

# Cartoons for the Classroom

Presented in cooperation with the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)



Ben Sargent first drew George W. Bush in his initial run for governor in 1994. His appearance references his political inexperience and his status as a former president's son. After he'd been governor for a while, the caricature grew into a man, but then it took on a life of its own.

## Face time

### A president's image keeps getting goofier

Presidents are far and away the most frequently depicted characters in political cartoons, so their caricatures change over time, evolve and often take on a life of their own. President Bush is no exception.

As often happens when a new figure comes onto the national stage, cartoonists' first attempts at Bush were clumsy and halting. In Bush's case, those early experimental caricatures took an unusual turn because of the long-term visibility of his father, a president himself. Many cartoonists made the mistake of trying to make George W. look like the elder Bush, when — especially from a caricaturist's point of view — their features are quite different.

Where the elder Bush's nose is pointy, the younger Bush's is flat; where the father's chin is angular and prominent, the son has his mother's more rounded jaw; where the elder's hair is straight and lanky, the younger's is a mysterious texture not unlike a cartoon Brillo pad. (Texas cartoonists, who had a six-year head start with then-Gov. Bush, viewed the phenomenon with self-satisfied amusement.)

While an editorial cartoon, and the opinion it conveys, involves much more than just a caricature, there's no doubt that a public figure's caricature carries a particularly potent subliminal clout. (The classic example is cartoonist Pat Oliphant's Jimmy Carter, who shrank from a full-scale president to a Gollum-sized gnome over the course of his presidential term.)

And whether Bush's caricature grows or shrinks, sprouts bigger ears or tinier eyes, there's no doubt it will continue to change.



Don Wright / Palm Beach Post



Mike Peters / Dayton Daily News

## Get out your newspaper

Gather a couple week's worth of political cartoons from your newspaper. Compare your artist's caricatures of the President with those presented here. Are they flattering? Or insulting? Why?

### Additional resources

Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)

<http://editorialcartoonists.com/>

The author, Ben Sargent, is the political cartoonist for the Austin American-Statesman