

# Teaching Social Studies through Political Cartoons

2019 GED Annual Conference



# WELCOME!

# In this session, we will...



- Explore the basic elements of political cartoons
- Explore the role political cartoons have played throughout U.S. history
- Review strategies and activities to help students learn how to interpret cartoons
- Share resources

# Ah – remember when...

WWW.ANDERTOONS.COM



"Pencil."

# Focusing Social Studies Instruction

*Integrating High Impact Indicators*



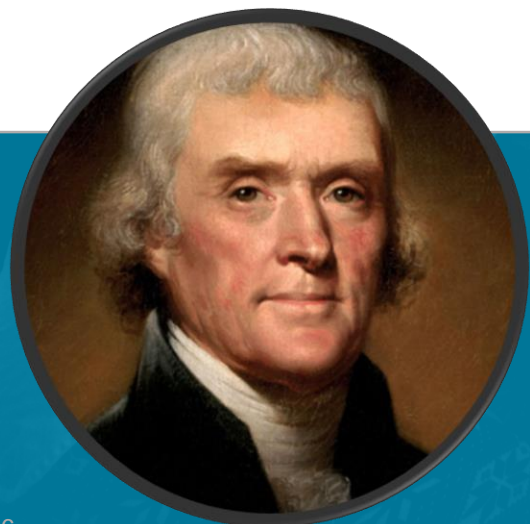


“

*I agree with you that it is the duty of every good citizen to use all the opportunities which occur to him, for preserving documents relating to the history of our country.*

”

— Thomas Jefferson



# What Should I Teach?

## Social Studies Content

(GEDTS Assessment Guide – Social Studies)

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graph TD; A[Social Studies Content  
(GEDTS Assessment Guide – Social Studies)] --> B[Social Studies Focusing Themes]; A --> C[Social Studies Practices (HIIIs)]; B --> D[Students apply skills of analyzing and evaluating to create meaning and understanding]; C --> D;
```

Social Studies  
Focusing Themes

Social Studies  
Practices (HIIIs)

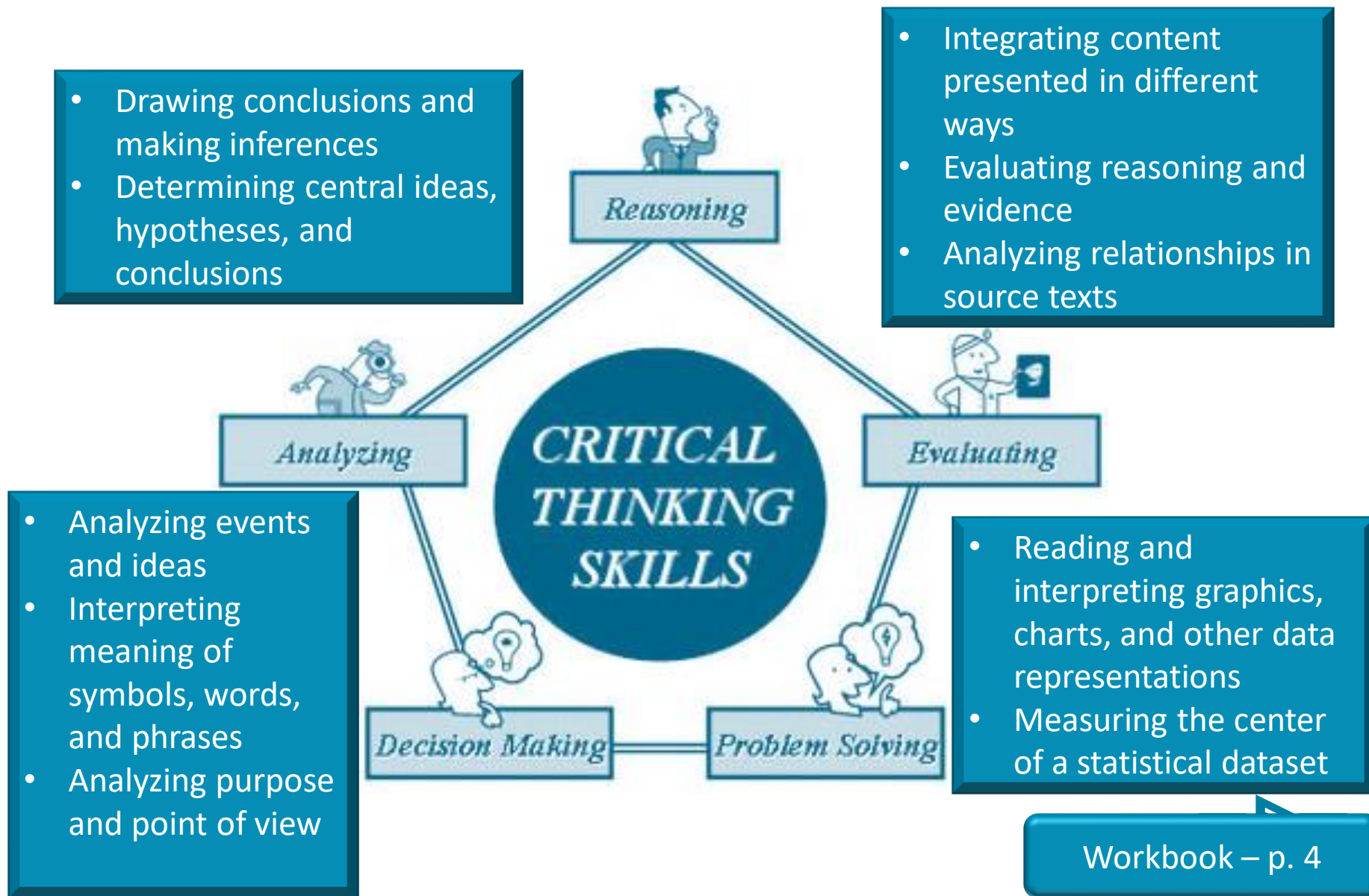
Students apply skills of analyzing and evaluating to  
create meaning and understanding

# Social Studies Themes

		Social Studies Example Topics			
		Civics & Gov't (50%)	US History (20%)	Economics (20%)	Geography & World (15%)
Focusing Themes	<b><i>Development of Modern Liberties and Democracy</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Types of modern and historical governments</li> <li>Structure and design of U.S. government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key historical documents</li> <li>Civil War and Reconstruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key economic events that shape American government and policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of classical civilizations</li> </ul>
	<b><i>Dynamic Responses in Societal Systems</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political parties, campaigns, and elections</li> <li>Contemporary public policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World War I &amp; II</li> <li>Cold War</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fundamental economic concepts</li> <li>Economic causes and impacts of war</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Borders between peoples and nations</li> <li>Human migration</li> </ul>



# Social Studies Practices



# Social Studies High Impact Indicators

- **SSP.2.a** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source document, corroborating or challenging conclusions with evidence.
- **SSP.2.b** Describe people, places, environments, processes, and events, and the connections between and among them.
- **SSP.3.c** Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation, including action by individuals, natural and societal processes, and the influence of ideas.
- **SSP.5.c** Analyze how a historical context shapes an author's point of view.
- **SSP.8.a** Compare treatments of the same social studies topic in various primary and secondary sources, noting discrepancies between and among the sources.

# Improving Graphic/Visual Literacy

**Political  
Cartoons**

# The Tools of the Cartoonist

Cartoonists use five main elements to convey their point of view.

- **symbolism** - using an object to stand for an idea
- **captioning and labels** - used for clarity and emphasis
- **analogy** - a comparison between two unlike things that share some characteristics
- **irony** - the difference between the way things are and the way things should be or the way things are expected to be
- **exaggeration** - overstating or magnifying a problem or a physical feature or habit: big nose, bushy eyebrows, large ears, baldness



# What is the Cartoonist Doing?

Symbolism



Caricature



Exaggeration/Distortion



Humor and Irony



Stereotypes





OMAHA WORLD-HERALD  
KOTERDA





# History of Political Cartoons

Began as street-level phenomenon

- Posted on walls
- Passed from person to person
- Published in newspapers
- Provided a way to spread political ideas

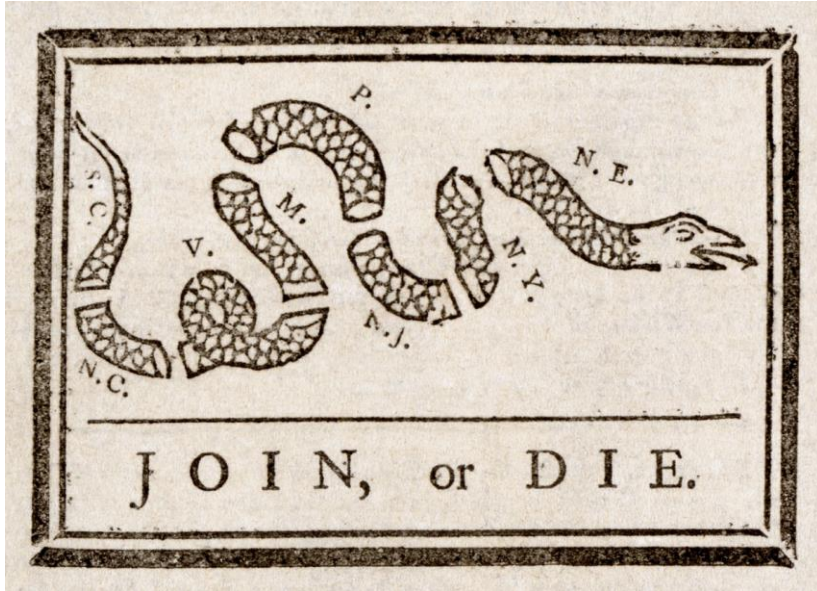
Became a valuable selling point for newspapers and magazines

Allowed cartoonists to express opinions through

- Praise
- Attack
- Caricature
- Lampoon
- Satire



# The First Political Cartoon



First political cartoon created by Benjamin Franklin in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on May 9, 1754.

- Cartoon states importance of the Albany Plan of Union which proposed a centralized government within the thirteen colonies.
- The snake is cut into eight parts to symbolize each of the colonies along the American coast.
- The goal was to point out the dangers without colonial unity.

# Important Caveats

## Political cartoons

- are expressions of opinion
- Use emotional appeals to persuade others to accept those opinions
- Are not evidence of the way things were or the way everyone else felt about them
- Are evidence of point of view and often heavily biased
- Often require students to make inferences

<https://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/21733>

# Questions Students Should Be Asking

What conditions might have given rise to this cartoon?

What groups might it have appealed to?

What values does the cartoon express overtly or implicitly?

# TIMELINE

History via Cartoon

By: SKPittman

**The Gerry-Mander**  
1812



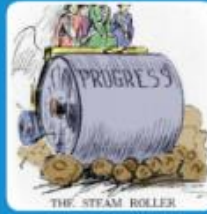
**A Winning Team**



**Labor Issues**  
1894



**Women Vote**  
1919



**Great Depression**  
1935



**Lincoln Wept**  
1963



**Wall Street**



**Join or Die**  
1754



**Lincoln and Douglass Election**



**WWI Elections**  
1917



**Prohibition**  
1926



**Peace Today**  
1947



**Never Forget**  
9-11



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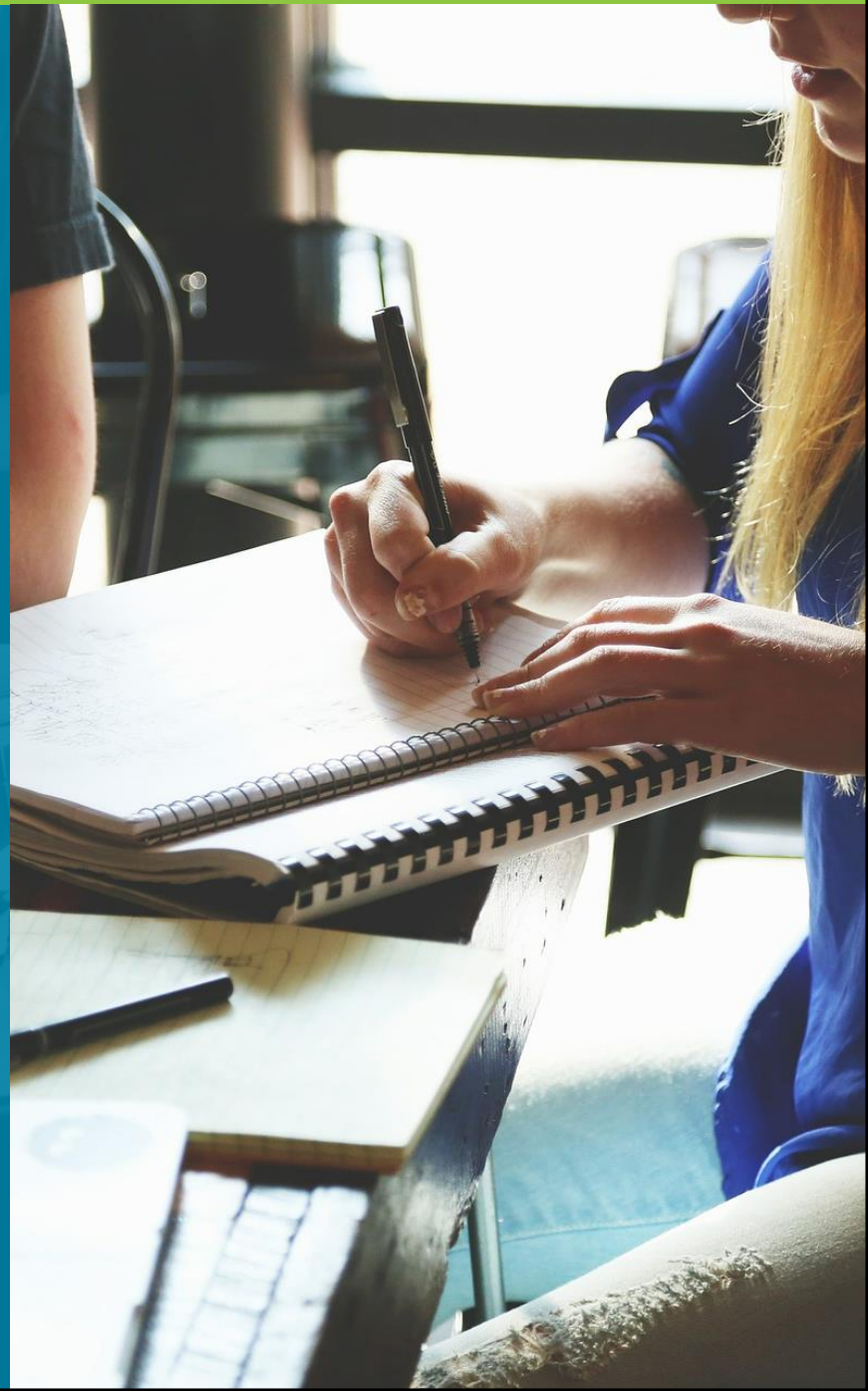
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# What Does the Constitution Say About That?

*Learning about the Government through Cartoons*







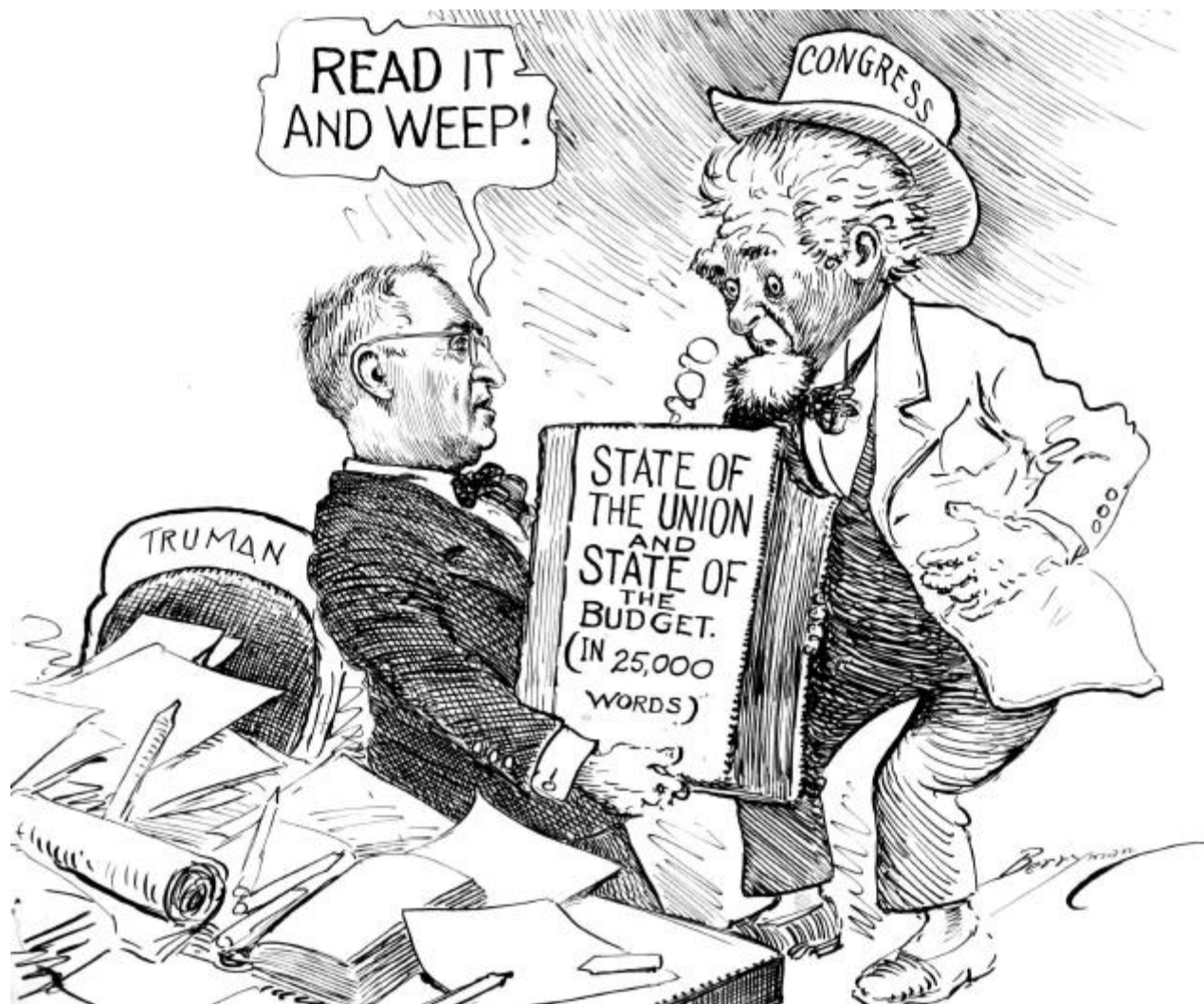
# Time to Test Your Knowledge!

You have 90 seconds to analyze each of the political cartoons. Each cartoon is associated with a specific clause in the constitution. Identify what part of constitution is applies and write it down. Don't share your information, yet!















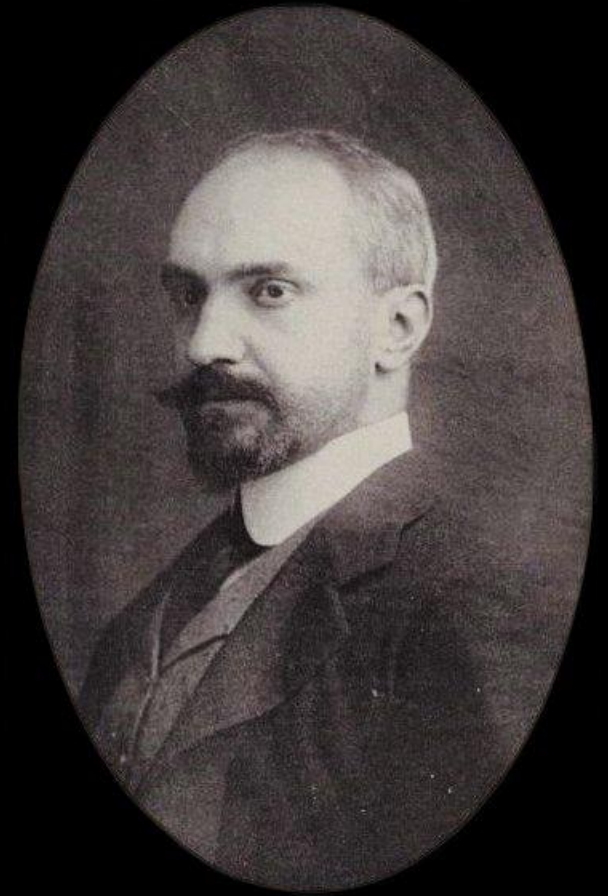


# Exploring the Connections

*Political Cartoons and Life*

Those who **cannot remember  
the past** are condemned  
to **repeat it.**

— *George Santayana*



AZ QUOTES



# History Repeats – Great Depression and the Great Recession

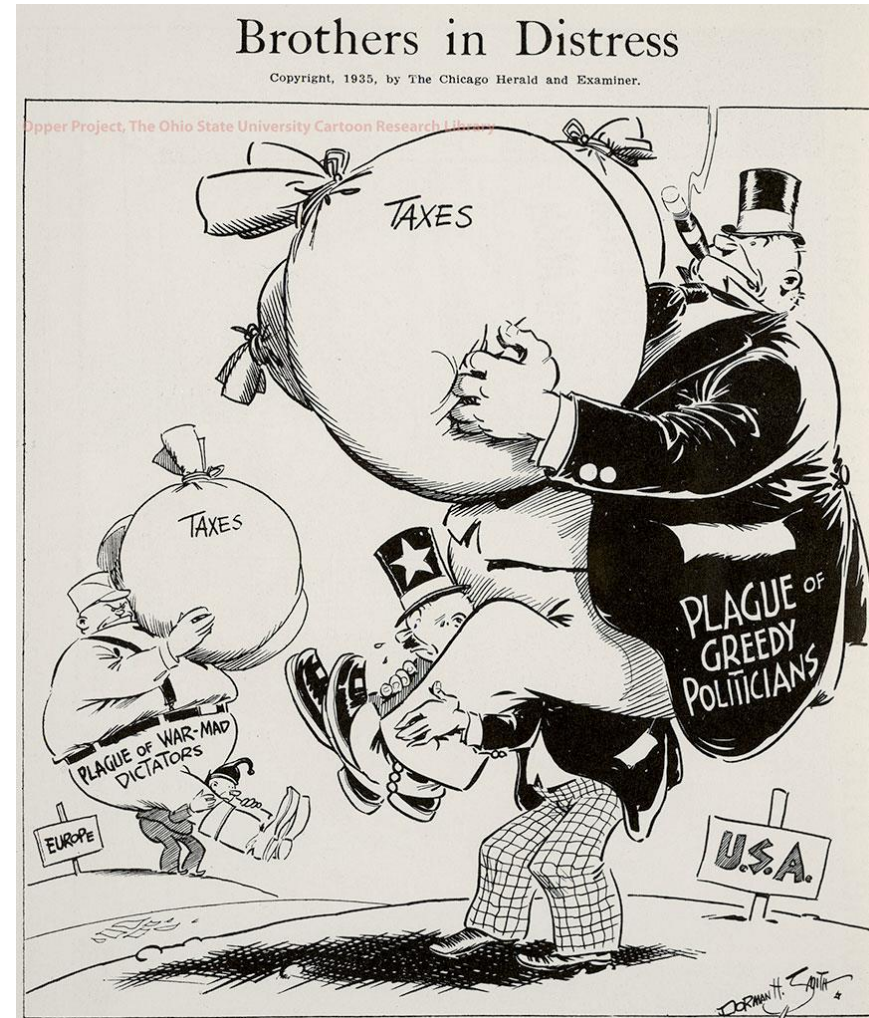
1929



2008



# Depression and Recession from the Cartoonist View





# History Repeats – Gerrymandering (Today)



GERRYMANDERED DISTRICTS

*Shelton* 2016



# History Repeats – Gerrymandering (1812)



Elkanah Tisdale (1771-1835)

# History Repeats – Wage Inequality

1999

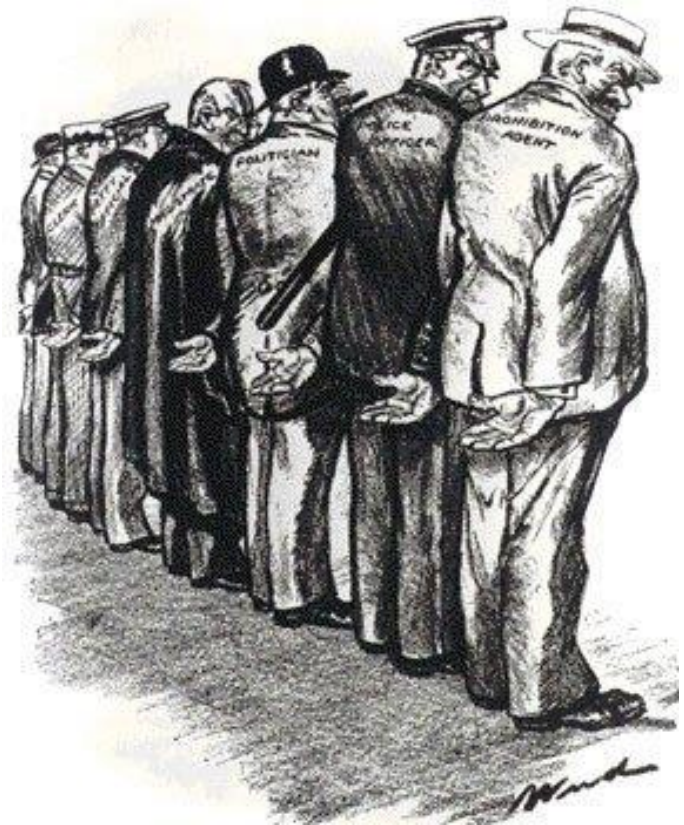


2019





# What about that swamp?



# Taking a Deeper Dive into Political Cartoons

*Using Graphic Organizers*


This Is the Toughest Puzzle of the Whole Set  
and We've Got to Put It Together if Possible





# Analyze a Cartoon (Novice)

## Analyze a Cartoon



### Meet the cartoon.

What do you see?

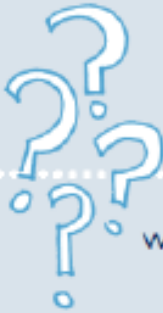
Is the cartoon?

☐ BLACK AND WHITE    ☐ COLOR

Is there a caption?




☐ YES    ☐ NO

If so, what does the caption tell you?



### Observe its parts.

Are there people, symbols, or objects in the cartoon?



PEOPLE    SYMBOLS    OBJECTS

What are the people doing in the cartoon?

What are the objects used for in the cartoon?

Write two words that describe the cartoon.

### Try to make sense of it.

Answer as best you can. The caption, if available, may help.


What do the symbols stand for in the cartoon?

Who drew the cartoon?

When do you think this cartoon was drawn?


What is the main idea of the cartoon?


List two parts (words or objects from the cartoon) that support the main idea.



### Use it as historical evidence.

Where do you think we could find out more information about the people, symbols, or objects in the cartoon?





NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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# Analyze a Cartoon

## Analyze a Cartoon

**Meet the cartoon.**

Quickly scan the cartoon. What do you notice first?

What is the title or caption?

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**Observe its parts.**

WORDS	VISUALS
Are there labels, descriptions, thoughts, or dialogue?	List the people, objects, and places in the cartoon.
	List the actions or activities.

---

**Try to make sense of it.**

WORDS	VISUALS
Which words or phrases are the most significant?	Which of the visuals are symbols?
List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed.	What do they stand for?

Who drew this cartoon? When is it from?

What was happening at the time in history it was created?


What is the message? List evidence from the cartoon or your knowledge about the cartoonist that led you to your conclusion.

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**Use it as historical evidence.**

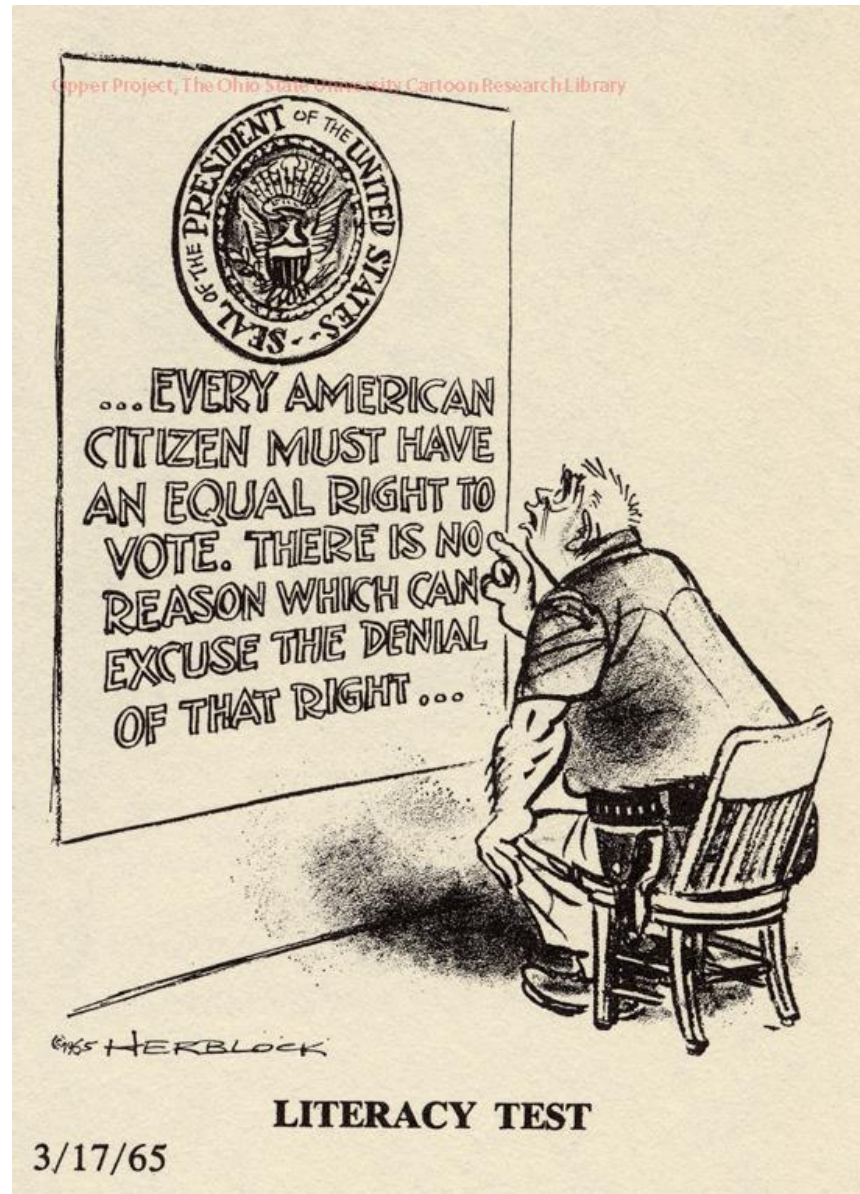
What did you find out from this cartoon that you might not learn anywhere else?

What other documents or historical evidence are you going to use to help you understand this event or topic?

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# Analyze that Cartoon



And on a final note...





# What Can You Do?

- Bring in and share cartoons from your hometown paper and talk about current issues that are “closer to home.”
- Do “The Cartoon of the Day.” Provide students with a copy of a cartoon. Ask them to analyze the cartoon and be prepared to share their analyses. At a set time during the day, discuss the cartoon. See what challenges students and address those issues.
- Use the Constitutional Scavenger Hunt with Political Cartoons from the National Archives.
- Provide practice and build students’ understanding of historical events.



# Resources



## Legislative Branch

[Home](#) > [The Center for Legislative Archives](#) > [Educational Resources](#) > [Lesson Plans](#) > [Constitution Scavenger Hunt with Political Cartoons](#)

### Legislative Archives

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## Constitution Scavenger Hunt with Political Cartoons

### Summary

In this lesson, students will analyze 16 political cartoons drawn by Clifford and Jim Berryman during the early to mid-20th century. They will search through the Constitution and associate each cartoon with a specific clause. Through networking exercises, students will analyze all 16 cartoons and read the entire Constitution. They will learn about the outline and structure of the Constitution, as well as the content of many of its clauses.

### Rationale

Understanding the Constitution is a vital element of the study of U.S. History and American government. Additionally, studying political cartoons allows students to enhance the social studies skills of understanding, applying, analyzing, and evaluating information.

### Guiding Question

How are the provisions of the U.S. Constitution visually represented in popular media?

### Materials

[16 Political Cartoon Facsimiles](#)

[The Constitution of the United States: A Transcript](#)

[2 Worksheets](#)

[Answer Key for Worksheet 2](#)

CAGLE CARTOONS > COLUMNS > TOPICS > ARTISTS > COLUMNISTS >

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### DARYL'S DESK

by Daryl Cagle

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Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s)



Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)



Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877)



The Development of the Industrial United States (1870-1900)

# Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/themes/political-cartoons/set.html>

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Specific artifacts (images, manuscripts, maps, sound files) with analysis tools help students think like historians about a particular historical event or phenomenon.

  
**Political Cartoons**  
Political cartoons paired with other historical documents let students explore the ways in which cartoonists try to persuade their audience.

  
**The Spanish-American War: The United States Becomes a World Power**  
The Spanish-American War launched the United States as a world power. Yellow journalism, the USS Maine and Theodore Roosevelt's rise to political power through his leadership of the Rough Riders.

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