

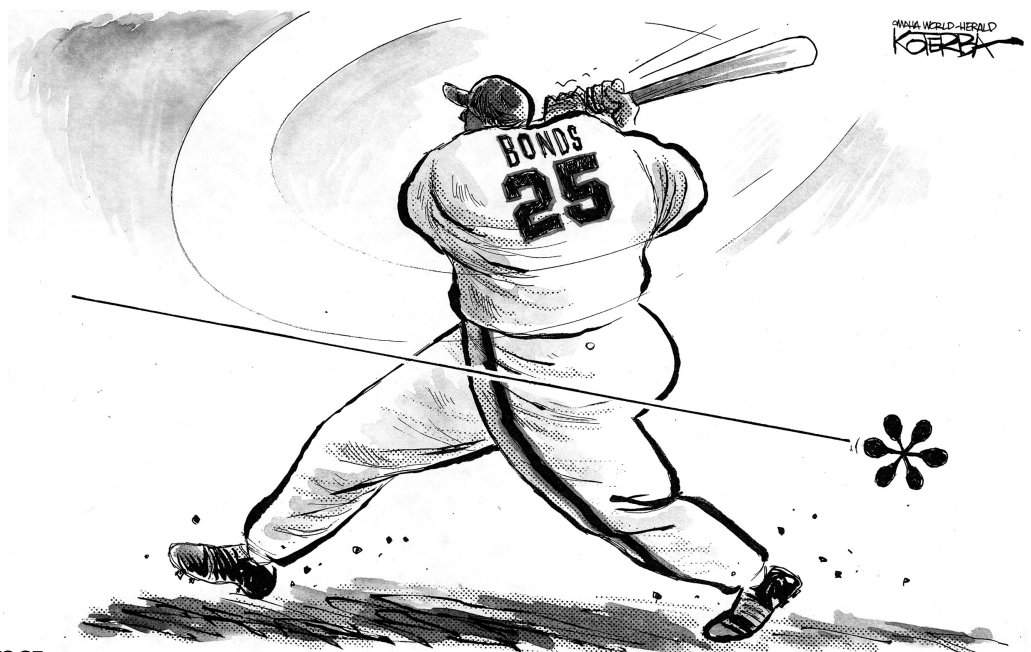
Cartoons for the Classroom

Presented by NIEonline.com and the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)



Between the lines

When Barry Bonds broke Major League Baseball's career home-run record in August 2007, a debate continued to swirl over the validity of his numbers. The widespread belief that his late-career power surge had been fueled by illegal performance-enhancing drugs tarnished his accomplishments. Critics argued that Bonds' statistics should be marked with an asterisk, indicating that steroid use had given him an unfair advantage. A number of cartoonists turned the asterisk into a metaphor in their commentary.



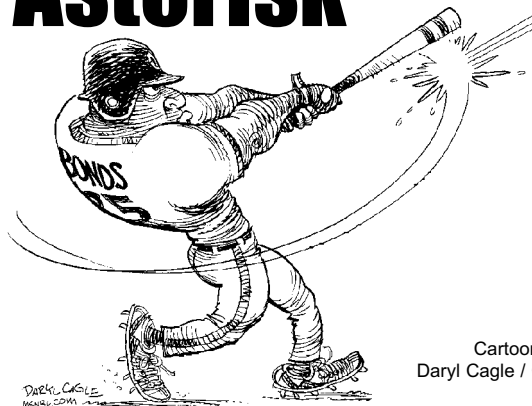
Cartoon Courtesy Jeff Koterba / Omaha World Herald

Reading for meaning

The Bonds Asterisk

Talking points

1. In Koterba's toon, Bonds swings and misses the asterisk while in Cagle's the slugger hits it out of the park. How do you interpret that difference? Consider these options: In one, Bonds misses the mark BECAUSE of the asterisk, in the other Bonds symbolically clobbers the criticism. Explain your interpretation of each toons' message. Is one "pro-Bonds" while the other critical of Bonds?
2. But what did the cartoonists' actually intend to convey? In a blog essay exploring the topic, cartoonist Neal Obermeyer asked the cartoonists themselves to explain. Cagle said his intent was to ask "...that we take notice of the 'asterisk' more than the achievement." Korterba said his was an observation that "...Bonds would always have that asterisk to contend with." Did you misinterpret their toons? If so, why?
3. In Cagle's version the slugger is swinging the bat right handed. But Bonds is really left-handed. Cagle defended his depiction: "The composition called for the asterisk to be on the right, coming at the 'end' of the cartoon, reading from left to right. The gag always comes at the end." In cartoons, how important is this kind of accuracy (or inaccuracy)? By the way, Cagle later posted a "correction," with Bonds redrawn as a lefty.



Cartoon Courtesy Daryl Cagle / Cagle.com

Get out your newspaper

Gather a collection of political cartoons from your newspaper. Using the Cartoon Evaluation Worksheet (available online at the NIE Website) analyze each cartoon and explain the issues addressed and evaluate the artist's opinion.

Additional resources

- Association of American Editorial Cartoonists
<http://editorialcartoonists.com/>
- More by Jeff Koterba
<http://cagle.com/politicalcartoons/PCcartoons/koterba.asp>
- More by Daryl Cagle
<http://cagle.com/>
- Daryl Cagle's Blog
<http://cagle.com/news/blog/>
- Neal Obermeyer's Blog
<http://www.nealo.com/>