

# Cartoons for the Classroom



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

## Literary allusion vs. pop culture

Homer's Odyssey: Out;  
Homer Simpson: In

Fear Factor or Falstaff? It's no contest. Shakespeare, Faust and biblical figures have pretty much been voted off the island. Political cartoonists use familiar images and metaphors from pop culture to get their message across. Today's readers are more apt to understand a reference to *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* than a joke based on Greek mythology. When Robert Ariail dips into Dickens for his cartoon reprinted below, he knows his readers will recognize the movie even if they never tackled the book. Cartoonists get much of their inspiration the same place we do — movies, TV shows and advertising campaigns.

### Get out your newspaper

Gather a week's worth of political cartoons from your newspaper. Using the Cartoon Evaluation Worksheet (available online at the NIE Website) analyze each cartoon and identify the symbols used and the issues. Do you recognize any obvious literary references?



Cartoons courtesy Robert Ariail / The State



### Talking points:

Write a short definition for each of the following.

- Allusion \_\_\_\_\_
- Metaphor \_\_\_\_\_

Robert Ariail's retelling of the Little Red Hen fable (above) is rich with symbolism. Instead of a duck, cat and dog as in the original fairy tale, Russia, Germany and France are depicted as a rat, pig and weasel. Why? What other symbols help tell the story? How do you know the Hen symbolizes America? What seeds does the hen want to plant? How are coalition partners at the table portrayed? What's the moral of the story? as Ariail tells it?

What story is the cartoon at left, based upon? What's the issue being explored? What makes candidate McGovern similar to candidate Dean in Ariail's eyes? What's the warning implied by the cartoon?

### Additional resources

Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)  
<http://info.detnews.com/aaec/>  
 More Robert Ariail cartoons from The State  
<http://www.thestate.com/mld/state/news/opinion/>