

Module: Social Studies

Lesson Title: Editorial Cartoons

Objectives and Standards

Students will:

- Analyze information presented in editorial cartoons
- Recognize common symbolism in editorial cartoons
- Identify different techniques used in editorial cartoons, such as symbolism, exaggeration, labeling, analogy, and irony

Social Studies Content 2014 GED® Assessment Targets	Social Studies Practices 2014 GED® Assessment Targets
Analyze information presented visually, for example, in maps, tables, charts, photographs, political cartoons, etc. (SSP.6.b)	Draw conclusions and make inferences. (SSP.1) Determine central ideas, hypotheses, and conclusions. (SSP.2) Analyze events and ideas. (SSP.3) Interpret meaning of symbols, words, and phrases. (SSP.4)

Materials

- Sample cartoons from a newspaper of interest to students
- Sample editorial cartoons from the newspaper or World Wide Web
- *Cartoon Analysis* Activity Sheet

Instructional Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students will analyze editorial cartoons, discussing the different techniques used as well as basic background knowledge needed to assess the author’s purpose and message.

Process

Introduce the lesson by taking a survey of the class. Ask students what cartoon is their favorite. Chart the different answers. Ask students why they enjoy a specific cartoon. Discuss the different reasons why students enjoy each type of cartoon. Have students share what types of reading and comprehension skills are required for each example.

Provide each student with a cartoon from the comic section of the local newspaper. Have students read the cartoon and decide why their cartoon is humorous. Have students share their personal reflections with the class. Students may share that the cartoons are similar to experiences that they have in their personal lives or

that they create humorous situations. Share with students that they can apply many of the skills that they already have when reading the Sunday cartoons to the analysis of editorial or political cartoons.

Discuss that interpretation of editorial cartoons requires that they have some background knowledge related to various eras in history, current affairs, economics, civics, or government, as well as understanding such techniques as symbolism, exaggeration, labeling, analogies, and irony. The following chart provides a brief definition of each technique.

Symbolism	Symbols stand for larger concepts or ideas. Identify the symbol and why it is being used.
Exaggeration	Physical characteristics of people or things are exaggerated to make a point. Watch for any characteristic that seems overdone or overblown.
Label	Objects or people are labeled to make the meaning of them clearer.
Analogy	Analogies show the comparison between two unlike things that share some characteristics. This enables the reader to look at a complex situation or issue from a more familiar vantage point.
Irony	Irony is often used to express an opinion on an issue. Irony is the difference between the ways things are and the way things should be or are expected to be.

Show students examples of cartoons in the daily newspaper, or you may wish to access the website: <http://www.cagle.com>. Daryl Cagle is a highly recognized political cartoonist who hosts a website that displays the work of more than 60 cartoonists.

Two other excellent sites for resources are:

- ***Cartoons in the Classroom*** – part of *Newspapers in the Classroom*
<http://www.nieonline.com/aaec/cftc.cfm>
- ***The Dirksen Center's Editorial Cartoon Collection*** (with lesson plans)
<http://www.congresslink.org/cartoons/about.htm>

Sample Debriefing Questions

Model for students how to interpret an editorial cartoon. Use cartoons that have points of interest to your students. Show students the cartoon and have them answer the following questions:

- What is the event or issue that inspired the cartoon?
- Are there any real people in the cartoon? Who is portrayed in the cartoon?
- Are there symbols in the cartoon? What are they and what do they represent?
- What is the cartoonist's opinion about the topic portrayed in the cartoon?
- Do I agree or disagree with the cartoonist's opinion? Why?

Have students practice interpreting cartoons by showing the class additional cartoons and having them provide the answers to each of the above questions.

Assessments/Extensions

Divide students into small groups of four. Provide each group with an editorial cartoon. Have students answer the *Debriefing Questions* about each cartoon. As students' skills increase, you may wish to have students respond to the editorial cartoon by completing the *Cartoon Analysis Worksheet*.

Start classes with the "Cartoon of the Day" to assist them in transferring their skills. You may wish to have students bring in their own sample cartoons that they have found in their local newspapers.

Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

Level 1	
Visuals	Words
1. List the objects or people you see in the cartoon.	1. Identify the cartoon caption and/or title. 2. Locate three words or phrases used by the cartoonist to identify objects or people within the cartoon. 3. Record any important dates or numbers that appear in the cartoon.
Level 2	
Visuals	Words
2. Which of the objects on your list are symbols? 3. What do you think each symbol means?	4. Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so? 5. List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.
Level 3	
A. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon. B. Explain how the words in the cartoon clarify the symbols? C. Explain the message of the cartoon. D. What special interest groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?	

The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.
<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon.html>