

Political Cartoons Analysis

Identifying the Main Idea

1. To what political event or idea is the cartoon referring?
2. What key person(s) are targeted in the cartoon?
3. How has the artist depicted these people? Are they distorted in any way? Does the artist's portrayal of characters cast them in a negative or positive light?
4. Identify and explain any symbols incorporated in the cartoon.
5. Identify and explain captions, labels, titles and/or speech bubbles. How do these contribute to the cartoon's message?
6. What is the message of the cartoon? How is the artist trying to persuade the reader?
7. What impact and/or reaction is the artist attempting to trigger?

Analyzing the Method Used by the Artist

1. How does the method used by the artist effectively convey a political message?
2. Identify and explain the use of:
 - a. Juxtaposition (the state of being side by side or close together, in a figurative sense)
 - b. Irony (the use of words or pictures to express something different from, and often opposite of their literal meaning)
 - c. Exaggeration (representation as greater than is actually the case; overstatement)

Cartoonist's perspective: Sympathetic to the plight of low paid workers in Nike factories. Critical of the employment practices of large corporations who contract the production of consumer goods to factories located in low cost (developing) countries.

Use of caricature: Relative size of characters and an aggressive facial expression used to reinforce the unequal power relationship evident in the production process.

Use of caption: Corporate advertising slogan ("Just do it") assigned a new meaning – one that reinforces the cartoonist's principal message of workplace exploitation.

Use of captions: Reinforces and helps contextualize the cartoon's non-verbal elements.

Use of visual metaphor and exaggeration: The boot in the worker's face reinforces the notion of worker exploitation and the suppression of organised labour (trade unions).

The larger European figure is used to highlight the role played by Western-based corporations in the global economy.

Symbolism: Nike name, logo and advertising slogan used to highlight the issue of labour exploitation in developing countries. But the message is more general and indicative – Nike is not the only transnational corporation involved in such practices.

Use of a visual metaphor: Cowered workers representative of exploited labour in clothing and footwear factories located in developing countries.

Context: Sports brands such as Nike promote healthy living but the lives of workers who make the shoes and clothes in Asia and Latin America are anything but healthy. Problems include low wages, long hours, verbal abuse, dangerous working conditions and the denial of the right to form trade unions.

Campaigns such as 'NikeWatch' (mounted by Oxfam) are part of an international campaign to persuade sports brands to respect workers' rights.



Political Cartoon Analysis: "The Dime Novel"



As a class, using the questions and space provided, analyze the political cartoon below:

Try to find at least 4 notable aspects of the image - circle or highlight them & annotate!

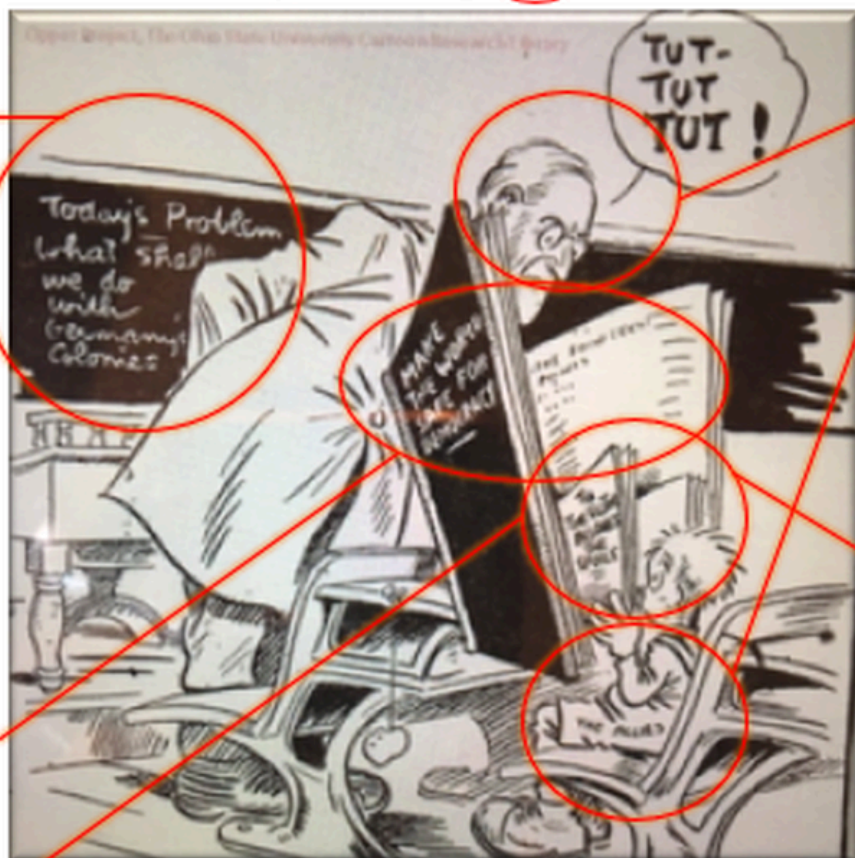


The board reads:
"Today's Problem:
What to do with
Germany's
colonies?"

A major issue
after WWI Wilson
attempted to
address with his
14 points was to
eliminate many of
the territorial
concessions...

The large
textbook reads:
"Make the World
Safe for
Democracy" &
the chapter title
is "The Fourteen
Points." Wilson
believes his 14
Point plan will
help accomplish
this goal...

The Dime Novel
reads: "To the
Victor Goes the
Spoils," which
refers to the
common reaction
of victorious
nations after
war to take
territory from
the "losing" side.



Woodrow
Wilson is
depicted as
the teacher
admonishing
his student-
he is aware of
[the allies']
pattern of
misbehavior -
going against
his wishes

The allies are
depicted as
the
misbehaving
student,
trying to hide
their real
actions /
intentions
behind what
the teacher
(Woodrow
Wilson)
WANTS to
see...

Scan the QR code for access to the DocTeach Cartoon Analysis Worksheet from the National Archives :)

SAMPLE FINAL PARAGRAPH:

President Woodrow Wilson announced his Fourteen Point Plan for European peace in January 1918. The Fourteen Points included free trade, open diplomacy, arms reductions, and an international organization to settle disputes without war. Over half of the points dealt issues of **national borders and national sovereignty**, especially for peoples in Eastern Europe. Wilson's plans were to **eliminate many of the territorial concessions** to the victors typical of peace treaties ("to the victor belong the spoils.") and allow independence for many of the areas under imperial control. In this way, Wilson hoped to solve the problems that led to World War I, thus preventing another European war and, making, as Wilson put it, "**make the world safe for democracy.**"

NOTE: Dime novels were adventure thrillers that were popular with children and criticized by parents and educators...