attention to it.
- Use lines effectively. Straight, bold lines can express anger while curvy lines seem more playful or gentle.
- Use tracing paper to make changes without drawing the whole thing again.
- Flip your drawing around to see if it works better from another angle.
- Add shading to make an image funnier, more interesting, or easier to see.
- Add details. Draw background to suggest context and place.
- Try using different textures of paper or color.

- Add a caption or dialogue to help clarify your message. Decide if a bubble or square box fits the characters and message best.
- Use pencil and then trace with black ink for the final draft, adding color at the end if you'd like.

Suggestions for Extension Activities:

1. Have students submit their cartoons for publishing to a school or community newsletter.
2. Have a Gallery Walk: Post the cartoons around the classroom and allow students to leave notes on sticky notes for the artist.
3. In lieu of current event assignments, ask students to find and report on political cartoons about current events and issues.
4. In an English classroom, create political cartoons related to the characters and conflicts in a work of literature as an alternative assessment.
5. To process major events and deal with conflict resolution in the school environment, have students create political cartoons to explore different sides of a problem.