

WOMEN'S LONG ROAD

MAINE STATE MUSEUM TEACHER MATERIALS



Lesson 2: Cartooning for a Cause

How Maine artist Lou Rogers' comics influenced the nation

Recommended grade level: 6-8

Instructional Materials

Lesson 2 Image Guide (Powerpoint)

Lou Rogers Handout

Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

Cartoon Image Handout (Optional)

Background Discussion

This lesson uses **analysis and interpretation of a primary source** document to encourage students' understanding of the women's suffrage movement in Maine. Using the provided political cartoons, this exercise hones students' visual literacy skills and takes them deeper into the suffrage movement in the decades leading up to the passage of the 19th Amendment.

This lesson plan can stand alone but ideally builds upon some knowledge of the women's suffrage movement. The **Introduction to Maine Women's Suffrage** document can provide a starting point for teachers and students. **Lesson 1: Cartooning for a Cause** may also serve as a helpful introduction to build upon. **Lesson 3: Mainers Speak Up** is recommended for higher grade levels due to the content of the primary source documents that students will work with. Teachers may review the materials to see if they would be a good fit for their students.

Political cartoons serve as a **primary resource** for research into our past. They provide engaging and humorous insights into the culture of the era that produced them—what ideas artists valued and what they wanted to challenge. Students will identify the persuasive techniques used in political cartoons and demonstrate an understanding of how and why they were used.

The exercises in this lesson provide an introduction to **visual literacy**. Visual literacy maintains that students not only need to read traditional print texts critically, but that they also need to engage in analysis of visual imagery and how images are used to convey ideas

and even advocate for specific causes. Careful, critical analysis of images is an important component of visual literacy; in the process of building these skills, students build literacy in all areas. Visual literacy helps students interpret and understand people, events, eras, and large ideas in a diverse array of contexts.

Visual literacy (noun) –the ability to recognize, understand, make meaning of, and communicate through visible actions or images (pictures) or other visual media. - Maine State Museum Curriculum

Essential Questions

- What can a cartoon tell us about a time period, place, a people, or the intent of the creator?
- How are images and symbols used to influence individuals and society?
- How can evidence be used to support an argument about an image?
- What is the difference between observation and interpretation?
- What persuasive techniques are used in political cartoons?
- Why and how did political cartoons contribute to the woman suffrage movement?

Plan of Instruction

Overview

This lesson begins with a discussion of how images can share information, especially in modern popular culture and online communication. Wonder Woman is used as an example of a symbolic figure with social impact. Wonder Woman's story connects to the focal point of this lesson, Maine cartoonist Lou Rogers.

Students will learn the history of Lou Rogers along with the differences between comics and political cartoons. The class will discuss the meaning and importance of symbols. They will then gain visual literacy skills through an image analysis activity. This provides the class with practice before the final section of the lesson—in-depth analysis of Lou Rogers' political cartoons. The lesson ends with an opportunity for reflection.

Timing

This class can be broken into two approximately 45-minute sessions or combined into one 1.5 hour session.

SECTION ONE (approx. 45 min)

Part 1: Introduction to Cartoons

1. The teacher opens the Lesson 2 Image Guide on a projector or distributes a printed version of the presentation.
2. **Slide 1-2:** The teacher introduces the lesson, then advances to slide three.
3. **Slide 3:** Context to share: Political cartoons are just one way that people use images to change people's minds or just to share information. In the last ten years, online memes have become more and more widely used. Even though posting a meme on social media is fairly new, it developed from similar art forms in the past.
4. The teacher reads the text out loud to the class (it is small):
 - Anti-suffrage cartoon in *Life Magazine*, 1913. Text reads "Militants... As they are... As they think they are... As they appear to the police and shopkeepers."
 - The word "Militants" here refers to activists fighting for women's suffrage.
5. Students should describe the characteristics of the women in each of the three rows. Draw attention to the "Votes for Women" pins on the clothing of the women in the top row if students are unable to see them.
6. The teacher asks the class: *Do you think this artist was in support of women fighting to get the vote, or against them?* Against, because he has drawn suffragettes as ugly and mean, and mocked them by showing how he thinks they see themselves.
7. **Slide 4:** Show a modern parallel—one popular type of meme. Over 100 years later, we still have similar techniques of using images and humor to make a statement.
8. **Slide 5:** The teacher shows students the photograph of Wonder Woman actress Gal Gadot from the 2017 movie and asks if any students recognize the image. Explain that it is a promotional movie photo of Wonder Woman, who has appeared in many comic books, TV shows, and movies over the decades. This image is from a modern movie.
9. **Slide 6:** *Who is Wonder Woman?* Use the slide to quickly review her abilities.
10. **Slide 7:** [Image from the 75th anniversary of Wonder Woman] The teacher points out that the oldest version of the character is on the left, the newest on the right. Ask the students: *Has Wonder Woman changed in 75 years? How?*
11. **Slides 8-9:** [Why does she matter?] The teacher reviews the content and discusses with the class. After seeing both slides, ask students: *Have you ever seen a comic book character inspire someone? Why and how? Think about superhero movies you may have seen recently—Avengers, Black Panther, etc. Think about book characters.*
12. **Slide 10:** [Wonder Woman's Secret History] The teacher lets the students know that the drawing on the left is by a Maine cartoonist named Lou Rogers, and the one on the right is by Harry G. Peter, the original Wonder Woman artist. Ask the students: *What do you see in the drawing on the left? What about the drawing on the right?*
13. The teacher shares the following information with students:

Context to share:

Harry G. Peter, the artist who originally drew Wonder Woman, worked for a magazine at a desk next to Lou Rogers, a female cartoonist from Maine. Lou drew many women's suffrage cartoons, including this image of a woman in chains. We can't be positive that Peters was directly inspired by Rogers, but his drawings were certainly influenced by images from the women's suffrage campaign. The author and creator of Wonder Woman, Dr. William Moulton Marston, also had close ties to the women's suffrage movement.

Part 2: Lou Rogers

1. **Slide 11:** [Part 3: Lou Rogers] Read the quote out loud:
 - a. *"Editors said there were no women cartoonists. They said women couldn't even draw jokes. They hadn't any humor."* -Friend of cartoonist Lou Rogers, Lewiston Daily Sun, 1924
2. Ask the students if this has changed since the early 1900s. Are there many female cartoonists and artists? What about female comedians?
3. The teacher distributes the **Lou Rogers Handout**. The class can read it individually or go through it as a group. [Optional] If short on time, this handout can be sent home for students to read as homework. There is a reflection question at the end which could be a prompt for a written assignment: *What gender stereotypes do you see today in movies, television, advertisements, and products we buy? Are there other images that fight these stereotypes?*
4. **Slide 12:** The teacher leads a short class discussion on the distinction between political cartoons and comics. Point out that Wonder Woman is a comic series, whereas Lou Rogers drew political cartoons. Both forms of art can carry powerful messages in different ways.

Part 3: The Power of Symbols [Activity in steps 2-5 is optional—if there is time]

1. **Slide 13:** Definition of "symbol."
2. The teacher stands at a white board and draws 3-5 common symbols that students would recognize (i.e. heart, dollar sign, peace sign, brand logo, smiley face, etc.), then asks students to identify the symbols. *What do these symbols mean? How do you know what they mean?*
3. Divide the students into groups of 2-3, and make sure each group has a blank piece of paper. Ask each group to come up with one "good" symbol, which indicates something positive, and one "bad" symbol, which indicates something negative. Draw each symbol on a piece of paper. Make sure there are no words on the page.

4. Have each group pass their paper to the right so that they get to see another group's symbols. The students will discuss as a group and decide what the symbols mean. Can they identify which is the good symbol and which is the bad symbol? How can they tell?
5. Class discussion:
 - *How have you seen symbols used in everyday life? Why are they useful?*

Part 4: Image Analysis

1. **Slide 14:** The teacher explains to the class that now that they've practiced with symbols and learned about cartoons, it's time to look deeply at images.
2. **Slide 15:** [Warmup Activity (cat in a towel)] The teacher asks the students "What do you see?"
3. **Slide 16:** [Observation vs. Interpretation] When students have finished describing the photo, review the meanings of observation and interpretation together.
4. **Slide 17:** Repeat the difference between observation and interpretation.
5. **Slide 18:** Try it as a class to demonstrate how an analysis of the cat photo would differ when using this technique. Invite the students to find and categorize other examples.
6. **Slide 19:** The teacher asks students to practice as a class by asking "What is happening in this image?" Start with as many observations as possible before moving to interpretations. Remind students that an observation is a basic description of what you see, like a list of the objects and actions in the image.
 - a. **Sample observations** from this photo: there is a child, there is a bird (duck, if students recognize it), the child is running, there is a building, there is grass.
7. Next, move to **interpretations**. Remind students that an interpretation is a reflection on what the image means and relationships between the elements of the image—what you think is happening and why. **Whenever students make an interpretation they need to back it up with evidence from the image.** The teacher may prompt this by asking "What do you see in the image that makes you think that?" or "How do you know?"
 - b. **Sample interpretations** from this photo: the picture was taken outside because we can see plants and the outside of buildings. The child seems to be running from the duck because she is moving away from it and her facial expression indicates fear. The child may be a girl because of their long hair and clothing colors. The picture looks like it was taken in summer because of the child's shorts and sandals and the green grass.

SECTION TWO (approx. 45 min)

Part 5: Cartoon Analysis

1. **Slide 20:** The teacher explains that the class now has all the tools they need to study cartoons from the women's suffrage movement. The class will be observing and interpreting four different cartoons by Maine artist Lou Rogers.
2. The teacher distributes three copies of the Cartoon Analysis Worksheet and uses the worksheet to discuss the seven main methods that political cartoons use to persuade readers. [If working in groups, one student can serve as note-taker. In this circumstance there only needs to be one worksheet per cartoon for each group.]
3. Go over the list of persuasive elements as a class and answer any student questions. Students will be practicing this together as a class to help clarify.
4. [Optional] Distribute copies of the **Cartoon Image Handout**. These are the same images available in the presentation—they are available in a separate document to make it easier for students to see the drawings in detail.
5. **Slide 21:** The teacher leads the class in the analysis of the first political cartoon using the Cartoon Analysis Worksheet. Students don't have to fill in the worksheet, but just look at it as a guide.
6. **Slides 22-24:** Students use the worksheet to analyze the remaining three cartoons. The teacher will decide if they should work individually, in partners, or in groups. Allow around 5 minutes per cartoon. After completing the worksheet for each cartoon, the class will come back as a group to discuss the results of the analysis, answering the following questions for each cartoon:
 - a. What issue is this political cartoon about?
 - b. What is the cartoonist's opinion on this issue?
 - c. Is this cartoon persuasive? Why or why not?

Part 6: Reflection

1. **Slide 25:** The teacher prompts the students to **reflect on the cartoons, either as a guided discussion or as an optional writing exercise**. This will also allow the class to follow up on the activity at a later date if there is no more time in-class.
 - What can a cartoon tell us about a time period, place, a people, or the intent of the creator?
 - How are images and symbols used to influence individuals and society?
 - How can you use evidence to support an argument about an image?
 - What is the difference between observation and interpretation?
 - What persuasive techniques are used in political cartoons?
 - How and why did political cartoons contribute to the woman suffrage movement?