

HISTORY TEACHING INSTITUTE



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

HISTORY LESSON PLANS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

RESOURCES

EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS

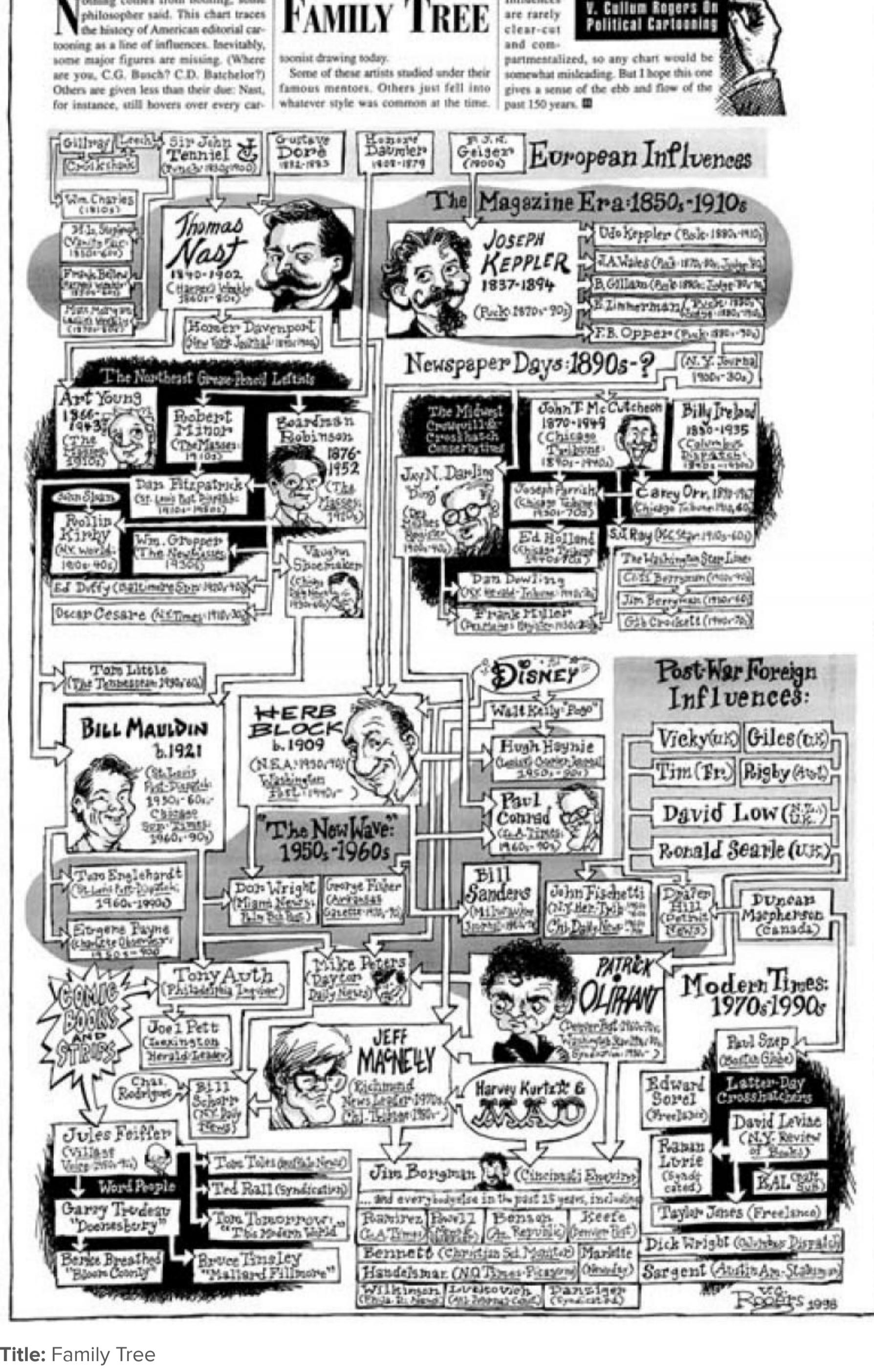


WHO ARE WE?

History Teaching Institute / History Lesson Plans / Opper Project / History of Editorial Cartoons

History of Editorial Cartoons

Family Tree



Title: Family Tree

Publication Date: 1998

Credit: Reprinted by permission of V. C. Rogers.

History Lesson Plans

American History - Connecting to the Past

[Back to History Lesson Plans](#)

[Back to History Primary Source Activities](#)

[Central Asia in World History](#)

[Cold Cases: Lessons in Historical Skills and Methods](#)

[European History, 1450 - Present](#)

[Teaching History with Historic Clothing Artifacts](#)

[Inventors and Innovators \(Ohio Chautauqua 2008\)](#)

[Opper Project](#)

[Editorial Cartoons: An Introduction](#)

[History of Editorial Cartoons](#)

[Lesson Plans](#)

[Biography of Opper](#)

[Credits](#)

[Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective](#)

[United States History](#)

[World War II \(Ohio Chautauqua 2007\)](#)

Contact Us

Department of History
230 Annie and John Glenn Avenue
Columbus OH, 43210

E-Mail: history@osu.edu

Phone: 614-292-3831



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

If you have a disability and experience difficulty accessing this site, please contact us for assistance via email at asc-accessibility@osu.edu.

[Privacy Policy](#)
[LOGIN](#)

Understanding Political Cartoons

Political (or editorial) cartoons are editorials in picture form. The cartoonist is expressing an opinion on a controversial issue, blending fact and opinion. The drawings grab the attention, often in a humorous way, and are designed to spark an interest from the reader.

Jeff MacNelly, cartoonist for the *Richmond News Leader*, describes his work by saying, "Political cartoonists violate every rule of ethical journalism -- they misquote, trifle with the truth, make science fiction out of politics and sometimes should be held for personal libel. But when the smoke clears, the political cartoonist has been getting closer to the truth than the guys who write political opinions."

To accomplish all this, cartoonists use many techniques. An understanding of these techniques will improve your "reading" of the cartoons.

Cartoonists' techniques include:

CARICATURE - distorting a person's features, but still keeping that person recognizable. Cartoonists drew Ronald Reagan with big wavy hair, and a wrinkled neck.

STEREOTYPING - showing all persons of one group (religious, racial, national, etc.) as looking or acting the same. Teachers are often shown in cartoons wearing glasses down on their nose, wearing a bun held together with a pencil.

SYMBOLS - using a sign or object to stand for something else. Uncle Sam or the eagle stand for the United States; a bear stands for the Soviet Union, and a lion represents Great Britain.

LABELS - using written words to identify figures in a cartoon.

SATIRE - pointing out something wrong and ridiculing it.

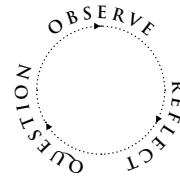
EXAGGERATION - overemphasizing a situation or portraying it as "bigger than life." A cartoonist might show a problem as a bottomless pit.

Political Cartoon Analysis

1. What facts are given or implied?
2. Are any symbols used to add meaning to the cartoon? If YES, explain.
3. Does the cartoonist use labels for any characters or items in the cartoon? If YES, explain.
4. Who, or what, do the characters in the cartoon represent? Has the cartoonist used caricature exaggeration in depicting any characters? Explain.
5. What meaning does the caption give to the cartoon?
6. With what issue is this cartoon concerned?
7. What seems to be the cartoonist's point of view on the issue?
8. Can you suggest another point of view on the issue?

TEACHER'S GUIDE

ANALYZING POLITICAL CARTOONS



Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. **Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.**

OBSERVE

Have students identify and note details.

Sample Questions:

Describe what you see. · What do you notice first? · What people and objects are shown? · What, if any, words do you see? · What do you see that looks different than it would in a photograph? · What do you see that might refer to another work of art or literature? · What do you see that might be a symbol? · What other details can you see?

REFLECT

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.

What's happening in the cartoon? · What was happening when this cartoon was made? · Who do you think was the audience for this cartoon? · What issue do you think this cartoon is about? · What do you think the cartoonist's opinion on this issue is? What methods does the cartoonist use to persuade the audience?

QUESTION

Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.

What do you wonder about... who? · what? · when? · where? · why? · how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:

Beginning

Think about the point the cartoonist was trying to make with this cartoon. Were you persuaded? Why or why not?

Intermediate

Compare two political cartoons that are on the same side of an issue. Identify the different methods — like symbols, allusions, or exaggeration — that the two cartoons use to persuade their audience.

Advanced

Select a political cartoon. Think about the point of view of the cartoonist. Describe or draw how the cartoon might be different if it had been created by a cartoonist with a different point of view.

For more tips on using primary sources, go to

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers>

Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

Level 1

Visuals	Words (not all cartoons include words)
1. List the objects or people you see in the cartoon.	1. Identify the cartoon caption and/or title. 2. Locate three words or phrases used by the cartoonist to identify objects or people within the cartoon. 3. Record any important dates or numbers that appear in the cartoon.

Level 2

Visuals	Words
2. Which of the objects on your list are symbols? 3. What do you think each symbol means?	4. Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so? 5. List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.

Level 3

A. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.

Limit response for each question to 3 lines of text

B. Explain how the words in the cartoon clarify the symbols.

C. Explain the message of the cartoon.

D. What special interest groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?

Reading an Editorial Cartoon

What is the cartoon's title or caption?

Who drew the cartoon?

When and where was it published?

What is familiar to you in this cartoon?

What questions do you have about this cartoon?

Editorial cartoonists combine pictures and words to communicate their opinions.

What tools does the cartoonist use to make his or her point?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Humor
<input type="checkbox"/> Caricature
<input type="checkbox"/> Symbols
<input type="checkbox"/> Stereotypes | <input type="checkbox"/> Speech balloons
<input type="checkbox"/> Labels
<input type="checkbox"/> Analogy to another historical or current event
<input type="checkbox"/> References to popular culture, art, literature, etc. |
|---|---|

List the important people and objects shown in the cartoon:

Are symbols used? If so, what are they and what do they mean?

Are stereotypes used? If so, what group is represented?

Is anyone caricatured in the cartoon? If so, who?

Briefly explain the message of the cartoon:

What groups would agree /disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?

Do you think this cartoon is effective in its message?

Caricature

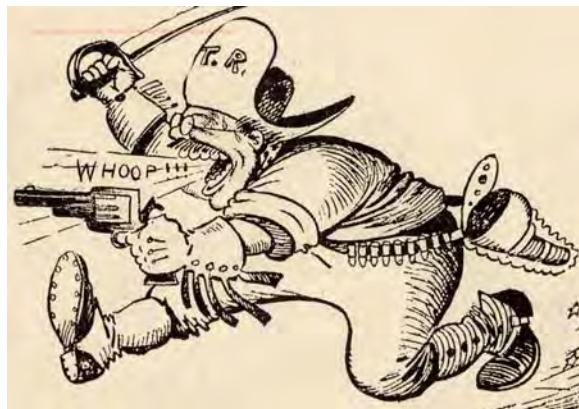
Caricature is the deliberate exaggeration of a well-known person's distinctive features. The cartoonist must be careful not to overdo this exaggeration or the person will not be recognized by readers. Caricature is the best known device used by editorial cartoonists to make political statements. Some cartoonists create realistic, portrait-like images while others only hint at the true appearance of the person.

Caricature is based on the assumption that readers will recognize the person being depicted. This makes the study of historic editorial cartoons challenging because we may not have seen a photograph of the person being depicted, so we have no way to know what he or she looked like.

Cartoonists caricatured President Theodore Roosevelt in many ways during his lifetime. What specific characteristics of Roosevelt's appearance do the cartoonists emphasize or exaggerate?



Cartoonist: Ole May.



Cartoonist: W. L. Evans



Cartoonist: Homer Davenport

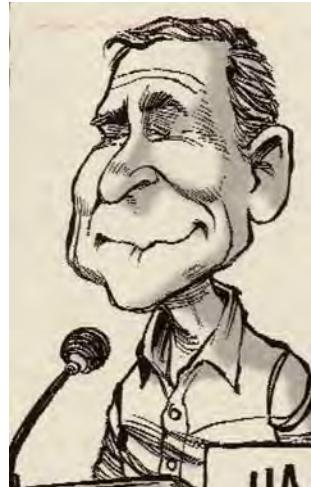


Cartoonist: Frederick Burr Opper

Within caricature, the question of what is a “fair” likeness has no answer. The cartoonist is not concerned about fairness, but about expressing an opinion, as may be seen in these examples of contemporary cartoonists’ caricatures of President George W. Bush. Which of these caricatures seem the most critical of Bush and why?



Used by permission of the cartoonist, Steve Sack.



Used by permission of the cartoonist, David Horsey.



Used by permission of the cartoonist, Ben Sargent.



Used by permission of the cartoonist, Tom Toles.



Used by permission of the cartoonist., Kevin Kallaugher.



Used by permission of the cartoonist, Jake Fuller.