

Cartoons for the Classroom



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

Timely vs. Timeless

Universal themes capture more than just a moment

Political cartoons satirize very specific events of the day. Like the newspapers that publish them, the cartoons capture a moment in time — an event, a cause, a personality that is important to that artist in that place at that time. Then issues fade, personalities change and often it's tough to understand a cartoon out of the context of its time. But some political cartoons move beyond the moment. They explore timeless themes that remain current even decades later. In his Pulitzer Prize winning cartoon from 1931, John McCutcheon defines a moment that echoes through the decades. The Great Depression of 1929-30 cost many their life savings when banks failed. Just change "Victim of Bank Failure" to "Victim of Enron's Collapse" or "Victim of the Tech Bubble" and you can see how well McCutcheon's metaphor still fits today.

Get out your newspaper

Gather a week's worth of political cartoons from your newspaper. Using the *Cartoon Evaluation Worksheet* (available online at the NIE Website) analyze each cartoon and identify the symbols used and the issues. Which cartoons do you think are timeless and which are timely? In other words, was the cartoon valid 10 years ago? Will it still be valid 10 years from now?

Additional resources

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

A Wise Economist Asks a Question



John McCutcheon / Chicago Tribune, 1931, reprinted with permission

Talking points:

Write a short definition for each of the following.

Context _____

Metaphor _____

What makes a squirrel a "wise economist"? What did the man do wrong if he really did "squirrel away" some money to help him through the bad times. What's different today from what happened during the Great Depression? Do you think it can happen again?