



# Political Cartooning

Grade 5

Social Studies/Art

**Social Studies: Standard 2:** Students will understand the chronology and significance of key events leading to self-government.

**Objective 2a:** Describe how the movement toward revolution culminated in a Declaration of Independence.

**Visual Art Standard 5.V.C.3:**

Create artistic statements using art vocabulary to describe personal choices in art-making.

**Standard 5.V.R.1:**

Compare one's own interpretation of a work of art with the interpretation of others, and identify and analyze cultural associations suggested by visual imagery.

**Standard 5.V.CO.2:**

Identify how art is used to inform or change beliefs, values, or behaviors of an individual or society.

**Objective:** The students will be able to analyze and interpret the purpose for political cartoons and the messages they convey. The students will also create their own political cartoons based on their course of study in American History.

**Time:** 60 Minutes

**Equipment and Materials needed:**

paper  
pencil,  
art supplies to color,  
an assortment of political cartoons from the time period being studied

**Lesson Outline:**

1. Post or display an assortment of political cartoons for the unit of study for the students to view. Discuss the techniques used to convey the artist's point across and what message he was trying to convey. Repeat for each political cartoon. What was the purpose? What was exaggerated or minimized to express the artist's opinion? Was it effective? What does the opposite opinion look like?

2. Give students a topic to create a political cartoon about in pairs or groups. Assign the point of view they should express in their political cartoon. Require students to use minimal words, to fill the paper, to use adequate color, and to stay on topic. They should also be reminded of what is and is not appropriate to include in their drawings.
3. Allow students to present their posters and explain the techniques they used to express their group's opinion.

\*I have done this activity several times with my students over the last two years. They seem to really enjoy drawing caricatures of famous people and situations. (We had previously drawn caricatures of ourselves in art). After they have drawn their own, they are better able to critically analyze political cartoons in the future and use them to support their own opinions about history and why certain events happened.

\*Last year we studied the presidential campaigns of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams using materials from the Colonial Williamsburg website. This was the first time that political parties played a major role in the election. Although these two men were personal friends, their political opinions were polar opposites. After studying their political points of view, the students made campaign posters for each side (two groups for Jefferson and two groups for Adams). After their posters had been presented, we had a very good debate about who should win the election. To conclude the activity, we watched a short video about the election and discussed the effects on their friendship.