

# Cartoons for the Classroom



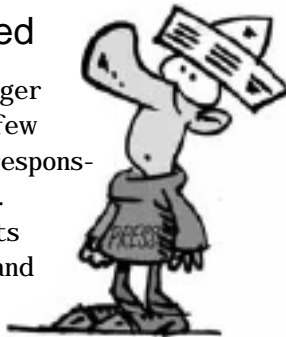
Presented by NIEonline.com and the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)

## Drawn to freedom

### Don't take your rights for granted

When American political cartoonists anger somebody, they might get a letter and a few phone calls. Many even take pride in the responses and keep the angry letters as trophies.

Iranian cartoonist Nikahang Kowsar gets death threats. In 2000 he was arrested and sent to prison over one of his cartoons. Recently, Islamic militant hardliners put him on a death list, targeting him for execution.



Years ago, one of Kowsar's professors at Tehran University told him: "Don't forget! We are living in a country where no one tolerates criticism. In Iran, we know critics as harmful people who only humiliate." Kowsar ignored the advice to stop and continues to publish in Iranian newspapers today.

By definition, political cartoons are opinions -- ideas. And the free exchange of ideas is the foundation of democracy. That concept is so important, it is included in the First Amendment of our Constitution. Why do you think so many other governments fear the free exchange of ideas?

### Get out your newspaper

Gather a couple week's worth of political cartoons and determine whether the issues deal with your rights as Americans. Are there topics in the newspaper that pertain to someone's rights being restricted? Look for stories on privacy, demonstrations, police raids, censorship. How would you draw a cartoon to call attention to the issue? What symbols would you use to get your opinions across?



### Additional resources

Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)  
<http://editorialcartoonists.com/>  
Nikahang Kowsar's website  
<http://sicknick.org/>  
Daryl Cagle's Cartoon Blog (Letter from Nick Kowsar)  
<http://cagle.slate.msn.com//news/BLOG/november.asp>



Cartoons courtesy Nikahang Kowsar

### Talking points:

Write a short definition for the following:

- Oppression \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Censorship \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Kowsar calls his cartoon character Sick Nick, a journalist who loves Freedom of the Press but has always suffered from powerful officials who hate Freedom of the Press. He only has a pen and a newspaper hat. In the cartoon above, you see a pair of scissors symbolizing censorship and an artist's pen. What is the point the artist is trying to convey? What is the pen dreaming about? What is the mood of the cartoon? The caption for the cartoon at left is "What they want for Journalists..." The symbolism should be very familiar to you. What is it? And who are "they"? Explain the cartoon's message.