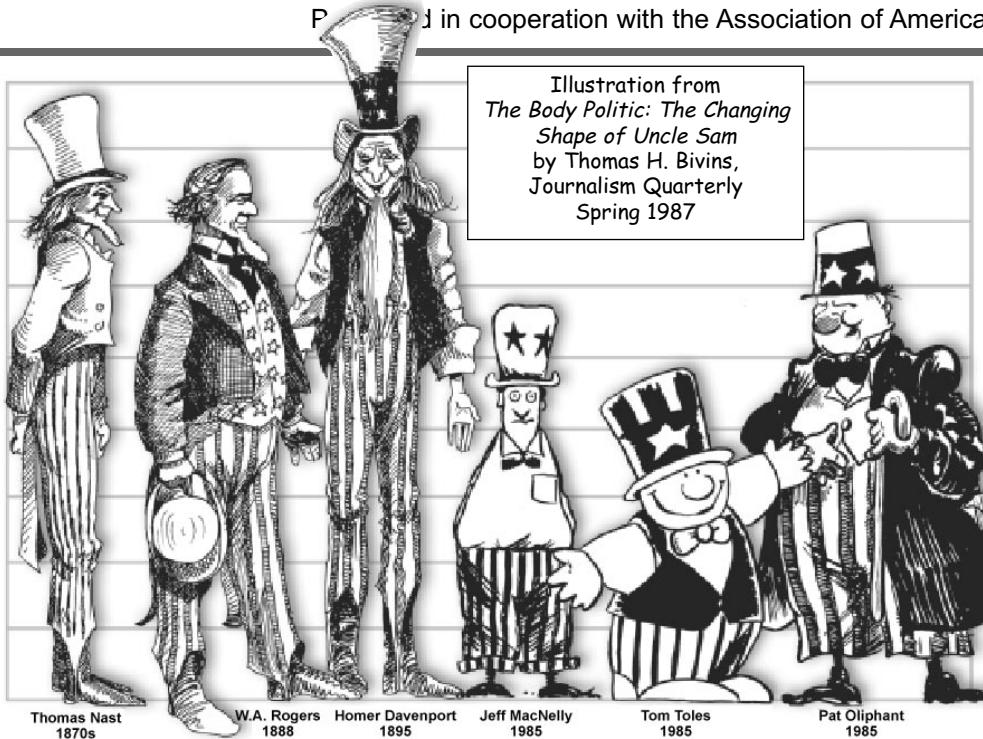


Cartoons for the Classroom

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



The many faces of Uncle Sam



Defining America through a caricature of a caricature

Since about 1834 a white-haired man wearing a top hat, striped pants and a goatee has personified our national identity. The most famous portrait of Uncle Sam is James Montgomery Flagg's World War I Army recruiting poster (top right) from 1917. But each political cartoonist before and since has come up with a unique interpretation -- a caricature of a caricature -- to make a point.

What then is Uncle Sam? What does he symbolize? Is it the American people? The American government? American power? The powerful in America? Each portrait we see is different and sends a different message through the symbolism implied by the caricature.

Can all these portraits be accurate?

Additional resources

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

The Body Politic: The Changing Shape of Uncle Sam by Thomas H. Bivins
http://jcomm.uoregon.edu/~tbivins/J496/pdfs/uncle_sam.pdf

Talking points:

What qualities do these caricatures of Uncle Sam convey to you? Leader or buffoon? Wise or befuddled? A couple even look kind of sinister. Of all the caricatures on this page, which fits your own impression of what Uncle Sam's qualities are? And which do you find the most disturbing?

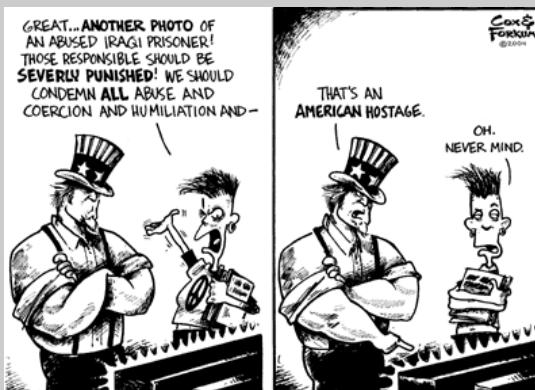
Get out your newspaper

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 study the caricatures used. Are they sympathetic to the subject? Or are they tools of ridicule? Explain.

After 9/11: In response to the 9/11 attacks a new Uncle Sam emerged. These artists depict him as stronger, more angry and even younger in the wake.



Robert Arai/ The State, Sept. 2001



Cox And Forkum / coxandforkum.com, May 2004