

TYPE ACTIVITY SHEET: CARTOONS

Overview:

Cartoons serve as a particularly wonderful and powerful glimpse into the past. Throughout the history of print media, they have provided a unique way to criticize, cajole or condemn people and events by using symbol and satire to convey a broad point. Cartoons provide valuable insight into popular attitudes because the point had to be comprehensible to a wide range of viewers for the cartoon to be successful. In order to get the “joke,” then, the reader has to know the historical context. One must also know where the cartoon appeared originally to understand its full historical significance.

Cartoons about women can reveal a great deal about what behavior by women brought criticism, caricature or distortion. They often provide a window onto changing gender roles and what was deemed acceptable or outrageous behavior. As women became published cartoonists, it is valuable to note what in their environment they found funny, how they conveyed their criticism and contempt, and what actions drew their fire and their pens.

Skill Focus:

Interpret images
Make inferences
Identify details

For the Teacher:

1. Discuss with your students the nature and value of cartoons as an historical source.
2. Have students bring in a cartoon.
3. Have students complete Section 1 of the Student Activity Sheet and discuss their results.
4. Provide students with a cartoon from the Jewish Women's Archive collection.
5. Have students complete Section 2 of the Student Activity Sheet.
6. Provide students with background information on this cartoon and have them complete Section 3 of the Student Activity Sheet.
7. For more specific questions, look at *Discuss This Document* in the individual documents.
8. Discuss students' responses.
9. If time permits, have students do the follow-up Activities in Section 4 of the Student Activity Sheet.

Document List:

Anti-Semitic cartoon, 1881
Sketches of the Henry St. Settlement, 1934
Political cartoon, Racial Discrimination Case, 1951