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# Analyzing Political Cartoons from the American Revolution

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# Analyzing Political Cartoons from the American Revolution

## Lesson Overview

The students will analyze and interpret political cartoons from the Revolutionary War. They will develop analyzing and critical thinking skills by linking their interpretations to prior knowledge of the Revolution era. The students will be able to connect the point of view of the artist to the analysis.

## Goal

The students will analyze and interpret political cartoons from the Revolutionary War. They will develop analyzing and critical thinking skills. The students will use their prior knowledge of events in the Revolutionary War to analyze and interpret political cartoons. The students will be able to connect the point of view of the artist to the analysis.

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Analyze political cartoons;
- Identify the ways in which point of view can be detected in political cartoons

## Investigation Question

How is discovering point of view important when analyzing political cartoons?  
What message is the author trying to convey?

## Standards

IL.16. STATE GOAL / STRAND

History: Understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States and other nations.

16.A. STATE GOAL / LEARNING STANDARD

Apply the skills of historical analysis and interpretation.

16.A.3a. LEARNING STANDARD / PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTOR

Describe how historians use models for organizing historical interpretation (e.g., biographies, political events, issues and conflicts).

16.A.3b. LEARNING STANDARD / PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTOR

Make inferences about historical events and eras using historical maps and other historical sources.

## Time Required

One 40 minute class period

## Recommended Grade level

7th grade

## **Subject**

Social Studies

## **Credits**

Lisa Pedersen

## **Materials**

[Teachers Guide Analyzing a Political Cartoon](#)

Describe what you see.

What do you notice first?

What people/objects do you see?

Are there any words?

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 do you think the cartoonist's opinion on this issue is?

What do you wonder about this cartoon?

[Primary Source Analysis Tool](#)

## **Resources**

["Join or Die"](#) Political Cartoon

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog (Washington, D. C., Prints and Photographs Reading Room), <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3q05315/> Benjamin Franklin, May 9, 1754, accessed March 2012

["Poor Old England"](#) Political Cartoon

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog (Washington, D. C., Prints and Photographs Reading Room), <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3a35347/> Matthew Darly, April 1777, accessed March 2012

## **Lesson Procedure**

### **Activity One**

1. Use the students' prior experience with a political cartoon done early in the school year. Then discuss with students the following questions:

- a. What is a political cartoon?
- b. What topics do political cartoons address?
- c. How can you tell the message of a political cartoon?
- d. What is point of view?
- e. How might point of view affect a photo, cartoon, story, etc?

2. Remind students of recent analysis of documents – how information was gathered and analyzed from those documents. Introduce them to the [Primary Source Document Analysis](#).

3. Pass out copies of the “[Join or Die](#)” political cartoon. Discuss with them some questions they might want to think about as they analyze the document, such as how animals often represent other objects in political cartoons. Give them time to sort through the document and complete the analysis sheet.

4. Discuss the analysis sheet.

5. Discuss :

- a. What is the message of this cartoon?
- b. What is the point of view of author?
- c. How could a different point of view change the meaning of the cartoon?

6. Pass out copies of “[Poor Old England endeavoring to reclaim his wicked American children](#).”

7. In pairs have students analyze cartoon using the [Primary Source Document Analysis](#).

8. As a class discuss the analysis:

- a. What is the message of this cartoon?
- b. What is the point of view?
- c. How could a different point of view change the meaning of the cartoon?

### **Evaluate**

Students will create a political cartoon of an event of the American Revolution. The event should be from the British or American point of view.

### **Works Cited**

Darby, Matthew. Poor old England endeavoring to reclaim his wicked American children. Illustration. *The American Revolution in Drawings and Prints: A Checklist of 1765-1790*. By Donald H. Cresswell. Eastford: Martino Publishing, 2005. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Web. 08 March 2012.  
<<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004673329/>>

Franklin, Benjamin. "Join or Die." Illustration. *The Pennsylvania Gazette* 9 May 1754. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Web. 08 March 2012.  
<<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002695523/>>