

POLITICAL CARTOONS



Cartoonists use 5 main elements to convey their point of view.

- symbolism – using an object to stand for an idea.
- captioning & labels – used for clarity and emphasis.
- analogy – a comparison between two unlike things that share some characteristics.
- irony – the difference between the way things are & the way things are expected to be.
- exaggeration – overstating or magnifying a problem or a physical feature or habit: big nose, bushy eyebrows, large ears, baldness, etc.

Examples of Symbols Used in Political Cartoons

- peace – dove, olive branch, victory sign, scales of justice.
- United States – Uncle Sam, flag, stars and stripes, shield, lady liberty.
- Democrats – donkey.
- Republicans – elephant.
- death – vulture, skeleton w/ shroud, skull and crossbones, grim reaper.
- love – heart, Cupid, Venus
- money – dollar bill or dollar sign.

Steps to analyzing a political cartoon:

- 1) Identify the characters, symbols, and objects in the cartoon.
- 2) Look for clues and details that would give further meaning.
- 3) Identify the main idea of the cartoon by reading any captions and by putting the message in your own words.
- 4) Identify any bias the cartoonist might have (what side of the issue is he/she on?).

Questions to answer:

- 1) What is the event or issue that inspired the cartoon?
- 2) What background knowledge do you need to understand the message?
- 3) Are there any real people in the cartoon?
- 4) Did the artist use caricatures?
(caricature: a picture, description, or imitation of a person or thing in which certain striking characteristics are exaggerated in order to create a desired effect)
- 5) Are there any symbols in the cartoon? What do they represent?
- 6) What is the cartoonist's opinion about the topic portrayed?
- 7) Does the caption help you understand the message? How?
- 8) Do you agree or disagree with the cartoonist's message? Why?

