

Cartooning Political and Social Issues

What role do cartoons play in presenting viewpoints about political or social issues?

Grades 6-8 Lesson: Cartooning Political and Social Issues

Grade Band: 6-8

Arts Subject: Visual Arts

Other Subject: Social Studies & Civics

SUMMARY

In this 6-8 lesson, students will examine political cartoons and discuss freedom of speech. They will gather and organize information about a current or past issue that makes a political or social statement and analyze the different sides. Students will plan, design, and illustrate a political cartoon that presents a position on a political or social issue.

PREPARATION

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Examine the practice and art of political cartoons.
- Discuss the U.S. Constitution's freedom of speech.
- Discuss the meaning of satire.
- Examine sources to find those that provide the most relevant and accurate information.
- Analyze examples of political cartoons, including the way an issue is exaggerated, a caricature of a person, and the use of satire.
- Use a graphic organizer to explore viewpoints expressed through political cartoons.
- Design and illustrate a political cartoon.
- Present work to an audience.

Standards Alignment

National Core Arts Standards

[VA:Cr2.1.6a](#) Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design.

[VA:Cr2.1.7a](#) Demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials, methods, and approaches in creating works of art or design.

[VA:Cr2.1.8a](#) Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of artmaking or designing.

Common Core State Standards

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.7](#) Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.



[ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.7](#) 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).

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.7](#) Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.

Recommended Student Materials

Editable Documents: *Before sharing these resources with students, you must first save them to your Google account by opening them, and selecting “Make a copy” from the File menu. Check out [Sharing Tips](#) or [Instructional Benefits](#) when implementing Google Docs and Google Slides with students.*

- [Slide: Political and Social Cartoon Examples](#)
- [Comparing Refugee Cartoons](#)
- [Comparing Climate Change Cartoons](#)
- [Planner: Political and Social Issues in Cartoons](#)

Websites

- [Political Cartoons](#)
- [Editorial Cartoons on Education](#)
- [Editorial Cartoons on Politics](#)
- [Political Cartoons from a Variety of Artists](#)
- [Freedom of Speech](#)
- [Explaining Satire](#)

Videos

- [The Power of Political Cartoons](#)
- [What’s Behind the Lines?](#)

Teacher Background

Teachers should be familiar with U.S. constitutional rights and freedom of speech. Review all media and cartoon resources prior to teaching the lesson as some may contain sensitive topics. This lesson can be adapted to reflect elections, promoting peace, justice, or raising awareness about a social issue or opinion. The SEL competency, Social-Awareness, is aligned with this lesson to build understanding of others’ perspectives and opinions.

Teachers can replace digital cartoon options with animated cartoons to meet the needs of audio-visual learners. Explore the works of cartoon animators, [Zina Saunders](#) and [Mark Fiore](#), to curate appropriate examples for students.

Accessibility Notes

Modify handouts, provide adaptive art tools, and create accessible works spaces/surfaces as needed.



INSTRUCTION

Engage

1. Show students the [Slide: Political and Social Cartoon Examples](#). Ask students to analyze the illustrations and captions, then share their interpretations of the cartoons. Tell students they were analyzing a political cartoon. A political cartoon is a type of editorial cartoon that includes a caricature of a person, policy, or current event, and expresses an opinion. Political cartoons are sometimes accompanied by a caption as well.

2. Start with a discussion about the U.S. Constitution and the significance of [freedom of speech](#). Explain that freedom of speech is a constitutional right, and that drawing is a form of free speech. The right to free speech is considered one of the most important rights people possess in the U.S.

3. Generate a class list of ways that people express their rights through free speech. List this information on the board, chart paper, or interactive board. Tell students that they will use this information to evaluate different cartoons.

4. Discuss with students' what freedom of speech does not include. For example, when the purpose is to cause harm to someone or break the law.

Build

1. Share the video, [The Power of Political Cartoons](#). Have students listen to Matt Wuerker discuss his work as a cartoonist. Ask students: *Why are political cartoons an important part of American history and culture? What are the advantages/disadvantages of expressing opinions in simple, direct ways to represent a specific viewpoint? What other ideas can be illustrated in political cartoons?*

2. Display the activity, [Comparing Refugee Cartoons](#). Model for students how to analyze a cartoon. As a class, work together to answer the questions in the comparison activity. Solicit student input for each section.

3. Divide students into pairs or small groups. Distribute the activity, [Comparing Climate Change Cartoons](#). Have students collaborate to analyze and compare the cartoons. Allow time for students to work on their comparisons.

4. Discuss with students what they know about stereotypes. Have them identify examples of stereotypes that they have seen or read. Discuss why political cartoons have been used to stereotype political figures and societal problems throughout history.

5. Explore other examples of political cartoons. Share or curate a collection of cartoons for students to analyze from [Political Cartoons](#), [Editorial Cartoons on Education](#), [Editorial Cartoons on Politics](#), or [Political Cartoons from a Variety of Artists](#).

6. Examine a selection of political cartoons in collaborative groups. Each group will select two or three cartoons to analyze. They'll weigh the pros and cons of political cartoons. Display the following questions to facilitate discourse among the group:

- *How are political cartoons effective or ineffective forms of free speech?*
- *How do political cartoons depict stereotypes?*
- *How do illustrators use hyperbole and satire to make a point?*
- *Do political depictions persuade or encourage people to take a side?*
- *Why is art used to convey messages?*
- *Why do cartoons remain a part of the way we are provided with news?*

Apply

1. Plan an original cartoon that takes a side concerning a political or social issue.

Distribute the [Planner: Political and Social Issues in Cartoons](#), to guide students in planning their initial design. Students can also learn tips from professional cartoonist, Andrew Hoare, in [What's Behind the Lines?](#)

2. Suggest appropriate subjects for creating political cartoons and review the key elements defined below. Each element can be used as criteria for planning and designing the cartoons.

- Symbolism - symbols that represent ideas or qualities
- Captions - a brief text providing an explanation
- Labels - a word describing or clarifying objects or people
- Irony - when you say something different from the way things are or expected to be
- Analogy - a comparison between two different things that share similar qualities or characteristics
- Exaggeration - a dramatic representation of a physical characteristic, object, or place

3. Illustrate or design a political cartoon. Distribute drawing and art materials or consider a digital tool like Google Drawings. Allow time for students to work on their political cartoons.

4. Display the cartoons around the classroom or school. Consider having students write an artist statement to go along with their work.

Reflect

1. Take students on a gallery walk to view and discuss all the cartoons. As they make observations, have them draw comparisons to other cartoons.

2. Assess students' knowledge of political cartoons with a reflection. Ask students: *What role do cartoons play in societal discourse? In your opinion, how are political cartoons an effective or ineffective method for creating interest in a political or social issue? How do cartoons create interest or disinterest in a particular political or social issue?*

Credits

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