

Transportation and Industry Change Wisconsin

Activity 9.2: Political Cartoons

Teacher Materials

Preparation/Organization You will need a transparency of the student page to display for the whole class, as well as a copy for each group or student, depending upon how you organize the activity. Students will also need blank pieces of paper or poster board, as well as crayons, colored pencils, or markers. The activity is suitable for the class as a whole, small groups, or individual students. Students can be supervised, work independently, or work under your direction for part of the activity and then let loose to work on their own.

Procedure

1. Display a transparency of the student page for the class, reminding them that although this political cartoon dates back to the early 1900s, political cartoons still appear almost every day in most newspapers. Ask students about political cartoons they might have seen. You may also wish to display some political cartoons from recent newspapers. Talk with students about why political cartoons remain popular, and why they can be effective in communicating ideas about current issues and people.
2. Distribute copies of the student page and discuss the directions for Part 1. Give students time to study the cartoon and discuss any questions they might have about it. Then have them answer the questions for Part 1.
3. When students have finished Part 1, have them share their ideas, making sure that they understand the ideas presented in the cartoon.
4. Then read the directions for Part 2 and distribute drawing supplies. Tell students that they may consult their textbooks to remind themselves about the Progressive Era. Emphasize that most effective political cartoons communicate a single important idea or message and that they often do this with humor or exaggeration. When students have finished their political cartoons, organize a display so that students can view and discuss their work.

Answers

Part 1

1. For La Follette.
2. The cartoon communicates this idea by showing how Wisconsin was in the grip of an octopus—the railroad trusts—before La Follette’s reforms; the cartoon depicts Wisconsin as a “model state” after his reforms.

Part 2

Cartoons will vary, but each student should be able to create a cartoon that, regardless of his or her drawing abilities, clearly communicates an idea and point of view.

Name _____ Date _____

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Part 1

This cartoon appeared in 1911. Look at it closely. Decide whether it is for Senator Robert M. "Fighting Bob" La Follette and his policies or against them. Then answer the questions below about the cartoon.



1. Is this cartoon for Senator La Follette and his policies or against them? _____

2. What in the cartoon tells you this? _____

Part 2

On a separate sheet of paper, create your own political cartoon about La Follette and the Progressive Era.