

Teaching With Political & Editorial Cartoons

The following challenges, discussion points, ideas for the classroom, and resources for teaching with editorial cartoons were suggested by NIFL-AALPD and NIFL-FOB subscribers, as well as teachers who participated in Tennessee workshops: "Helping Students Master Charts, Graphs, Maps, and Other Visual Tasks".

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Challenges Some Teachers Face in Using Editorial Cartoons in the Classroom

- Editorial cartoons can be difficult for learners to interpret for several reasons, including that cartoons may draw upon either an unfamiliar context or prior knowledge that the learner does not have in order to understand or become engaged with the message being presented in the cartoon.
- Oftentimes teachers may find themselves teaching the historical and social background to get to the "context" and presumably "meaning" conveyed in an editorial cartoon.
- Given the finite amount of time teachers have with learners and given that there are only a few cartoons on the GED, what is the cost/benefit of spending a proportionate amount of ABE/GED class time on cartoons?

Why Cartoons?

Lots of reasons! The GED 2002 Series test has a greater percentage of questions that test the critical thinking skill of analysis. Analyzing editorial cartoons might help to strengthen analytical and other higher order thinking skills. Cartoons are used to convey not just political, but also social issues; editorial cartoons can be used to teach a variety of skills; and for the GED classroom, editorial cartoons can be integrated across GED content areas.

Tips from Teachers:

A few quotes from a discussion of using editorial cartoons

- "I actually feel that it is important to NOT let understanding context be a litmus test. More important, I feel, is that students learn the skills needed to decipher and decode meaning. In this way, they can learn to "read the word, to read the world" in terms of Freire. I focus on skills required to read and decipher political cartoons and remind the students of what they