



POLITICAL CARTOONS

(40-50 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students analyze symbolism and messages in political cartoons and draw one on a current issue.

MATERIALS

Political Cartoon by Steve Benson handout;
political cartoons from newspapers

GET READY

- ✓ Divide the class into groups of four.
- ✓ Duplicate one *Political Cartoon by Steve Benson* handout for each group of four students.
- ✓ Collect political cartoons from local and national newspapers. Ask students to bring them in as well, so that you have one for each student in your class.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Distribute the *Political Cartoon by Steve Benson* handout. Also distribute four additional political cartoons to each group (so that each group member has one).
- ✓ Say, *Political cartoons have varied agendas; they may entertain, challenge viewpoints, satirize, and champion causes. In this cartoon, Steve Benson is satirizing and challenging the viewpoint of senior citizens in Arizona retirement communities who will not allow children into their planned communities.*
- ✓ Review the questions you will ask later about all the cartoons (see the discussion questions). Say, *After your group has answered these questions for the Benson cartoon, each person should examine these same questions for their*

own cartoon. Students can ask their group members for help, if needed.

- ✓ Ask your students to share their political cartoon analyses with the class.
- ✓ Students should now select a current issue for their own original cartoon (example: voter apathy among local 18-year-olds). They need to find symbols that could be used in their cartoons. They can ask their groups members for help: *What are symbols I could use for apathetic 18-year-olds? (Teen in our school's sweatshirt in front of a TV?) What about a symbol for voter responsibility? (Uncle Sam tapping the TV watcher on the shoulder?)*
- ✓ Have your students share their political cartoons with the class.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ For the cartoons they analyzed: *What do the visual symbols stand for? Does it entertain? Challenge a viewpoint? Satirize? Champion a cause? What is the political message of your cartoon?*
- ★ *The Benson cartoon would alienate many readers. Why do political cartoonists sometimes choose to be deliberately offensive?*
- ★ *How do political cartoons influence voters?*
- ★ *Explain how the cartoon you drew qualifies as a political cartoon.*

MORE!

- ✓ Invite a political cartoonist to your classroom. Provide an overhead projector for the presentation, so that the professional can draw for students and show them past cartoons.

Thanks to Pulitzer prize-winning cartoonist Steve Benson of the *Arizona Republic* for sharing the cartoon in this lesson.



**POLITICAL CARTOON BY STEVE
BENSON,
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC**



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