Cartoons for the Classroom

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

Between the lines

Congressional proposals to criminalize illegal and undocumented immigrants and to build a wall along the entire U.S.-Mexico border have sparked demonstrations across the U.S.

Xenophobia

Ugly stereotypes and prejudice mark anti-immigration cartoons

The term xenophobia is typically used to describe the fear or dislike of foreigners -- in general, fear of people different from one's self. Each wave of immigrants has faced cultural, ethnic, and racial prejudice upon arrival in the United States. Italian, Irish, black, Jewish and Latino immigrants were greeted by racial intolerance and discriminatory legislation as their numbers swelled. During the 19th century, Anti-Asian hostility and the fear of "cheap" Asian labor led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which suspended the immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years and prevented those already in the U.S. from becoming citizens. Political cartoons from these eras reflect the prejudices of their times.

Talking points

1. Anti-immigration themes abound in early political cartoons. This vicious portrayal of a Chinese immigrant reflected the anger of many Californians in the 1800s. Chinese immigrants were so skilled and efficient they soon dominated the cigar, clothing and laundry trades. What made the Chinese easy scapegoats for San Franciscans frustrated by high unemployment?

2. Are similar cultural biases evident in the reaction to Latino immigration issues in the states bordering Mexico and elsewhere?

3. Racist and ethnic stereotyping in cartoons was common in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Define "stereotype" and explain how the term applies to this drawing. Would this cartoon be published by the mainstream press today? Explain.

The Coming Man. George Keller / Wasp, San Francisco, 1881

Get out your newspaper

Gather a collection of political cartoons from your newspaper dealing with the immigration issue. 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. Gather news stories about the immigration issue and evaluate the cartoonists' opinions.

Additional resources

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

The San Francisco Wasp: An Illustrated History
http://www.oldmagazines.com/private/press.htm

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