

Lesson Title: Political Cartoons: Making Government a Little More Fun

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Key Curriculum Words: Political Cartoon, Satire, Propaganda

Grade Level: 12th Grade

Time Allotted: 90 min.

Purpose/Rationale for teaching this Lesson (So what?):

As high school students become adults and get closer to voting age, they need to be informed about the political and social issues on which they need to decide. It is vital for students to learn how to evaluate messages portrayed in the news, no matter what form they come in, because that is where many influences come from. Political cartoons are a bit of news media that can serve to help simplify complex and/or controversial issues. So if students can learn to critically think about and analyze political cartoons, they will have an easier time making decisions about the issues they face.

Key Concepts/Definitions of this Lesson:

1. Political Cartoon – image or series of images that are designed to comment on contemporary political issues through imagery
2. Satire – the use of irony, sarcasm, ridicule, or the like, in exposing, denouncing, or deriding vice, folly, etc.
3. Propaganda – material disseminated by the advocates or opponents of a doctrine or cause

Background Paragraph for this Lesson (How does this lesson fit within a unit of study?

What came before this lesson, and what will come after this lesson)

It is vital to begin a course on United States Government with the history and influences that shaped it. But, before anyone can analyze political issues and government, they must be able to understand and interpret the information about those issues and the government, no matter what form they come in. To do this, students would be introduced to a variety of news media and learn analysis methods for each. Once the critical thinking and analysis skills necessary to study government are fully developed, the students can be introduced to the beginning topics of the class.

Virginia Standard of Learning Objective (Unpacked)

GOVT.1 The student will demonstrate mastery of the social studies skills citizenship requires, including the ability to
c) <u>analyze political cartoons</u> , political advertisements, pictures, and other graphic media

NCSS Themes associated with this lesson/explaining statement

NCSS Theme X Civic Ideals and Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An understanding of civic ideals and practices of citizenship is critical to full participation in society and is a central purpose of the social studies.• High school students increasingly recognize the rights and responsibilities of citizens in identifying societal needs, setting directions for public policies, and working to support both individual dignity and the common good. They learn by experience how to participate in community service and political activities and how to use democratic process to influence public policy.• Political cartoons provide information and opinions on many issues on which informed citizens must be aware of and make decisions on, so if students know how to interpret and analyze political cartoons they will have one of the skills vital to citizenship.

Enduring (Big, Profound) Questions:

1. Are political cartoons a viable source of political information or just propaganda?

Facts/Concepts you want students to learn in this lesson:

- Why political cartoon are created
- What uses there are for political cartoons
- When political cartoons are satire and when they become propaganda

Skills you want students to learn in this lesson:

- How to interpret primary sources.
- How to analyze and interpret images
- How to form opinions on contemporary issues

Values/attitudes associated with this lesson:

- Citizenship – interpreting political cartoons is important to being an informed citizen

Guiding Questions--Student Questions that will Guide Your Teaching:

- Why do people create political cartoons?
- What are the uses of political cartoons?
- What is the difference between satire and propaganda?
- Is a political cartoon satire or propaganda?

Lesson Objectives:

1. Students will be able to analyze political cartoons and explain their meaning.
2. Students will be able to identify political cartoons' authors' points of view.
3. Students will critically think about the message of political cartoons.
4. Students will be able to list and explain the techniques of political cartoonists.

Materials/Resources/Technologies (Include copies of materials you use, and historical references.):

- Historical Resources: (copies included below)

- Material A: “Join or Die.” Archiving Early America. 1996-2007. 2 Dec. 2007. <<http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/firsts/cartoon/snake.html>>
- Material B: “Cartoon Analysis Guide.” It’s No Laughing Matter: Analyzing Political Cartoons. 2 Dec. 2007. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/learn/features/political_cartoon/cag.html>
- Materials C-G: “Today’s Cartoons at a Glance.” The Association of American Editorial Cartoonists. 2005-2007. 2 Dec. 2007. <<http://editorialcartoonists.com/cartoon/>>
- Material H: “Learning Activity Module.” It’s No Laughing Matter: Analyzing Political Cartoons. 2 Dec. 2007. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/learn/features/political_cartoon/model.html>

Procedures/Process/Activities used to teach lesson

- a. The hook—the 5-7 minute high interest lesson introduction that connects this lesson to previously-learned content
 - The class will be shown the political cartoon “Join or Die” and the teacher will give a brief background on the cartoon.
 - Students will be asked to write what they interpret the political cartoon to mean and any questions they have
 - The class will discuss the meanings and questions the students come up with
- b. Lesson activities (what you do, and what students do. Include all handouts and/or outlines of your notes, Power Points, etc.)
 - The teacher will hand out a list of techniques political cartoonists often use with definitions and brief explanations as well as several questions to help guide student inquiry.
 - The class will discuss the terms and any questions the students have.
 - The teacher will show the class a series of five political cartoons on contemporary issues and the students will be asked to write three questions about content, imagery, and/or message for each cartoon.
 - The teacher will then, through either the use of a projector or Smartboard, lead the class through the online activity found at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/learn/features/political_cartoon/model.html to allow students to see how the techniques provided at the beginning of class are actually used.
 - The teacher will then go back and show the class each of the five political cartoons again.
 - After each cartoon is viewed, the class will discuss how the five techniques are used in each cartoon.
- c. Lesson Closure (how you appropriately end the lesson)
 - Once all of the cartoons have been analyzed, the students will divide the questions they wrote about the cartoons into three categories based on topic (Cartoon’s message, Subject of the cartoon, and Use of images and/or artistic techniques).
 - The students will answer all of the questions they have written to the best of their ability and will show their answers to the teacher as an “exit slip” for class.

Differentiation strategies—meeting diverse learner needs

A. No curriculum differentiation

B. Instructional differentiation

- Linguistic intelligence – students will be asked to listen, speak, and write about the topics of the lesson
- Visual-spatial intelligence – political cartoons and artistic techniques will be the main topics of the lesson
- Interpersonal intelligence – the class will have the opportunity to talk about topics at several different points in the lesson
- Intrapersonal intelligence – students will be asked to interpret and analyze images and make their own opinions based on what they think and how they understand the information they see

C. No assessment differentiation

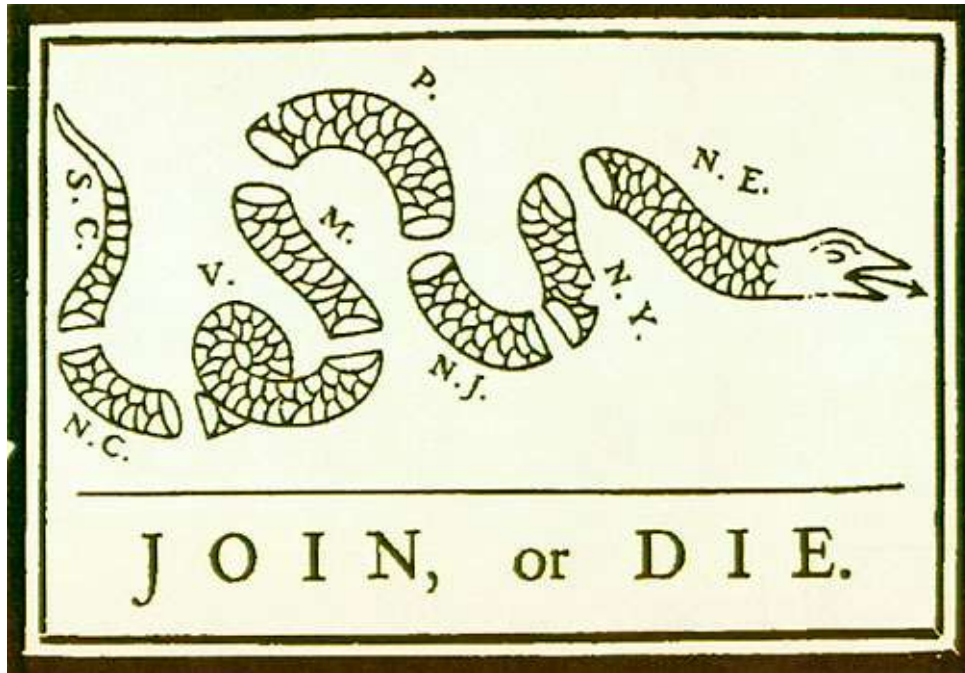
Assessment Strategies—Informal

- Teacher’s observation of students’ work during class activities
- Students’ engagement and participation (i.e. note taking, asking questions) in class discussion and activities

Assessment Strategies—Formal

- Student answers to questions to be checked by the teacher as an “exit slip” for class and graded for completion

Material A: "Join or Die"



Material B: Political Cartoonist Techniques and Guiding Questions

Symbolism:

Cartoonists use simple objects, or **symbols**, to stand for larger concepts or ideas.

After you identify the symbols in a cartoon, think about what the cartoonist intends each symbol to stand for.

Exaggeration:

Sometimes cartoonists overdo, or **exaggerate**, the physical characteristics of people or things in order to make a point.

When you study a cartoon, look for any characteristics that seem overdone or overblown. (Facial characteristics and clothing are some of the most commonly exaggerated characteristics.) Then, try to decide what point the cartoonist was trying to make through exaggeration.

Labeling:

Cartoonists often **label** objects or people to make it clear exactly what they stand for. Watch out for the different labels that appear in a cartoon, and ask yourself why the cartoonist chose to label that particular person or object. Does the label make the meaning of the object more clear?

Analogy:

An **analogy** is a comparison between two unlike things that share some characteristics. By comparing a complex issue or situation with a more familiar one, cartoonists can help their readers see it in a different light.

After you've studied a cartoon for a while, try to decide what the cartoon's main analogy is. What two situations does the cartoon compare? Once you understand the main analogy, decide if this comparison makes the cartoonist's point more clear to you.

Irony

Irony is the difference between the ways things are and the way things should be, or the way things are expected to be. Cartoonists often use irony to express their opinion on an issue. When you look at a cartoon, see if you can find any irony in the situation the cartoon depicts. If you can, think about what point the irony might be intended to emphasize. Does the irony help the cartoonist express his or her opinion more effectively?

Once you've identified the persuasive techniques that the cartoonist used, ask yourself:

What issue is this political cartoon about?

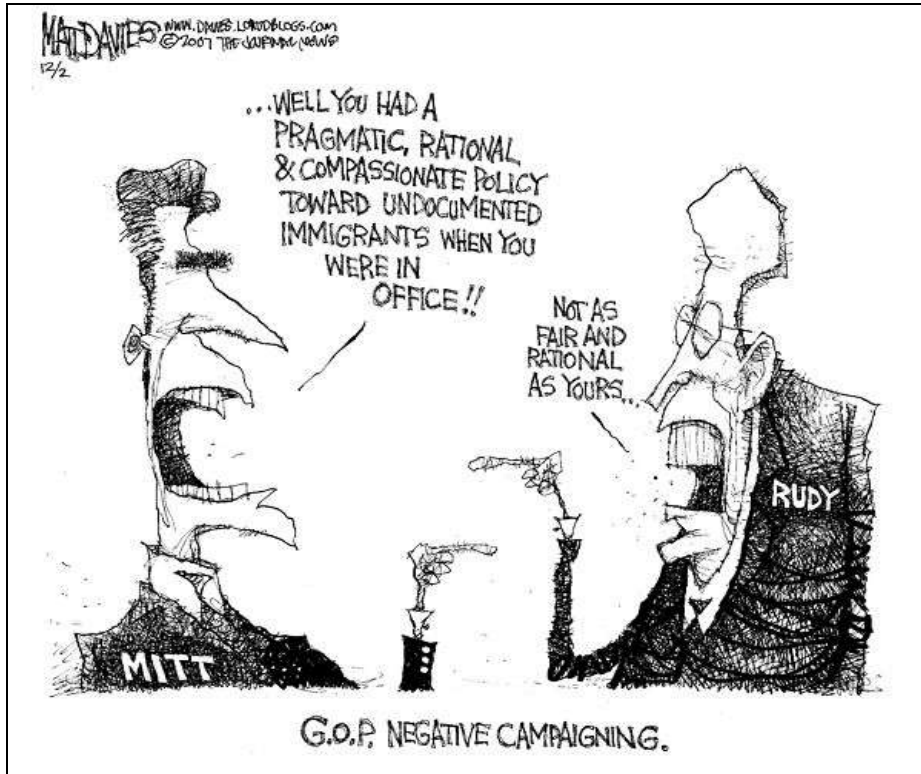
What is the cartoonist's opinion on this issue?

What other opinion can you imagine another person having on this issue?

Did you find this cartoon persuasive? Why or why not?

What other techniques could the cartoonist have used to make this cartoon more persuasive?

Material C: Political Cartoon #1



Material D: Political Cartoon #2



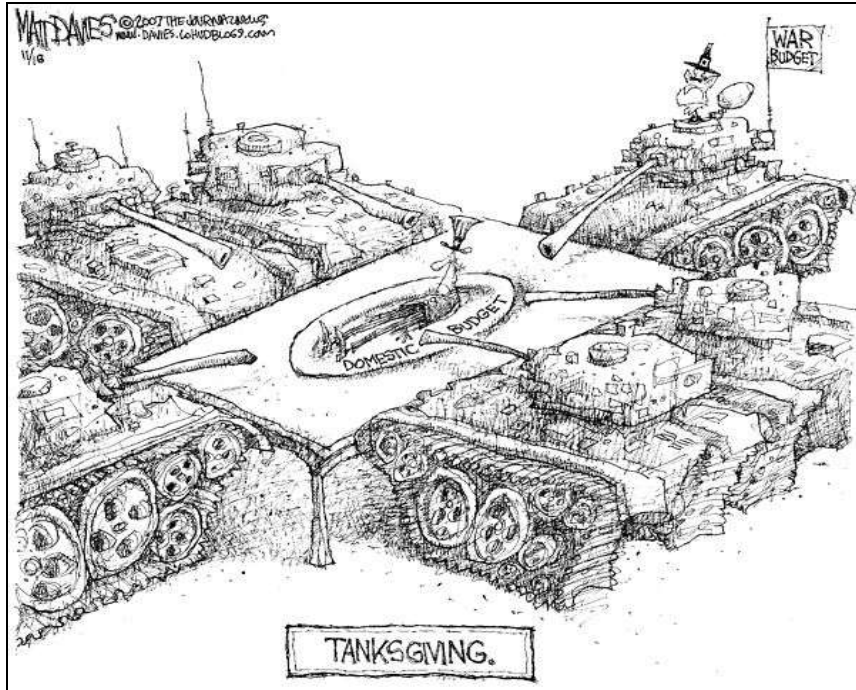
Material E: Political Cartoon #3



Material F: Political Cartoon #4



Material G: Political Cartoon #5



Material H: Web Activity Link

http://lcweb2.loc.gov/learn/features/political_cartoon/model.html