

LESSON: Civic Engagement and Political Cartoons

<p>GRADE LEVEL: Middle School</p> <p>SUBJECT: Civics, Government, Public Activism</p> <p>TIME REQUIRED: 45-60 minutes</p> <p>This lesson is meant to exemplify and expand upon ideas of civic participation and political art.</p>	<p>RATIONALE</p> <p>Political cartoons can particularly and more sincerely reflect the ideas of a certain community or reactions to certain events. Creating and sharing political art offers a way for individuals to spread opinions and perspectives on governmental and social developments.</p> <p>NOTE: This lesson is designed as part of a series on types of political activism. It can be adapted to fit a unit of this topic as needed.</p>
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This lesson plan and materials needed to teach it can be found at the Thurgood Marshall Institute: <https://tminstituteldf.org/>

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How can ordinary citizens interact with and influence their local and national governments?
- What is a political cartoon?
- How do political cartoons communicate ideas and perspectives?
- To what extent did political cartoons broaden the effects of *Brown v. Board*?

OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVES

After the lesson, students will...

- Define what a political cartoon is and how it can be used.
- Analyze how political cartoons can be useful in making change.
- Question the relationship between *Brown v. Board* and contemporary political cartoons.

PREPARING TO TEACH

- Students should have a foundational understanding of *Brown v. Board* and the basic timeline of events associated with the development of segregation and desegregation in America.
- Teachers should:
 - Print a copy of the attached page for all students.
 - Print (or virtually share) copies of the selected cartoons with students.

SCAFFOLDS AND ACCOMMODATIONS TO SUPPORT LEARNERS

Reading support...

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Teachers might consider providing students with definitions for the words on the cartoons or the vocabulary necessary to describe the cartoon.

Differentiation...

Teachers can choose to edit the number of cartoons used in their class activity, depending on how they think their class could manage the differences of interpretation required for the selected cartoons.

Adjusting for high school grades...

Teachers may expand this lesson for high school grades by elevating the questions on the graphic organizer, or by encouraging students to analyze multiple cartoons (thus expanding their comparison analyses). Teachers may also invite students to answer the questions they create about their cartoons by doing their own research.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES SEQUENCE

1. Review any necessary information/history with students to prepare them for the content of the lesson.
2. Explain to students that today's lesson is about analyzing visual types of political activism. Divide students into six groups and assign each group one cartoon to work with. Instruct students to fill in the first side of the worksheet with their group as they analyze their cartoon.
3. Reorganize students so they are in groups with six members, where each member has looked at a different cartoon (jigsaw sharing). Invite students to share about their cartoon and fill out the first column of the graphic organizer.
4. Invite students to discuss the second column of the graphic organizer collectively and fill in the boxes.
5. Bring students back together and invite students to share their answers in the graphic organizer for each of the cartoons. Answer any final questions about the cartoons and their meaning.

ASSESSMENT

Teachers can collect the students' worksheets from this lesson in order to analyze student learning. If time allows, or as an extension of the lesson, teachers may invite students to design their own political cartoons around a theme of *Brown v. Board*.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR ENRICHMENT

Sources

- Binder 1, Thurgood Marshall Institute, pg. 29
- *Herb Block (1909–2001). [I'm eight. I was born on the day of the Supreme Court decision, May 17, 1962.](#) Ink, crayon, and opaque white over graphite underdrawing on layered paper. Published in the Washington Post, May 17, 1962. [Prints and Photographs Division](#), Library of Congress (169) © 1962 by Herblock in the Washington Post*

- Herb Block (1909–2001). *“And remember, nothing can be accomplished by taking to the streets,”* September 6, 1963. Ink, graphite, and opaque white over graphite underdrawing on layered paper. Published in the *Washington Post*, September 6, 1963. [Prints and Photographs Division](#), Library of Congress (170) © 1963 by Herblock in the *Washington Post*
- Oliver W. Harrington (1912–1995). *Dark laughter. Now I aint so sure I wanna get educated,* 1963. Crayon, ink, blue pencil, and pencil on paper. Published in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 21, 1963. [Prints and Photographs Division](#), Library of Congress (172) Courtesy of Dr. Helma Harrington. Digital ID # ppmsca-05518
- Vincent Smith (b. 1930). *First Day of School,* 1965. Etching (reprint, 1994). [Prints and Photographs Division](#), Library of Congress (178)
- Herb Block (1909–2001). *“ . . . One nation . . . indivisible . . . ,”* February 22, 1977. Ink, graphite, and opaque white, with tonal film overlay and porous point pen over graphite underdrawing on paper. Published in the *Washington Post*, February 22, 1977. [Prints and Photographs Division](#), Library of Congress (182) © 1977 by Herblock in the *Washington Post*

Political Cartoons - Investigation Worksheet

Answer the following questions using your political cartoon.

1. Describe what your cartoon looks like. What does it look like is happening?
2. Who are the characters (think about clothing, facial expressions, emotions, speech, jobs, age, race)?
3. What is the setting (buildings you see, names of places, urban or rural)?
4. What words are written on your cartoon? What do those words make you think about?
5. What are some details of the cartoon that most stick out to you?
6. What do you think is the main message of your cartoon?
7. What questions do you have about your cartoon?

Cartoon	What is the main idea/argument of this cartoon?	Who is the cartoon meant to influence? What does this cartoon want people to do differently?
#1		
#2		
#3		
#4		
#5		

#6		
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"I'M EIGHT. I WAS BORN ON THE DAY OF THE SUPREME COURT DECISION"

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"I'M EIGHT. I WAS BORN ON THE DAY OF THE SUPREME COURT DECISION"



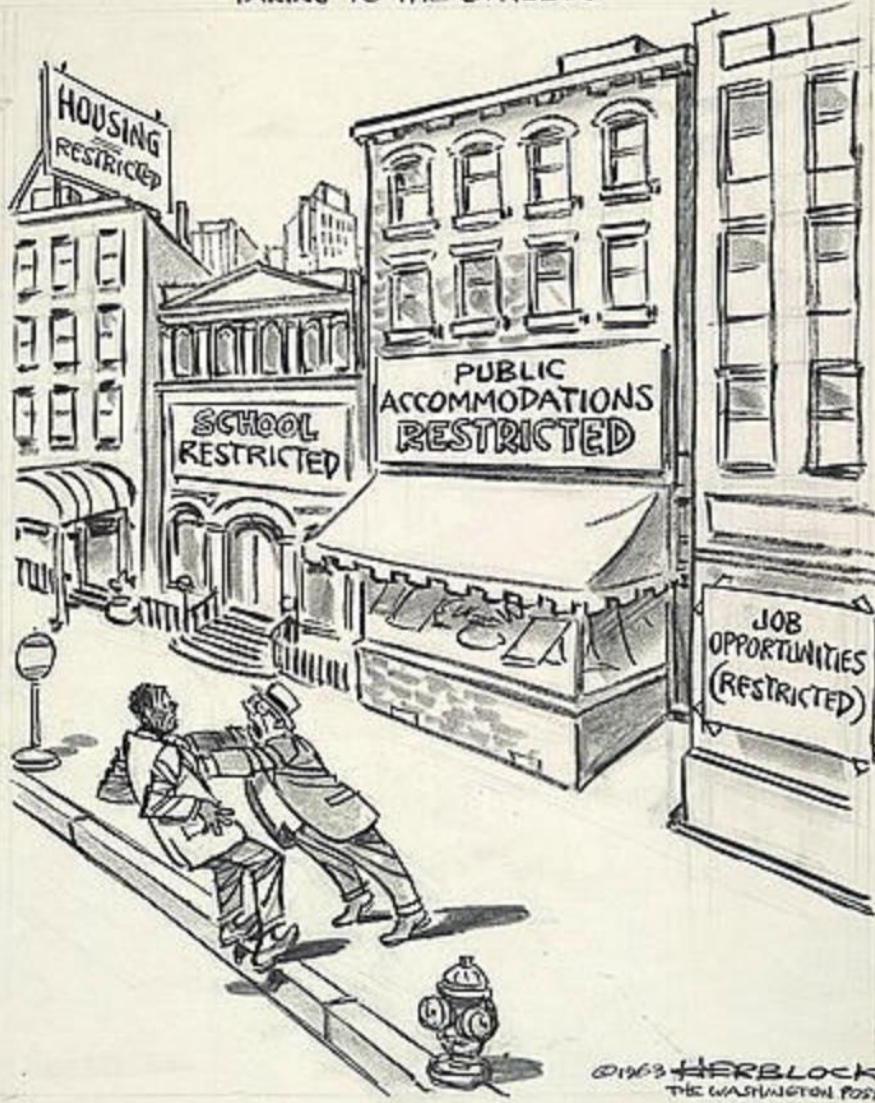
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"AND REMEMBER, NOTHING CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED

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"AND REMEMBER, NOTHING CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED BY
TAKING TO THE STREETS"



Courtesy of Dr. Helma Harrington

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"...ONE NATION...INDIVISIBLE..."

