Inspiration from a classic

Courtesy David Parkins / The Guardian

Between the lines

Artists have parodied the disturbing imagery of Henry Fuseli's masterpiece frequently since its 1782 debut in London.

According to the British museum, Tate Online: "The exact meaning of *The Nightmare* remains elusive. Fuseli's painting combines a wide range of references. The result was meant to appeal to the sensationalist tastes of the time."

The painting is now part of the permanent collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Illustrator and cartoonist David Parkins recently moved to Ontario, Canada, from Britain.

Additional resources

Association of American Editorial Cartoonists
http://editorialcartoonists.com/

More by David Parkins
http://www.canadiancartoonists.com/cartoonist_parkins.html/

Talking points

1. To understand David Parkins' cartoon you need the context. Parkins says:

"The cartoon was done not long after the London bombings in 2006. The supine figure is Tony Blair, the then Prime Minister. The incubus is a Muslim cleric, Abu Hamsa, who was preaching hatred at a London mosque. The mosque turned out to be a hotbed for terrorist recruitment, and Hamsa was later indicted and jailed. At the same time in London there was a major exhibition of Romantic art, and Fuseli's Nightmare was the centrepiece."

Now that you know the players and the context, can you sum up the point of the cartoon? The title certainly helps.

2. Parkins used a famous painting for inspiration. List all the similarities between the cartoon and the original painting.

3. Parkins acknowledges his debt to the painter Henry Fuseli in his signature at bottom right. What does "a long way after" mean? Hint: He's not talking about time.

More about Henry Fuseli's painting, The Nightmare: http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/gothicnightmares/infocus/nightmare.htm