The objective of a political cartoon is to influence someone's thoughts or actions. As persuasive art, political cartoons are really editorials -- propaganda meant to provoke a response. War is an issue that evokes strong opinions from both sides. You can't be wishy-washy in your stand if your goal is to sway public opinion about a topic you care about.

**Talking points:**

Write a short definition for each of the following.

- **Persuasion**
  
- **Propaganda**

Alan Forkum explains his cartoon (above): "Anti-war protesters often use the death of innocent victims in foreign countries to condemn American military intervention. Yet if the prevention of innocent deaths is one of the protesters’ main concerns, why isn’t any significance given to the deaths of innocent Americans?"

At right, James Casciari drives home a message about the cost of war in terms of lives lost.

Which cartoon do you feel is more successful at getting its message across? And which message is closer to the way you feel about the war? Does either cartoon cause you to consider a different perspective?

**Getting your newspaper**

Gather a couple week’s worth of political cartoons from your newspaper, paying particular attention to cartoons that deal with the war. Using the Cartoon Evaluation Worksheet (available online at the NIE Website) analyze each cartoon and identify the symbols used and spell out the message. Define the cartoonist's stand on the war (supportive or critical). What makes the opinion clear to you?

**Additional resources**

Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)
http://politicalcartoonists.com

More from Allen Forkum (writer) & John Cox (artist)
http://www.coxandforkum.com/

Cartoons for the Classroom is available through Newspaper in Education programs. Copyright Online Publications Inc. and NIEOnline.com