

Analysing Cartoons

When describing a cartoon it is wise to proceed in a certain order. Before you start writing, get prepared by

following the three steps below:

1. Study the cartoon carefully and try to figure out what message the artist wants to convey with it.

(Unless you know the intended message, you cannot describe the cartoon appropriately!!!)

2. Take a closer look at the details and decide whether they contribute to the message or not. Only those aspects that contribute to the message are relevant and therefore have to be described later on.

3. Make a list of all the relevant details.

Once you have completed the first three steps, you can start describing what is going on in the cartoon.

4. Describe where the situation is taking place, which characters are involved, what they are doing and what they are talking about. If possible, refer to the artist and the picture's title, date and source of publication.

Make sure you mention all the relevant details and leave out everything that does not contribute to the understanding of the message.

Keep in mind that for the reader the situation shown in the cartoon is happening right now. Therefore the

correct tense for every action shown in the cartoon is the PRESENT PROGRESSIVE (ING-FORM)! The setting

is described by using the SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE.

When referring to what is being said, thought, or written in the cartoon, try to use your own words as far as

possible. Just copying the content of a speech bubble (Sprechblase), thought bubble (Denkblase), poster, banner, sign or caption (Bildunterschrift) is not a good idea! Make sure your descriptive part only describes

what's going on in the picture and does not contain any sort of interpretation.

Once you have described everything you consider relevant, start a new paragraph (new line!) and interpret the cartoon.

5. Explain what the cartoonist wants to express with the cartoon.

In most cases cartoons contain a clear message. The cartoonist criticises people's behaviour, comments on

trends in our society or just makes fun of certain people. Cartoons are often critical of real people, current

events or trends, so it is important to recognize and identify them: point out the event or issue the cartoon

refers to; if the cartoon is a caricature of a well-known person, it is important to say who it is. Keep in mind

that the characters in the cartoon represent groups of people in most cases. In some cartoons a famous person (e.g. politician, sportsman, celebrity...) is illustrated.

Point out how far the details you described in the first part contribute to the message.

6. After writing your interpretation, read your full description carefully and make sure it really tells the reader what's going on in the cartoon. Keep in mind that after reading your description, a person who has never seen the cartoon before must be able to imagine the situation shown in the cartoon.

Conclusion:

7. Say whether you think the picture or cartoon is effective or not and give reasons for your opinion (refer to the quality of the cartoon, the colours used, the depiction of people, symbols,...)

8. Read your full description once again and correct your mistakes (grammar, spelling, vocabulary).