

Unit 10

“Nasty” Pictures

Analyzing and Creating a Political Cartoon

Thomas Nast (1840-1902) is most often remembered for his cartoon campaign in the 1870s



against Boss Tweed and New York City’s corrupt Tammany Hall political machine. He was immensely popular, and influenced the masses with his accusatory tones to the point that the term “nasty” was first used to describe his drawings. Nast created the G.O.P. Elephant, popularized the Democratic Donkey, and was the first to portray Santa Claus as the jolly, red-nosed character that is so familiar today. But before he was twenty years old, he earned the money necessary to take him to Italy to join Garibaldi and the famous *Red Shirts* in 1859. During this campaign he not only furnished war pictures to various papers to the U.S., England, and France, but was entrusted by Garibaldi with several delicate diplomatic missions, which he carried out with great skill.



SOAPSTone - Use this acronym to accurately assess the message and context of a primary source. In this example, you will be analyzing political cartoons, which communicate powerful ideas often in a humorous, enlightening manner, by incorporating the events of the period into an easily understandable format most people could relate to even with limited reading abilities. Symbols, caricature, drawings and exaggerations used by the cartoonist point out themes and problems of any given time period.

SOAPSTone

Speaker: Who created the source (who is the author)? What do you know about the author (assumptions)? What is the author’s point of view? Is there emotion conveyed by the author?

Occasion: Where and when was the source produced? What led to the source’s publication or development? How might this affect the meaning of the source?

Audience: For whom was the primary source created? How might this affect the reliability of that source?

Purpose: Why was this source produced at the time it was produced? What point is the source trying to convey? Is the author attempting to rouse a reader’s response?

Subject: What is the subject of the piece? How do you know this? How has the subject been selected and presented by the author?

Tone: What is the attitude of the author? Do you notice any bias, or point of view? What about the language used, or the imagery?

Practice the Skill

Look at the cartoon to the right. Can you interpret its meaning? Does it help to know that the author is Thomas Nast? It was the first cartoon in which the “Tammany Tiger” was used as emblematic of the Tammany Hall scandal. Boss Tweed is depicted as a Roman Emperor, and the tiger is attacking “Lady Liberty”. So, why was this created? And why would it have been produced at that time? What was the response Thomas Nast was trying to generate? It has been largely accepted as one of the most powerful political cartoons ever produced. Even Boss Tweed himself remarked that most of his constituents couldn’t read, but, “they can still see those cartoons!”



“The Tammany Tiger in the Arena”
Harper’s Weekly (Nov. 11, 1871)

Political Cartoons come in many different varieties. As the old adage goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” The term *cartoon* can be misleading sometimes, since a political cartoon doesn’t always have to be humorous, but instead is designed to conjure up some feeling or expose something (or someone) in a particular light. In many ways a political cartoon is an editorial.

Caricatures are representations in which the subject's distinctive features or peculiarities are deliberately exaggerated to produce a comic or even grotesque effect.



Cartoonists may also use *symbolism*, in which they use a form, image, or subject representing a meaning other than the one with which it is usually associated.



Cartoons may also be *satirical*, using irony, sarcasm, or derisive wit used to attack or expose an opposing viewpoint, vice, folly, or stupidity. Caricatures are commonly satirical whenever they are critical.

Now It's Your Turn

You will create TWO original political cartoons. Use any one of the following historic AND one of the current topics (2 total) - choosing to use caricature, symbolism, and/or satire.

Historic (1800-1914)	Current (within the past month)
The Great Hunger Austrian Multi-Nationalism The Dreyfus Affair The Unification of Italy The Unification of Germany The Russian Czars The Dual Monarchy Balkan Nationalism	Obama's Second Term Bickering on Capitol Hill World Economic State of Affairs American Employment Concerns National or International Scandals Violent Events or Terrorist Threats Recent Sporting Events and Issues Scientific Discoveries and Breakthroughs