



## Analyze a cartoon

uncovering the techniques used by an artist when creating a political cartoon to convey a particular message

targeted

adaptable

Primary

Intermediate

Middle

Senior

### Learning outcomes

- understand that political or editorial cartoons can provide valuable insights about contemporary or historical attitudes and values
- understand techniques used in cartoons
- interpret the message that political cartoons may convey

### When to use the strategy

- analyze the writer's intent behind a political cartoon (e.g., what message the cartoon is conveying and how the techniques used help to convey that message)
- infer the meaning of a scientific illustration or cartoon (e.g., what issues are being raised about a particular scientific method or lack thereof)
- analyze the use of the techniques in graphic novels or comic books
- identify stereotypes portrayed in a cartoon
- draw conclusions about the author's background and perspective in cartoons
- prepare to create a cartoon

### How to use the strategy

#### Prior knowledge

- knowledge of the time period that the cartoon was created (e.g., knowledge of the time period will give information on particular issues that the cartoon might be addressing)
- knowledge of the events featured in the cartoon or context of the cartoon

#### Ideas to emphasize

- Political cartoons can provide a valuable source of historical insight.
- Cartoons need to be "read" to be understood.
- Just as authors use writing techniques to communicate their message, cartoonists employ similar techniques, including:
  - a caption: a sentence or phrase that is the title for the cartoon
  - a label: words in the drawing to identify people or objects
  - relative size: figures are drawn much larger or smaller than others
  - light and dark: use of dark shading and white space to create an effect
  - composition: the arrangement or location of figures or objects in the cartoon
  - symbolism: a sign or object used to represent something else
  - caricature: a distorted, oversimplified or exaggerated representation of a figure.

#### Instructional suggestions

- Provide cartoons and invite students to find examples of each of the techniques.
- Discuss the impact and message each of the techniques may convey.



# Analyze a cartoon

uncovering the techniques used by an artist when creating a political cartoon to convey a particular message

## Purpose

This strategy helps me understand how various cartooning techniques are used to convey a message.

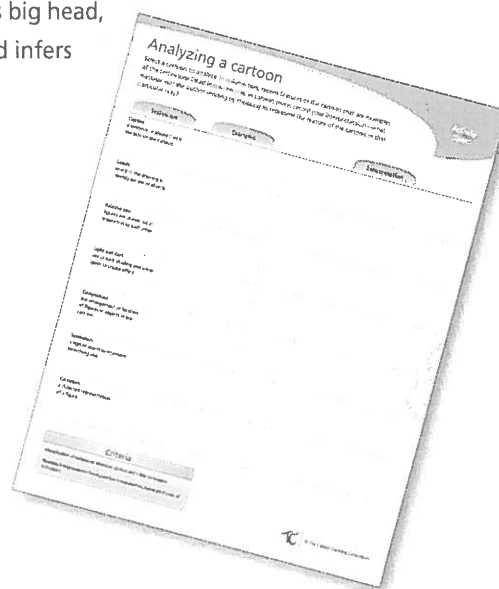
### Instructions

- Select a cartoon to analyze (e.g., political, scientific, graphic novel, historical, local newspaper editorial cartoon).
- Look for the overall impression created by the cartoon. Identify the issue or topic portrayed. If possible, discuss your initial reaction or impression with a partner.
- Examine the cartoon more carefully. Look at the detail in the drawings.
- Look carefully at the foreground and the background.
- Refer to the activity sheet and examine the cartoon for examples of each of the techniques.
- Record your examples in column two.
- Think about the effect of each cartooning technique. What message do you think the cartoonist is trying to convey? Record your interpretation in column three and explain your thinking (e.g. Einstein's big head, relative to his body, draws attention to his head and infers that he is really smart).

## Criteria

**Identification of techniques:** identifies obvious and subtle techniques.

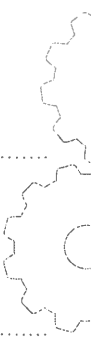
**Plausible interpretations:** draws plausible interpretations, based on the use of techniques.



# Analyzing a cartoon

Select a cartoon to analyze. In column two, record features of the cartoon that are examples of the techniques listed in column one. In column three, record your interpretation—what message was the author sending by choosing to represent the feature of the cartoon in that particular way?

Technique	Examples	Interpretation
<b>Caption</b> a sentence or phrase that is the title for the cartoon		
<b>Labels</b> words in the drawing to identify people or objects		
<b>Relative size</b> figures are drawn out of proportion to each other		
<b>Light and dark</b> use of dark shading and white space to create effect		
<b>Composition</b> the arrangement or location of figures or objects in the cartoon		
<b>Symbolism</b> a sign or object to represent something else		
<b>Caricature</b> a distorted representation of a figure		



## Criteria

**Identification of techniques:** identifies obvious and subtle techniques.

**Plausible interpretations:** draws plausible interpretations, based on the use of techniques.



# Assessing the analysis

Rubric

## Identification of techniques

Excellent	Very Good	Competent	Basic	Not Yet Able
Identifies many examples of cartooning techniques, including many subtle techniques.	Identifies a number of examples of cartooning techniques, including a few subtle techniques.	Identifies a few examples of cartooning techniques, but very few subtle techniques are noted.	Identifies a few obvious examples of cartooning techniques.	

Evidence:

## Plausible interpretations

Excellent	Very Good	Competent	Basic	Not Yet Able
Draws several interpretations about the message the cartoonist or author may want to convey; all are highly plausible.	Draws some interpretations about the message the cartoonist or author may want to convey; most are plausible.	Draws a few interpretations about the message the cartoonist or author may want to convey; most are somewhat plausible.	Draws a few interpretations about the message the cartoonist or author may want to convey; a few are plausible, but some are not.	

Evidence:

# Cartoons for the Classroom



Presented by NIEonline.com and the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)

## Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

Page 1

### Visuals

1. List the objects or people you see in the cartoon.

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2. Which of these objects are symbols?

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3. What do you think each symbol means?

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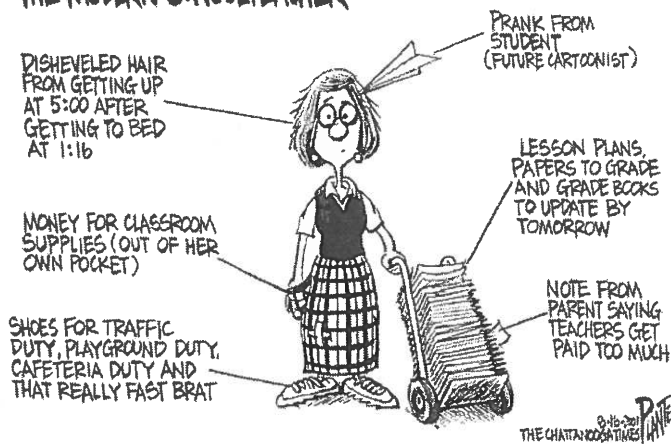
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### Just for fun

#### THE MODERN SCHOOLTEACHER



Courtesy Bruce Plante Chattanooga Times Free Press

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Newspaper \_\_\_\_\_

Cartoonist \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Cartoon \_\_\_\_\_

### Words (not all toons include words)

4. Identify the cartoon caption and/or title.

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5. Locate three words or phrases used by the cartoonist to identify objects or people within the cartoon.

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6. Record any important dates or numbers that appear in the cartoon.

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7. Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so?

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8. List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.

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Worksheet adapted from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration's Digital Classroom

[http://www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom/lessons/analysis\\_worksheets/cartoon.html](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/analysis_worksheets/cartoon.html)

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# Cartoons for the Classroom



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## Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

Page 2

9. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.

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10. Explain how the words clarify the symbols.

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11. Explain the message of the cartoon.

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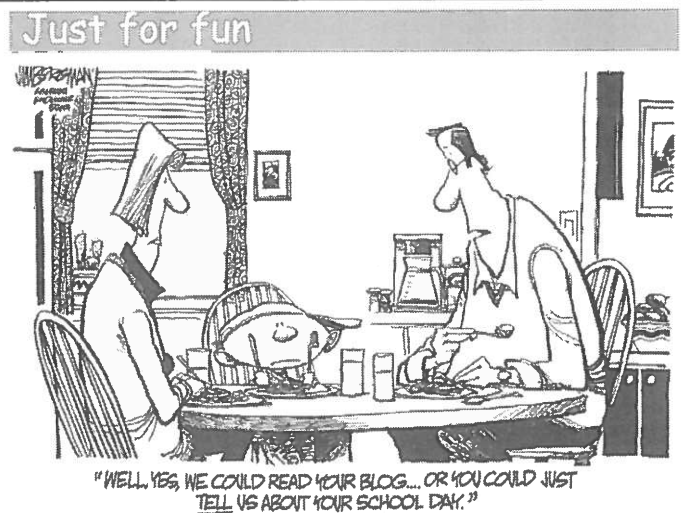
12. What special interest groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon's message?

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Courtesy Jim Borgman / Cincinnati Enquirer

Worksheet adapted from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration's Digital Classroom

[http://www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom/lessons/analysis\\_worksheets/cartoon.html](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/analysis_worksheets/cartoon.html)

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