Pictures Are Worth A Thousand Words

General

Grade Level

Middle School, High School

Author Info

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Type of Lesson

Challenge

Type of Project (Individual/Group/Both)

Both

Duration

30-60 minutes

Challenge Question

Political cartoons are a form of expression that have been around for hundreds of years. Americans (more specifically newspapers and their editors) have used this form of expression to share their views on numerous topics. A political cartoon mostly uses as few words as possible. Also, they USUALLY contain three key elements: caricature, analogy, and symbolism.

Click on the cartoon on the RIGHT side of your screen. Study the caricature, analogy, and symbolism. What message is it conveying to you?
Your Sea of Liberty challenge is to create a political cartoon from the Federal Period. The focus of your cartoon will be either The Alien and Sedition Acts, or The Louisiana Purchase.

Rationale

Political cartoons are a form of expression that has been around for hundreds of years. Americans (more

specifically newspapers and their editors) have used this form of expression to share their view on numerous topics. Students will display the ability to use higher level thinking skills by implementing caricature, and more specifically, symbols and analogy into commentary about the Alien and Sedition Acts, or The Louisiana Purchase.

Notes to Teacher

—Explanation for the cartoon provided:
James Akin's earliest-known signed cartoon, "The Prairie Dog" is an anti-Jefferson satire, relating to Jefferson's covert negotiations for the purchase of West Florida from Spain in 1804. Jefferson, as a scrawny dog, is stung by a hornet with Napoleon's head into coughing up "Two Millions" in gold coins, (the secret appropriation Jefferson sought from Congress for the purchase). On the right dances a man (possibly a French diplomat) with orders from French minister Talleyrand in his pocket and maps of East Florida and West Florida in his hand. He says, "A gull for the People."

—Students might benefit more from a WHOLE class discussion about the three elements of political cartoons. Additional, reviewing some modern day examples, pointing out symbols and analogies will enhance their comprehension of these terms.

Steps

1. Review the key elements of a political cartoon:

   Caricature = a picture or description of someone or something that ludicrously exaggerates distinctive qualities of a person, place, or thing. (President Obama's caricature usually has unusually large ears)
   Analogy = a similarity between like features of two or more things on which a comparison may be made. (Football and war, for example)
   Symbolism = something used for or regarded as representing something else (Statue of Liberty and Uncle Sam are symbols of the United States)

2. Discuss with a neighbor/partner what message "The Providential Detection" and "Mad Tom in Rage" are saying. Are they "Pro-Jefferson" or "Anti-Jefferson"? What are some symbols that are used in these political cartoons? Are there any analogies?
3. From cultural trends and world events, to sporting events and national issues, political cartoons always make their readers think and reflect on a given situation. Click here http://www.politicalcartoons.com to see some up-to-date political cartoons about the most recent events happening in our world today. This should help you get your creative juices flowing.
4. As you have learned, Thomas Jefferson and his supporters, the Democratic-Republicans, felt Alien and Sedition Acts were a direct attack on their party and its' followers. Conversely, many Americans felt President Jefferson's willingness to purchase the Louisiana Territory from France went against the boundaries of The Constitution.

   Create a cartoon that targets ONE of these two topics.

Your cartoon should incorporate the three key elements of political cartoons (caricature, analogy, and symbolism), and be neat and colorful. Remember, the less words, the more effective the cartoon.

5. CREATE YOUR CARTOON:

A) take a 8.5 x 11 piece of heavy stock paper (provided by your teacher) and creatively draw you caricatures, symbolism, and analogy in a nice neat colorful way. Best practice for this exercise is to first do a rough sketch on "scratch paper ". Then, use the heavy stock for the final copy.

B) Once the image is complete, take a digital camera, iPhone/smartphone, or iPad/digital tablet and take a legible picture of your creation.

C) Save it to location on your computer where you will be able to easily locate it.

D) Submit it by clicking the red TAKE CHALLENGE button underneath these steps. From the CREATE MY PROJECT window, click the "ADD AN IMAGE CIRCLE". Follow the directions given, and save.