

Political Cartoons: More Than Meets The Eye

How to Interpret the Basic
Elements of Political Cartoons

What Are Political Cartoons?

- Art form that serves as a source of opinion on society
- Express viewpoints on political, economic, or social issues
- Make use of humor, symbolism, historical events, and stereotypes

How To Read Them?

- Artist's viewpoint
- Symbols
- Captions
- Humor and Satire
- Historical Images

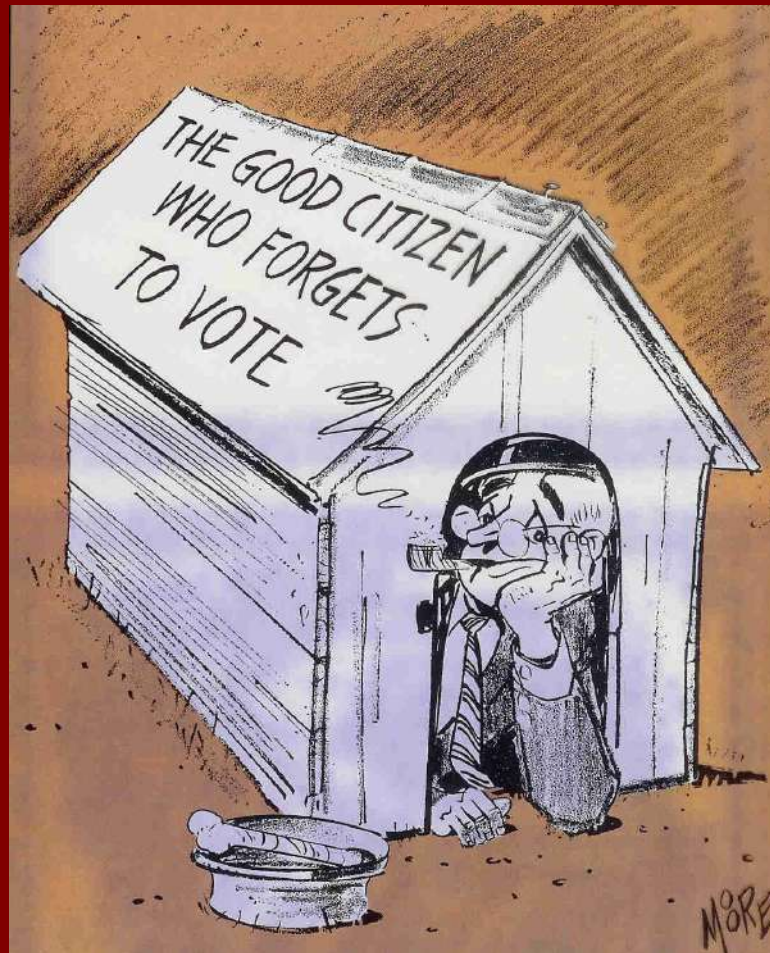


Artist's Viewpoint:

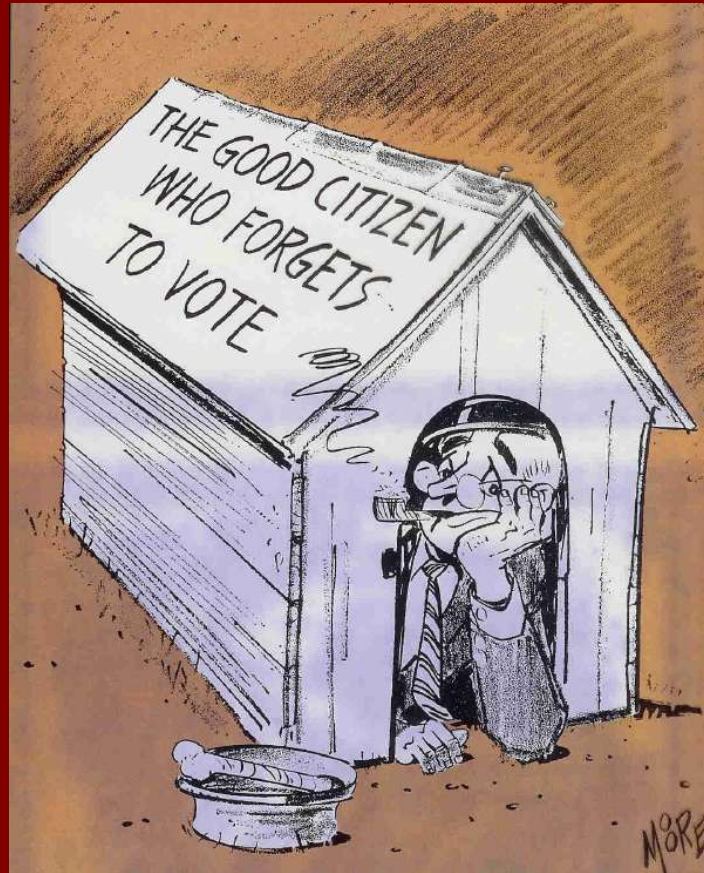
The purpose of any political cartoon is to express an opinion

- What subject or issue is the artist commenting on?
- How is the subject portrayed?
- What feelings are suggested by the images?

What is the artist's viewpoint of this cartoon?



What is the artist's viewpoint of this cartoon?



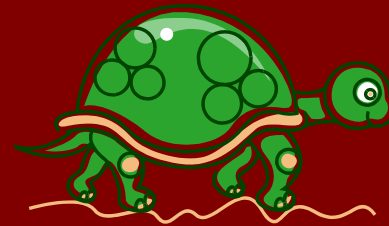
Voter apathy: People who don't vote will be in trouble with society.

Use of Symbols:

Images that stand for something else

- Symbols can stand for objects, places, groups of people, beliefs, character traits, or ideas
- Common symbols for our country:
 - *Uncle Sam=United States
 - *Set of Scales=Justice or court system
 - *Dollar bill=Money
- Animals used as symbols
 - *Donkey= the Democratic Party
 - *Elephant= the Republican Party
 - *Dove= Peace
 - *Fox= Sly or untrustworthy

What Do These Symbols Mean?



Captions

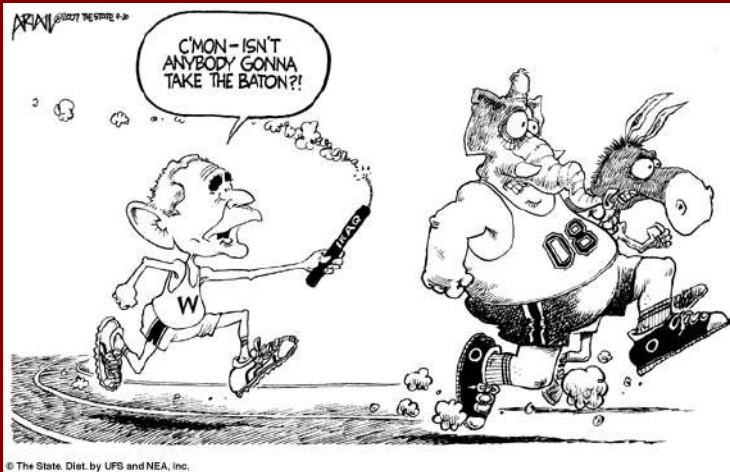


- Can help the reader understand the message, even if the symbols aren't familiar.

Humor and Satire

- Humor creates interest
- Caricature: overemphasis of a person's features
- Irony: saying the opposite of what was really meant
- Satire: the portrayal of a wrongdoing to that it becomes the object of ridicule
- Stereotype: an oversimplified judgment of a group of people or objects

Humor and Satire



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<http://www.comics.com/editoons/ariail/archive/ariail-20070919.html>



Heitzmann, W.R. (1980) *Political cartoons: Scholastic social studies skills*.
New York: Scholastic, Inc.



Heitzmann, W.R. (1980) *Political cartoons: Scholastic social studies skills*.
New York: Scholastic, Inc.



Hakim, J. (1993). *A history of us: An age of extremes*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Historical Images

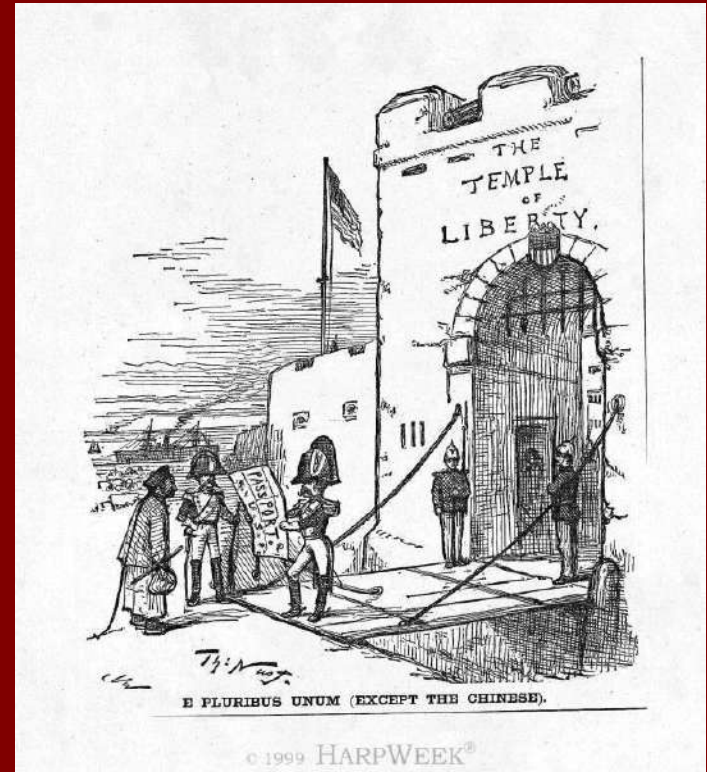
- Artists include historical or literary images to help express viewpoints on current issues
- Recognizing the historical or literary images is necessary to understand the meaning of the cartoon

Historical Images



Heitzmann, W.R. (1980) *Political cartoons: Scholastic social studies skills*. New York: Scholastic, Inc.

The angel of Teddy Roosevelt reacting to the news that Pres. Carter would turn over the control of the Panama Canal to the Panamanian government in 1999.



<http://www.immigrants.harpweek.com/ChineseAmericans/Illustrations/078EPluribusUnumMain.htm>

Soldiers “guarding” the entrance to the United States to all immigrants except the Chinese following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

How Will We Use Cartoons?

- Understand public opinion of a particular time period
- Examine opposing views
- Compare historical and contemporary issues

Cartoon Analyzer

Visuals

Which of the objects or characters in the cartoon are symbols?

What do you think each symbol means?

Words (not all cartoons include words)

Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant?

Why do you think so?

Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.

Explain the message of the cartoon.

Adapted from a design by the Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration