Step 1: Editorial Cartoons 101

First, let’s learn about editorial cartoons. Here’s what you need to know.

1. What Are Editorial Cartoons?

Editorial cartoons, also known as political cartoons, are illustrations that use visually persuasive techniques to express political or social viewpoints on current events and public figures.

2. Where Are Editorial Cartoons Published?

Editorial cartoons are typically found in the opinion sections of print and digital media, including newspapers and news magazines.

3. Why Are Editorial Cartoons Important?

Editorial cartoons are primary sources that reveal significant political and social issues at a particular time and place.

4. How Do You Find Editorial Cartoons in ProQuest SIRS Issues Researcher?

Find editorial cartoons by performing a cartoon keyword search for Multimedia/Statistics in Advanced Search.

List three examples:

Example 1: __________________________________________

Example 2: __________________________________________

Example 3: __________________________________________

Common Core Standard*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
Step 2: Analyze Editorial Cartoons

Select one of your examples from step one and review it carefully.

Key Ideas and Details

Let’s start with the basics.
Identify the following if applicable:

1. Cartoon Title (e.g., “Presidential Election”)

2. Name of Cartoonist (e.g., Thomas Nast)

3. Publication (e.g., New York Times)

4. Date of Publication (e.g., 2016)

5. People, Places and/or Objects Depicted (e.g., senator; Washington, D.C.; bag of money)

6. Central Event or Issue (e.g., a speech; political corruption)

7. Action Taking Place (e.g., lobbyist hands politician money)

Common Core Standards*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

Need Help?
Alongside their signatures, modern-day cartoonists generally include the year and publication in which the cartoon originally appeared.
Step 2: Analyze Editorial Cartoons (Cont’d)

Craft and Structure

Let’s dig deeper. Cartoonists use persuasive techniques to express ideas and viewpoints. Identify the following if applicable:

8. Symbols are things used to represent something else (e.g., a dove represents peace).

Are there any symbols being used? If so, how do they contribute to the meaning of the cartoon?

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________________________________________________________________________________

9. Exaggeration overstates, changes, or distorts depictions of people or things to make a point. A caricature, for example, is the deliberate exaggeration of a person’s unique characteristics (e.g. a person depicted with big ears).

Are there any examples of exaggeration? If so, how do they contribute to the meaning of the cartoon?

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10. Oversimplification presents simplistic views of people or things to make a quick point. A stereotype, for example, is an oversimplified—oftentimes insulting—judgment of an individual, group, or thing (e.g., New Yorkers are rude).

Are there any examples of oversimplification? If so, how do they contribute to the meaning of the cartoon?

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Common Core Standards*

| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science. |
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.5 Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis. |

SIRS® Issues Researcher Curriculum Guide: Understanding Editorial Cartoons

Step 2: Analyze Editorial Cartoons (Cont’d)

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11. **Labels and Captions** use words to identify people and objects for clarity and emphasis. (e.g., caption bubbles used to indicate speech).

Are there any labels or captions? If so, how do these words contribute to the meaning of the cartoon?
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12. **Analogy** is a comparison between two unlike things, suggesting that one thing is like the other (e.g., college application process compared to riding a roller coaster).

Are there any analogies? If so, how do they contribute to the meaning of the cartoon?
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13. **Irony** uses words or images—oftentimes humorously—to contradict what is true or expected to be true (e.g., saying “Nice weather we’re having today” during a blizzard).

Is irony used? If so, how does it contribute to the meaning of the cartoon?
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Step 3: Evaluate Editorial Cartoons

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Let’s put it all together. First, we’ll identify the cartoon’s central viewpoint and then assess whether or not the cartoonist was effective.

1. **Audience:** Who do you think is the intended audience of this cartoon? Explain.

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2. **Central Viewpoint:** Taking into consideration the cartoonist’s viewpoint, what is the cartoon’s central message? Explain.

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3. **Alternative Viewpoints:** Identify groups that would agree and disagree with the cartoon’s central message. Explain.

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4. **Effectiveness:** Does this cartoon effectively convey its central viewpoint? Explain.

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Step 4: Apply Knowledge

Create Editorial Cartoons

Now it’s your turn. Draw your own editorial cartoon that expresses an alternate viewpoint to the one you just analyzed. Use some or all of the persuasive techniques listed below. Then compare and contrast the cartoon you drew with the one you analyzed.

Cartoonist’s Persuasive Techniques:

- Symbols
- Labels & Captions
- Exaggeration/Caricature
- Analogy
- Oversimplification/Stereotypes
- Irony

Common Core Standard*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9 Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.