



The Granger Collection

## Reading Political Cartoons

### VOCABULARY

political cartoon      symbol

### WHY THE SKILL MATTERS

The trial of John Peter Zenger helped to establish freedom of speech. One way that people in the 13 colonies expressed their opinions was in **political cartoons** in newspapers and pamphlets. A political cartoon is a drawing that expresses a cartoonist's opinion about people, events, or issues.

Have you ever drawn a picture to express how you feel about something? Political cartoons deal with very serious issues, such as taxes and elections. Yet cartoonists often treat these issues in a humorous way.

Reading political cartoons can help you learn about important issues of a particular time. Political cartoons give readers something to think about, or to laugh about.

### USING THE SKILL

Political cartoons often have **symbols** that help get a message across to readers. A symbol is something that stands for something else. For example, the 50 stars of the United States flag stand for the 50 states.



## HELPING Yourself

Symbols can be hard to understand. Look at the cartoon on page 298, which is about the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766. The coffin is a symbol for the Stamp Act that has just been repealed, or "killed." The skulls are symbols for other taxes the colonies had repealed. The sad men are British leaders who liked the Stamp Act. In the background, the ships stand for the trade that will begin again between Great Britain and America.

Some cartoonists use captions or dialogue (DI uh lahng) to express their opinions in words. Dialogue is conversation. The political cartoon on the opposite page is titled *The Funeral of Miss Ame-Stamp*. It has no dialogue. The cartoon on this page does.

- A political cartoon shows a cartoonist's opinion about a person, an event, or an issue.
- To understand a political cartoon, look for **symbols** and other clues. If there is dialogue, determine who is speaking.

### TRYING THE SKILL

The cartoon on this page was drawn in 1994. What is it about? What point is this cartoonist trying to make? Is this cartoon finding fault with or praising something?

### REVIEWING THE SKILL

1. What is a political cartoon?
2. How does a political cartoon express its meaning?
3. What kinds of issues does a political cartoon cover?
4. Do you think political cartoons influence people? Explain your answer.
5. What could you draw in a political cartoon? What symbols would you use to express your opinion? Why?

Today, **political cartoons** appear in a wide variety of magazines and newspapers.

