

Cartoons for the Classroom

Presented in cooperation with the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)

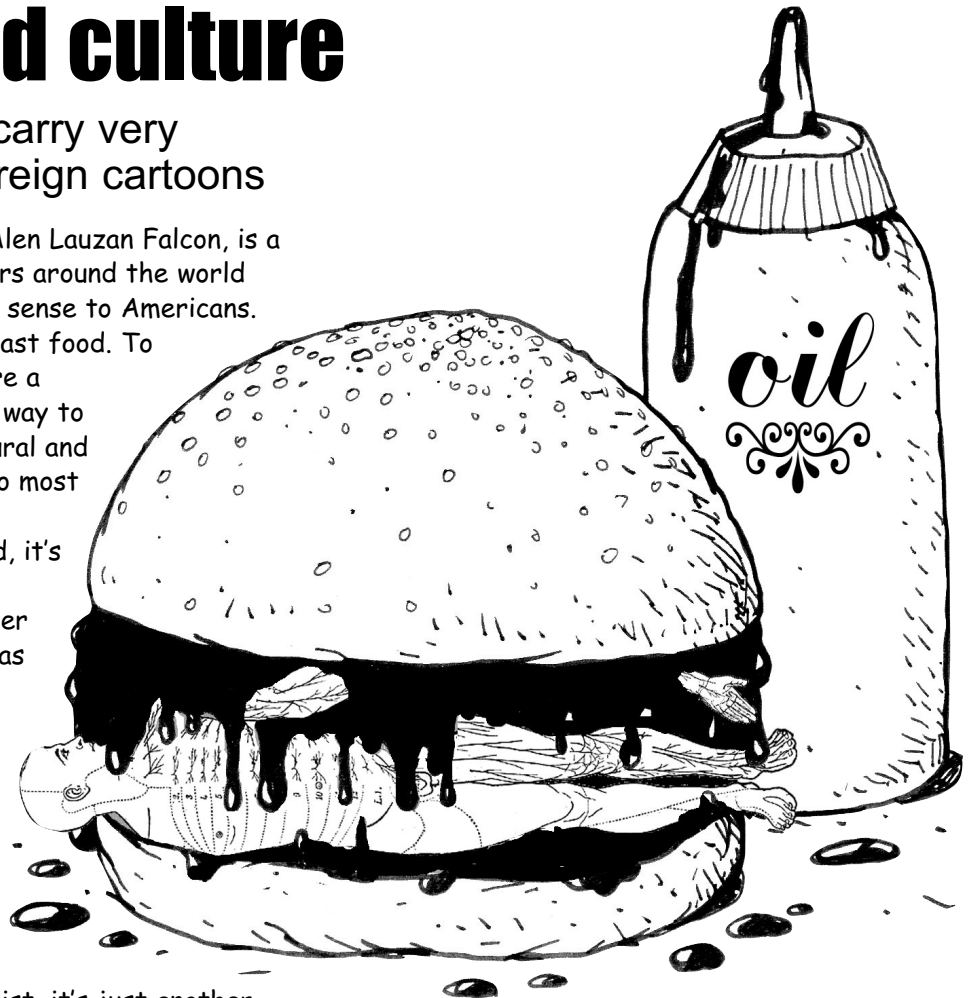


Cartoons and culture

Obscure symbols often carry very different messages in foreign cartoons

This cartoon by Chilean cartoonist Alen Lauzan Falcon, is a good example of an image that readers around the world would understand, but would make no sense to Americans.

To Americans, hamburgers are just fast food. To the rest of the world, hamburgers are a metaphor for the United States -- a way to characterize our reputation for cultural and economic hegemony and arrogance. To most Americans, Lauzan's cartoon appears meaningless. To the rest of the world, it's an obvious indictment of the U. S. as murderer because of its greedy hunger for oil. Two other recurring symbols as stand-ins for America in foreign cartoons are Superman and Dracula. Superman is usually depicted suffering or defeated in foreign cartoons. Again, Americans would easily miss the implication. In Muslim countries that don't have the "devil" character culturally available, Dracula is often a convenient replacement. For the foreign cartoonist, it's just another way of getting an anti-American point across.



Alen Lauzan Falcon / cagle.com

Cartoon and lesson provided by
Daryl Cagle / Pro Cartoonists Index

Talking points

1. Who is the intended audience for Alen Lauzan Falcon's cartoon?
2. If a cartoon's message can't be deciphered by everyone, does that make it an ineffective cartoon?
3. If you were to draw a political cartoon criticizing American dependence on oil, what symbols would you use?
4. Is a hamburger a good symbol for America? Why?
5. If America is represented as a hamburger, what might a symbol for Britain be? What about France? Germany?

Get out your newspaper

Gather a collection of political cartoons from your newspaper over the next two weeks. Using the Cartoon Evaluation Worksheet (available online at the NIE Website) analyze each cartoon and explain the issues addressed and determine the point of view of the artist. Which symbols do you think would be difficult for a foreign audience to understand? Which would work across cultures?

Additional resources

Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)
<http://editorialcartoonists.com/>

Daryl Cagle's Pro Cartoonists Index
<http://cagle.slate.msn.com/>