Humour and Caricature

Teachers Notes
POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

Consider the meaning of the phrases “biting wit”, “sharp insight”, “well-crafted caricature”. Look up definitions if required.

Do you agree with Peter Greste that people find political cartoons “deeply satisfying” even if they don’t agree with the cartoons underlying sentiment? Why/why not?
Humour and Caricature

What’s so funny?

Humour is an important part of most political cartoons.

It’s a very effective way for cartoonists to communicate their message to their audience — and thereby help shape public opinion.

The joke can be simple or multi-layered and complex.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

“By distilling political arguments and criticisms into clear, easily digestible (and at times grossly caricatured) statements, they have oiled our political debate and helped shape public opinion”. Peter Greste, Australian Journalist, Behind the Lines foreward, http://behindthelines.moadoph.gov.au/2015/foreword.

Do a quick exercise with your classmates — share a couple of jokes. Does everyone understand them? Why/why not? What does this tell us about humour?

Why do you believe it’s important for cartoonists to make their cartoons easy to understand?

What are some limitations readers could encounter which may hinder their understanding of the overall message?
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Types of humour

Cartoonists use different kinds of humour to communicate their message — the most common are irony, satire and sarcasm.

**Ironic** — where the literal meaning of what is presented is the opposite of what is intended.

Examine this cartoon:
What is the literal meaning of what is presented?
What is the intended meaning of the cartoon?

Research the context of the cartoon. What is the cartoonist saying about what is happening to areas of natural heritage and who is responsible?
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Types of humour

Satire — where an artist exposes and denounces vice, folly, abuses etc. to scorn and ridicule.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

What is the left frame of the cartoon saying about the attitudes evident in “Old Australia?” Whose attitudes do you believe they represent? When was “Old Australia”?

What is the right frame of the cartoon saying about attitudes evident in “New Australia?” Whose attitudes do they represent? According to the cartoonist, what effect are these attitudes having on the public? How has this been represented in the cartoon?

Who is being ridiculed in this cartoon?
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Types of humour

Sarcasm — praise which is really an insult; sarcasm generally involves malice, the desire to put someone down.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

What is the cartoonist really saying about Tony Abbott?
How is Tony Abbott being insulted?

Why is Tony Abbott being depicted wearing red speedos?
Complete some research to find out why so many political cartoonists choose to draw him wearing these. How does this add to the humour being presented in the cartoon?
POUNTS FOR DISCUSSION:

The cartoon is titled “The Legacies of Leadership”. In what way does the title add more to our understanding of the cartoon's overall message?
Caricature

Which politicians are depicted in this cartoon?

What characteristics have been exaggerated?

Why do you think these have been exaggerated? What is the effect?

The evolution of Tony Abbott, Rocco Fazzari, 2013

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

The cartoon is making a statement about similarities between the two politicians, but also differences. Can you identify these?

Other political cartoons that explore caricature further:
Big Shoes to Fill, Ian Sharpe, 2012;
Frozen Assett, Andrew Dyson, 2013;
Leadership Spill, David Pope, 2015;
The Legacies of Leadership, Rocco Fazzari, 2011;
The Incredible Carbon Tax Machine, John Tiedemann, 2011;
The Great Gonksi, Mark Knight, 2013;
Bob to the Rescue, David Follette, 2012
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POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

“A picture, as they say, is worth a thousand words, and political cartoons and caricatures have traditionally been a devastating method of cutting the powerful and the proud down to size”


Find three more political cartoons and explain how humour and caricature have been used to cut the powerful and the proud down to size.

"The best political cartoons will always push the boundaries. They challenge policies, ideas and individuals, stripping away the shiny wrapping and flowery bows that politicians often wrap them in."

Peter Greste, Australian Journalist, Behind the Lines 2015 Foreward

Instead of ‘shiny wrapping and flowery bows’ — political cartoonists successfully use humour to promote their message.

It helps to make politics accessible.