

Cartoons for the Classroom

Presented by NIEonline.com and the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)



Tooning into History

McCarthyism: 60 years later



Talking points

1. The first use of the term "McCarthyism" appears in this 1950 Herblock cartoon where conservative senators push a reluctant GOP elephant to mount the unsavory platform. Today the "McCarthyism" is defined as "any type of reckless political persecution or witch-hunt." Why were so many people afraid to challenge McCarthy the way Herblock did?
2. Explain the symbolism and message in Herblock's "Fire!" cartoon. Note that the cartoon pre-dated McCarthyism.
3. Explore the online Herblock exhibits. Select a cartoon from any era and explain the issue presented.

Cartoons courtesy The Herblock Foundation



Between the lines

On Feb. 9, 1950, Joseph McCarthy, the junior senator from Wisconsin, made a speech claiming to have a list of 205 people in the State Department that were members of the American Communist Party. He began a campaign to identify and purge communists in government. Herb Block recognized the danger to civil liberties posed by such activities and warned of them in his work. Block was one of the few cartoonists willing to take on McCarthy and his campaign of using smear tactics, bullying and innuendo.

Additional resources

Herblock exhibit at the Library of Congress
<http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/herblock/Pages/default.aspx>

Herblock exhibit: From the Crash to the Millennium
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/swann/herblock/>

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