

Cartoons for the Classroom

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



Symbolism: Peace

Why a dove and not a sparrow?

Peace is a tough concept to draw. You can take a photograph of war -- showing death and destruction -- and folks would recognize it as such. But peace is just too fuzzy a concept to be defined in visual terms that way. That's where symbols come in handy. The image of a dove with an olive branch is instantly recognizable as a representation of peace.

But why a dove? Why not a sparrow or a duck? The most common explanation is that the symbol stems from the biblical story of Noah. The dove returning to the Ark, with an olive branch in its beak, was a sign that the flood waters were receding because the bird had found land. Pablo Picasso's painting of a dove was featured in a 1949 poster for the World Peace Congress and was wildly popular.

Plenty of other birds often show up in cartoons as symbols. An eagle obviously represents the United States. What do the following birds stand for: Vulture, turkey, robin, parakeet (in a cage), a goose, a hawk. Can you name others?

Talking points:

Write a short definition for each of the following.

Icon _____

Metaphor _____

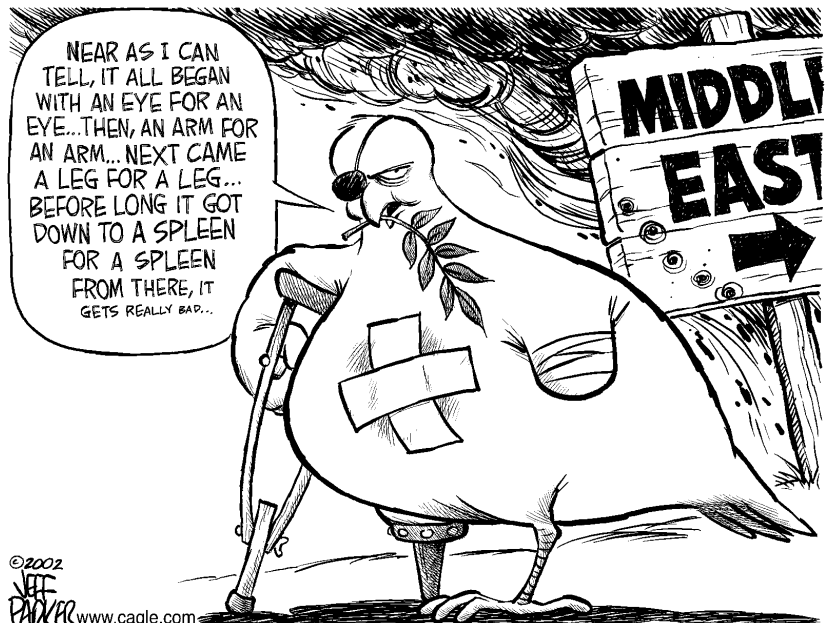
Cartoonist Jeff Parker uses the dove symbol in different ways in these toons to make his point. Explain the message in the "Hawks" beating the drums of war. What are hawks? At right, the artist draws on another biblical reference to criticize the endless cycle of attack and retribution. Explain the reference and the message.

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.

Additional resources

Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)
<http://info.detnews.com/aaec/>
Daryl Cagle's Professional Cartoonists index
<http://cagle.slate.msn.com/>



Cartoons courtesy Jeff Parker / Florida Today