

The Art of Persuasion: Using Political Cartoons for Political Expression

The media (controllers of the media) utilizes numerous mechanisms through which to connect with its target audience. The varying mechanisms aid in communicating and dispersing information. The information is both objective and subjective in nature. It is used to inform and influence the target audience. Connecting with an audience on serious and at times dissenting matters regarding current affairs/event and significant issues often requires attention grabbing eye-catching methods such as political cartoons.

Political cartoons like politically themed written work communicate a perspective and disseminate information. They are often used for political expression regarding one or more sides of an issue or pertaining to a current event. However, to grasp the complete essence of the illustration and the message of the cartoon sometimes requires additional analysis on the part of the viewer. In an effort to inform or to persuade, political cartoons are embedded with symbols, clues, and other artistic techniques to make a point. The result inciting emotional responses that varies from laughter, to anger, to confusion yet considered harmless due to the nonthreatening delivery of the message as a “drawing”. Despite the response, they serve a purpose and often deliver lasting messages that influence perspectives and define events.

This assignment offers students an opportunity to utilize the Digital Library of the Caribbean’s online periodicals to research and analyze international political cartoons and consider their impacts their respective society/nation.

Proposed Activity

The proposed activity can be assigned for individual completion or group completion. The guidelines below outline the activity as completed for an individual assignment. The guidelines also include an in-class activity which can be completed following the submission of the individual assignments.

I. Individual Assignment

1. Using the Digital Library of the Caribbean (<http://dloc.com/>), research political cartoons. Select one political cartoon from your search. Download/save a copy of the selected cartoon. Appropriately cite the cartoon being certain to include the name, year, location, and uniform resource locator (url) link for the publication in which the cartoon was published (see the citation links available on the DLOC pages).
2. Compose a personal perspective paragraph(s) regarding your impressions of the cartoon. Address the following:
 - a. What is the topic of the cartoon and what clues from the illustration help you to identify this?
 - b. What is the message that you think the cartoonist is attempting to make? Is the message clear?
 - c. What can be concluded regarding the point of view or attitude of the cartoonist regarding the event/issue?
 - d. What clues or aspects of the illustration in the cartoon substantiate your responses for the above questions ‘b’ and ‘c’?

3. Compose a fact-based paragraph(s) regarding the cartoon.

Address the following:

a. Using the course textbook, the Digital Library of the Caribbean (<http://dloc.com/>), and useful outside resources, research the: nation of origin, year/time period, and associated major event connected to the cartoon.

4. Considering your selected political cartoon, your perspective of the cartoon, and the facts behind the cartoon, address the following:

a. Does your selected political cartoon address a recurring theme in history (such as war, labor issue, human/civil rights)?

b. Based on your knowledge, do you notice a change or a consistency in the manner in which the event/issue (theme) has been addressed in other societies/cultures? For example: Given the year/time period of your selected cartoon, have political cartoons regarding the same or similar themes been more or less offensive with the illustrations?

c. Do you think the illustration of your cartoon is effective? Why or why not? What, if any changes would you make to increase its effectiveness?

d. Was your personal perspective regarding the topic and message of the cartoon accurate?

II. Class Involvement:

1. Invite students to volunteer or select submitted cartoons to share during a class period. Display the volunteered/selected cartoons to the class.

2. Inquire personal perspectives from the students regarding the message of the respective cartoons. Inquire factual information regarding the national origin and time period of the cartoon and what major events transpired during the time of the release of the cartoon.

3. Note the responses of the students in a location visible to the entire class.

4. Invite the student to whom the submitted cartoon assignment belongs to confirm or reject the responses of the students. Have the student share the accurate response and why she/he selected the political cartoon.