Analyzing Political Cartoons

- What is a political cartoon?
  - Interpretive drawing, sometimes with words, that convey an idea or message about a current issue, event, or problem.
  - Are simple, usually black and white, graphic depictions of a news story or event.
  - Portray people's attitudes about a problem or issue.

Common characteristics for a good political cartoon:

- Wit and humor obtained by exaggeration not just for comic effect but to send a message about the character.
- The cartoon must have a foundation in truth (characters should be recognizable to the viewer and the main point of the drawing must have a basis in fact, even if it conveys a philosophical or ideological bias.
- The cartoon should have a moral purpose. In other words, the cartoon should provide opportunities to inform the viewer about an issue and allow for critical thinking (supporting OR refuting the cartoonist's message.)

OPTICS Strategy

- **O** - Conduct a brief ***overview*** of the visual or graphic. "float" over the image. What is the primary focus?
- **P** – Key in on the ***parts*** of the visual by reading all labels and noting any elements or details that seem important. What is the interaction of the parts with the primary focus?
- **T** – Read the ***title*** of the visual so that you are clear on the subject it is covering. Does the title make sense? If there is no title – What would you call it?

OPTICS continued

- **I** – Use the title as your theory and the parts of the visual as your clues to detect and specify the ***interrelationships, to infer or interpret*** – What is not in the picture, but implied?
- **C** – Draw a ***conclusion*** about the visual as a whole. What is it all about? Can you summarize in one sentence?
- **S** – What is the ***source***? Where did it come from? What is the bias / political leaning of the source? What is the audience? What is the context?

Some questions to ask yourself:

- What issue is this political cartoon about?
- What is the cartoonist's opinion on this issue?
- What other opinion can you imagine another person having on this issue?
- Did you find this cartoon persuasive? Why or why not?
- What other techniques could the cartoonist have used to make this cartoon more persuasive?

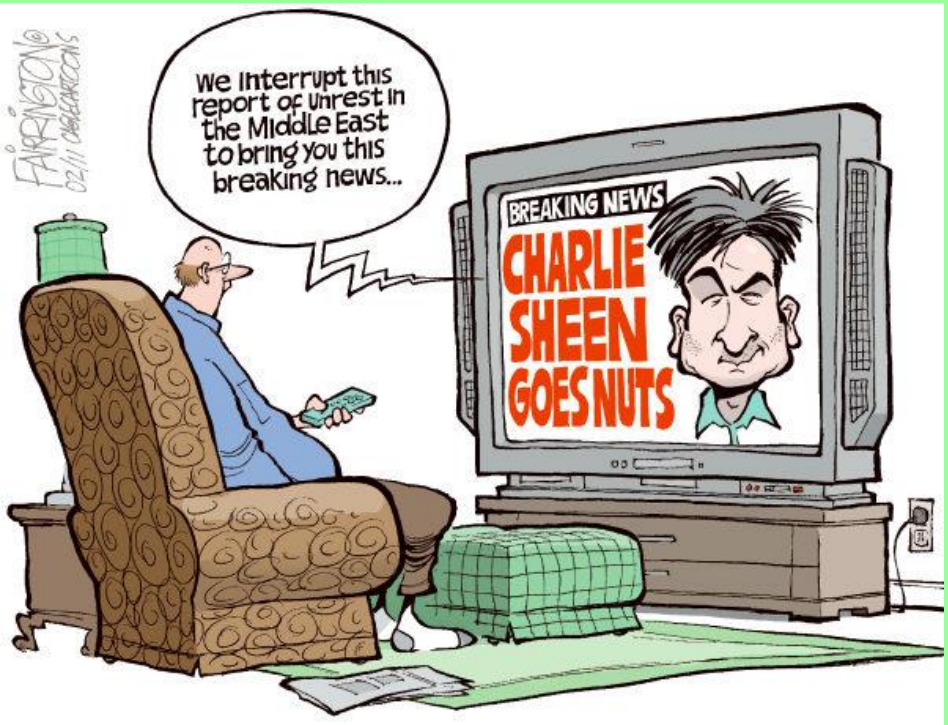
More info

- Powerful people are usually fat, large people
- Weak people are usually skinny, small people
- Green – environmental
- Red – communist
- Good guys usually wear white
- Bad guys usually wear black

Symbolism

- Cartoonists use simple objects, or **symbols**, to <u>stand for larger concepts or ideas.</u>
- After you identify the symbols in a cartoon, think about what the cartoonist intends each symbol to stand for.

Exaggeration



- Sometimes cartoonists overdo, or **exaggerate**, the physical characteristics of people or things in order to make a point.

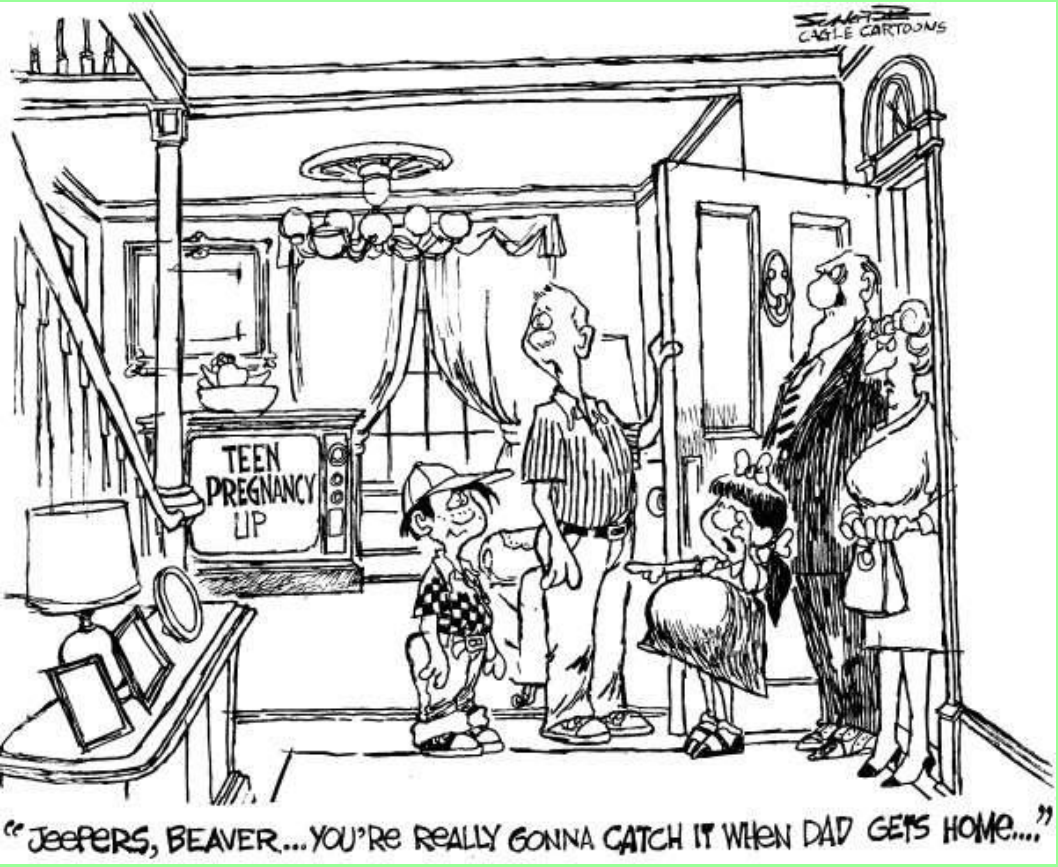
When you study a cartoon, look for any characteristics that seem overdone or overblown. (Facial characteristics and clothing are some of the most commonly exaggerated characteristics.) Then, try to decide what point the cartoonist was trying to make through exaggeration.

Labeling

- Cartoonists often **label** objects or people to <u>make it clear</u> exactly what they stand for.

Watch out for the different labels that appear in a cartoon, and <u>ask yourself why the cartoonist chose to label that particular person or object</u>. Does the label make the meaning of the object more clear?

Analogy

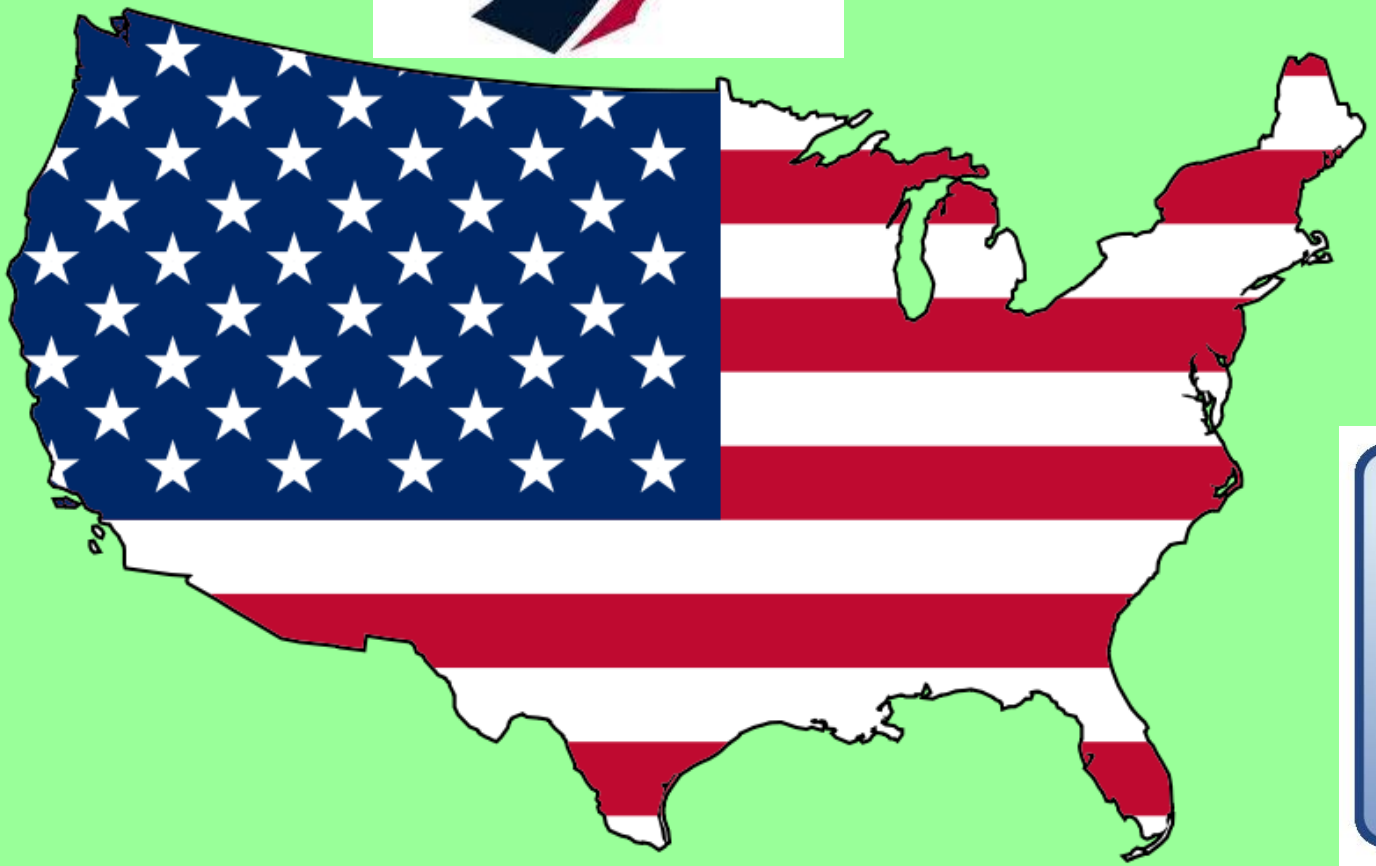


- An **analogy** is a comparison between two unlike things that share some characteristics. By comparing a complex issue or situation with a more familiar one, cartoonists can help their readers see it in a different light.
- After you've studied a cartoon for a while, try to decide what the cartoon's main analogy is. What two situations does the cartoon compare? Once you understand the main analogy, decide if this comparison makes the cartoonist's point more clear to you

Irony

- **Irony** is the difference between the ways things are and the way things should be, or the way things are expected to be. Cartoonists often use irony to express their opinion on an issue.
- When you look at a cartoon, see if you can find any irony in the situation the cartoon depicts. If you can, think about what point the irony might be intended to emphasize. Does the irony help the cartoonist express his or her opinion more effectively?

Common Symbols:



USA

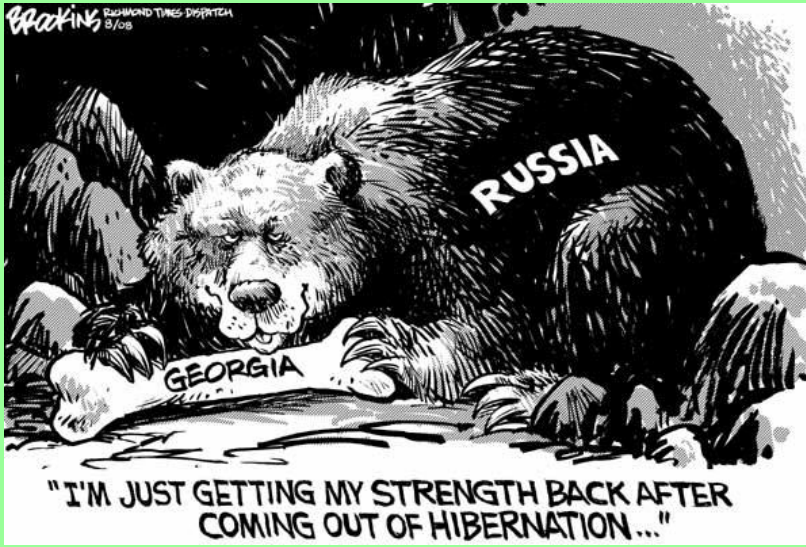
Uncle Sam or Eagle

United Kingdom

John Bull – a fat person in tailored suit

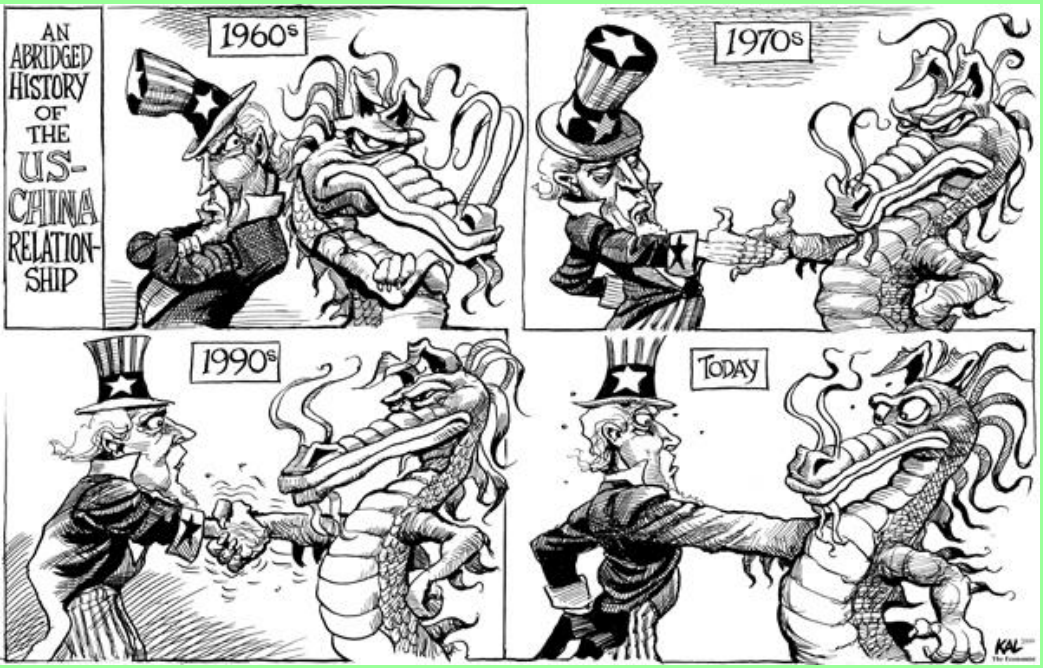
Lion

Russia


RUSSIA
GEORGIA
"I'M JUST GETTING MY STRENGTH BACK AFTER COMING OUT OF HIBERNATION..."

bear

China



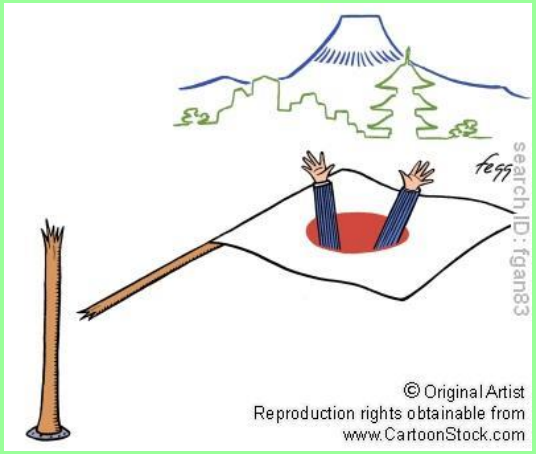
Dragon or panda

Saudi Arabia

Oil wells

Arab robes

Japan

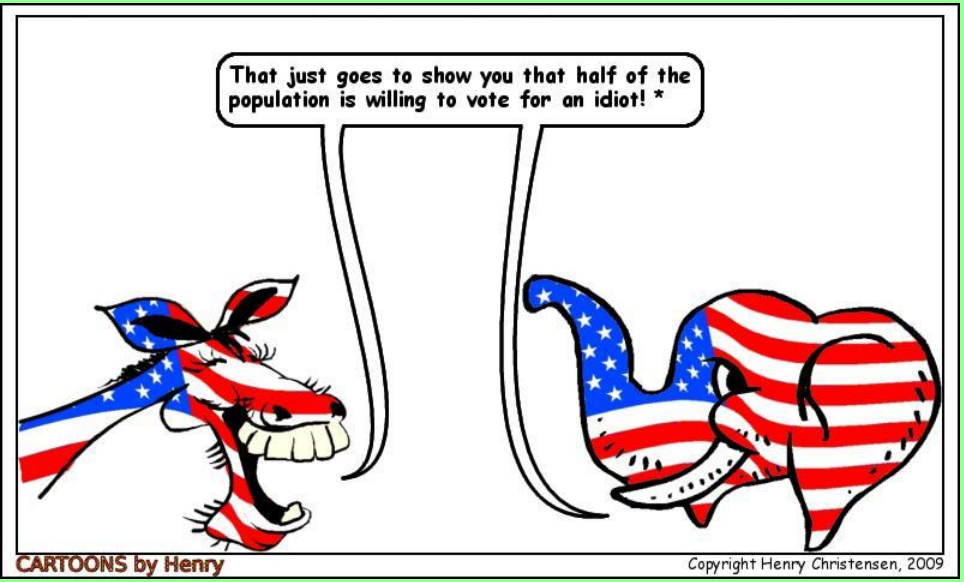


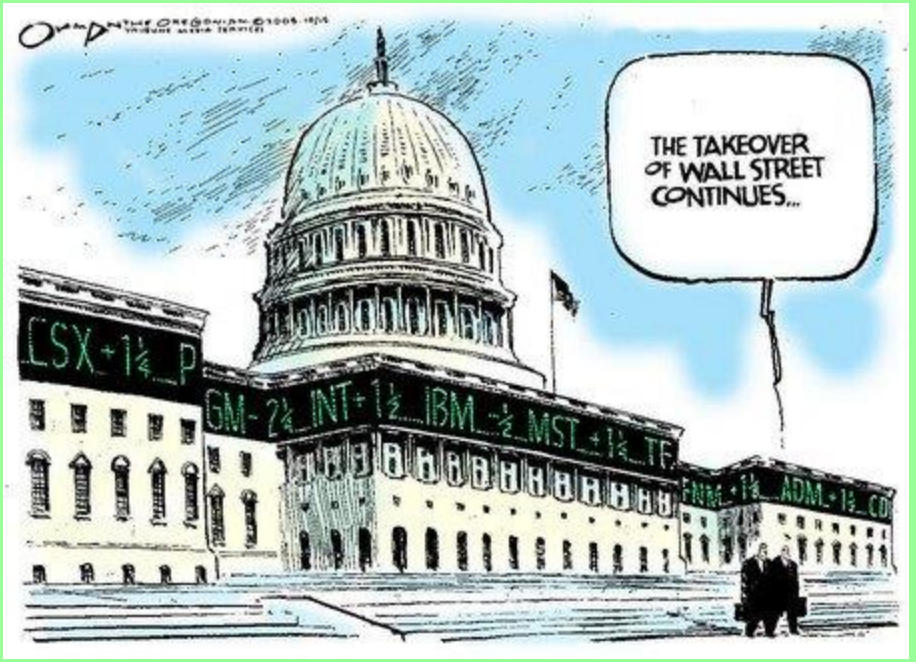
Kimono, slanted eyes,
sumo wrestler, Mt. Fuji

EU

EU flag – stars in circle

US Politics





Democrats – donkey

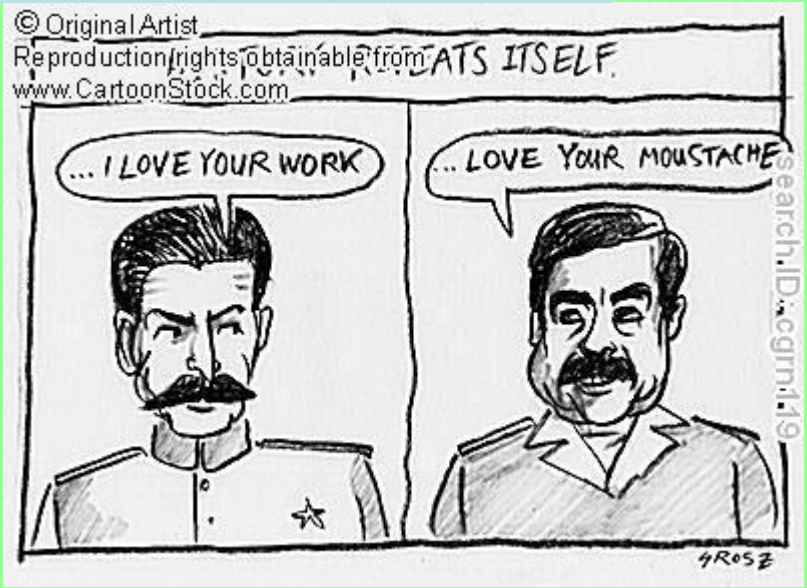
Republicans – elephant

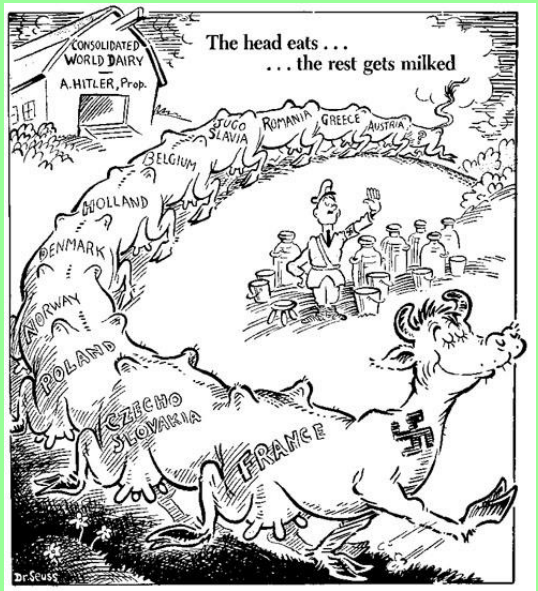
US politics – capitol building

Other People

STALIN HUSSEIN

CASTRO





HITLER

PUTIN

Symbols

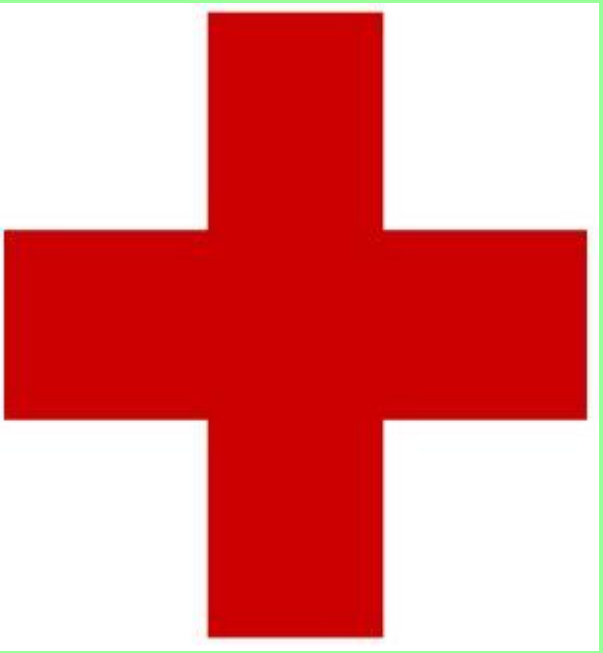
Pork barrel – waste

Money

Communism

justice

Symbols



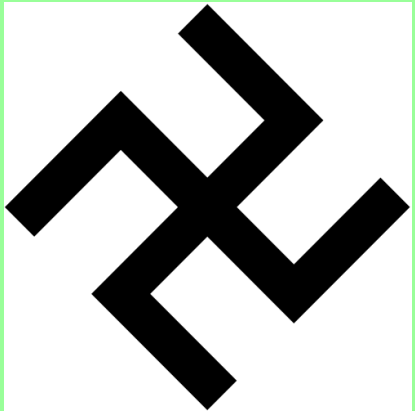
Terrorist

UN

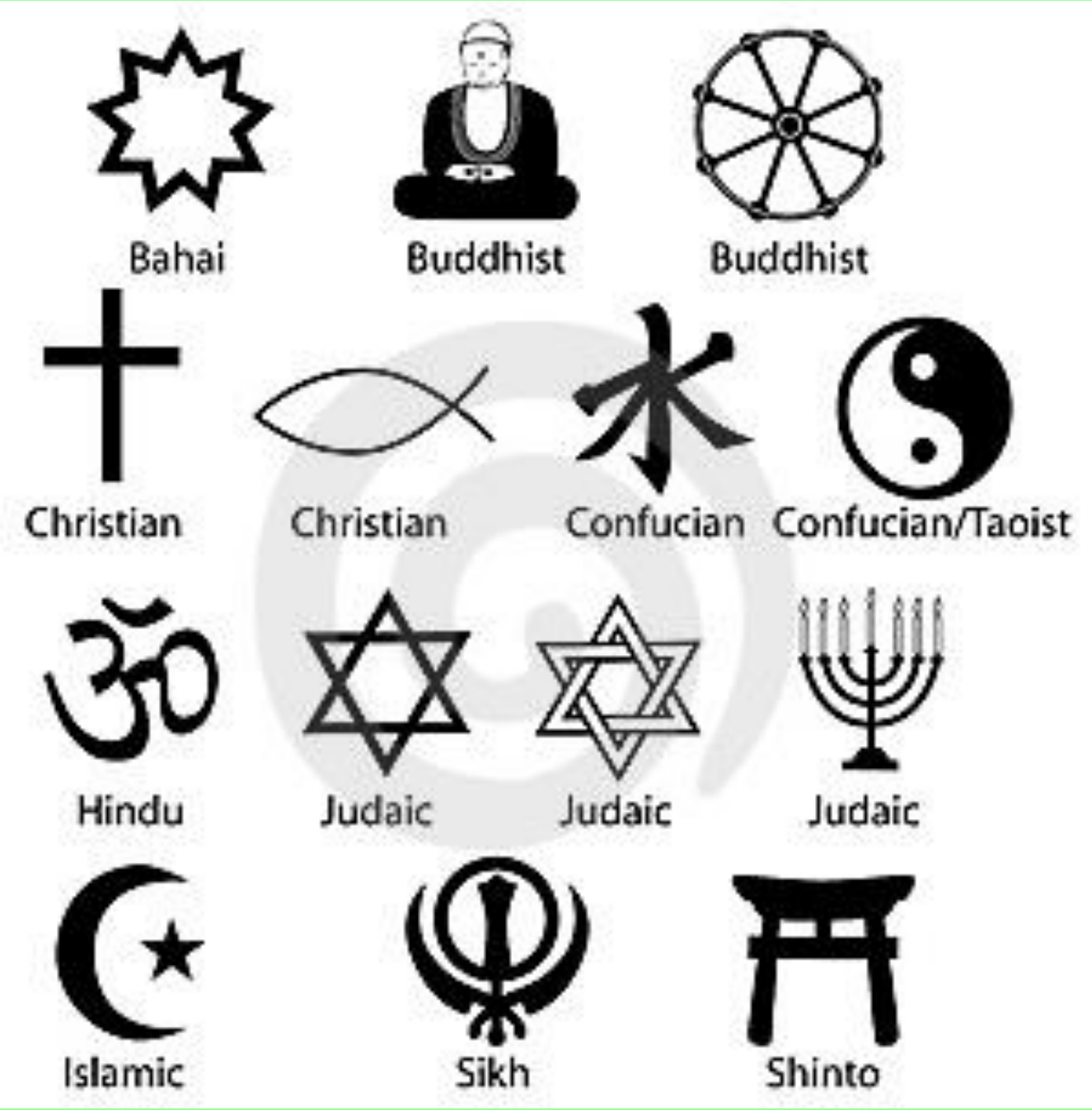
Red Cross

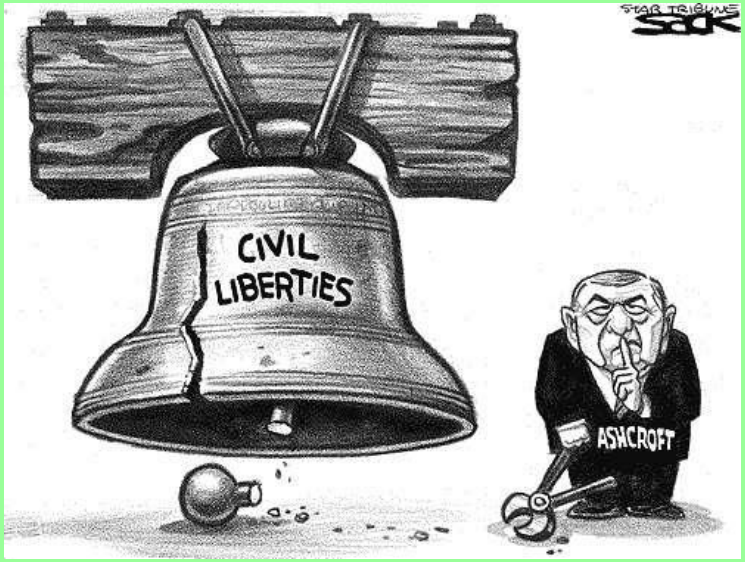
Palestine

Nazi



Religions


Bahai
Buddhist
Buddhist
Christian
Christian
Confucian
Confucian/Taoist
Hindu
Judaic
Judaic
Judaic
Islamic
Sikh
Shinto

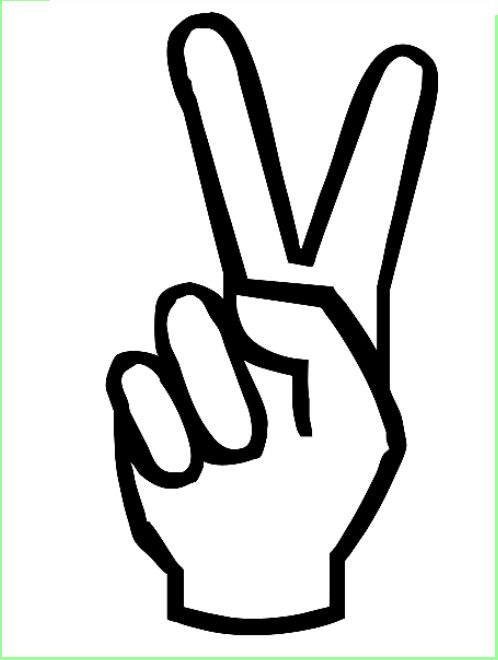


Liberty, freedom and democracy:

Liberty Bell

Statue of Liberty

Peace and War



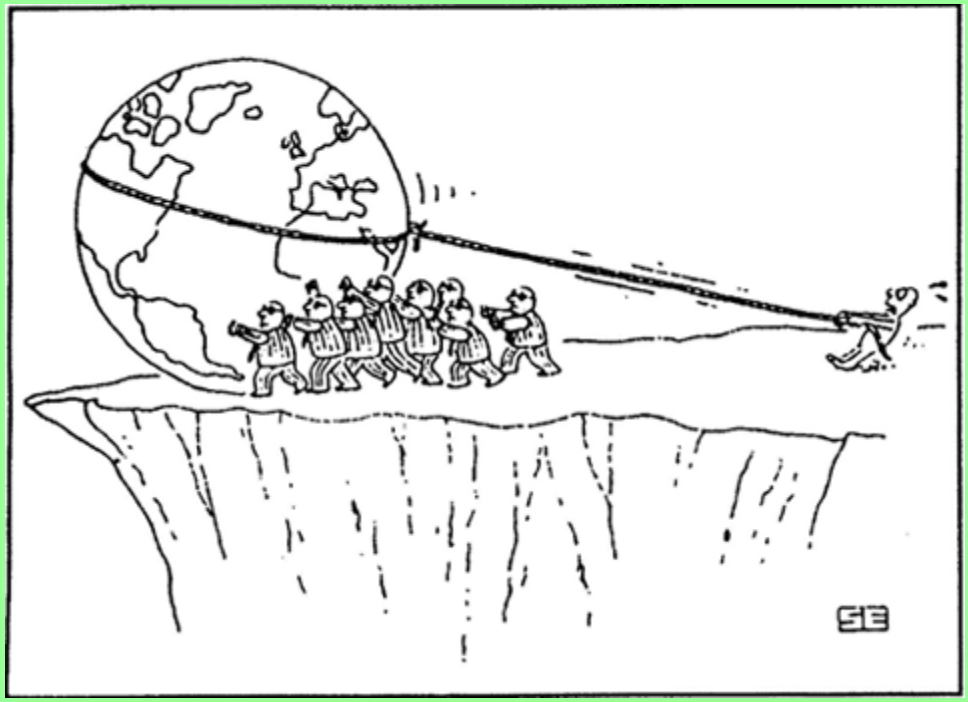
Peace – dove, laurels, peace fingers or peace sign

War – hawk, bomb, missiles

Time and Victory

Time – clock or hourglass

Victory – victory fingers, trophy, or wreath of laurels



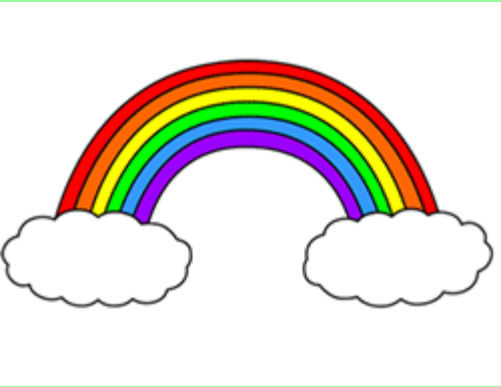
Death & Danger

-Falling objects

-Vultures

-Scull & crossbones

-cliffs

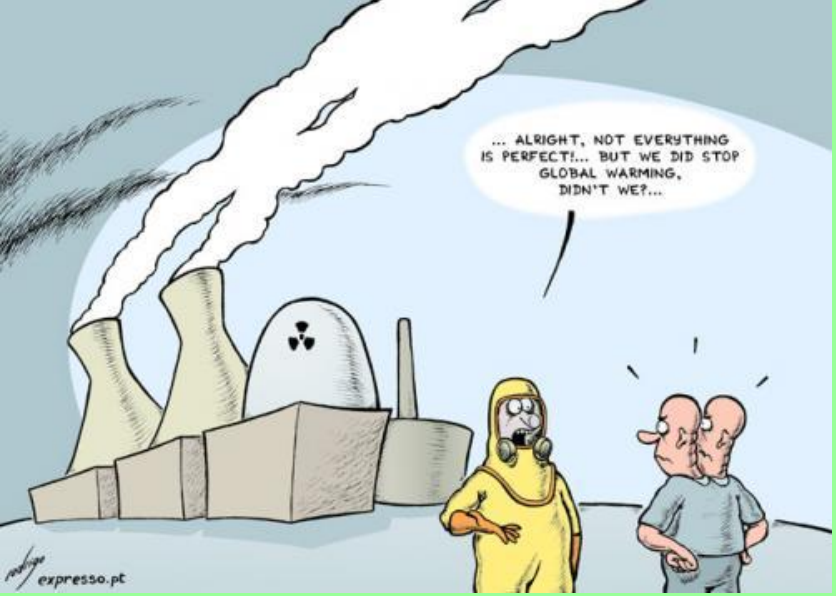


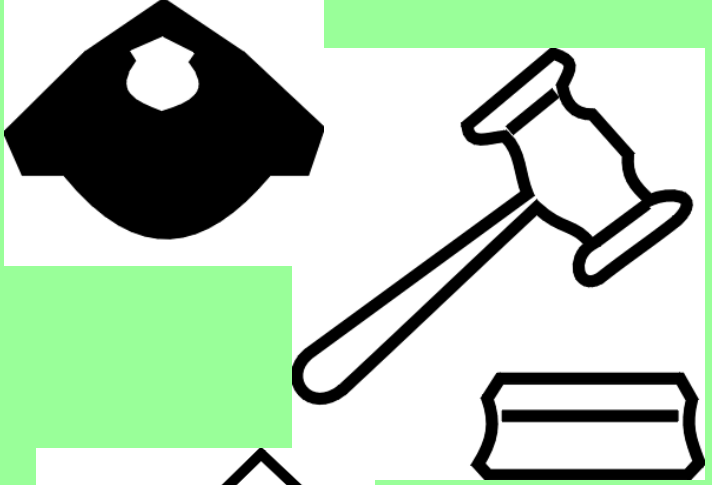
Slow – snail, turtle

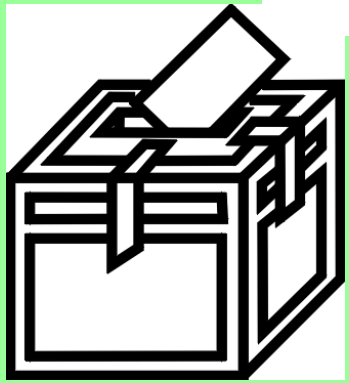
Love – heart, cupid, venus

Hope – rainbow, smiley

Wealth – money bags







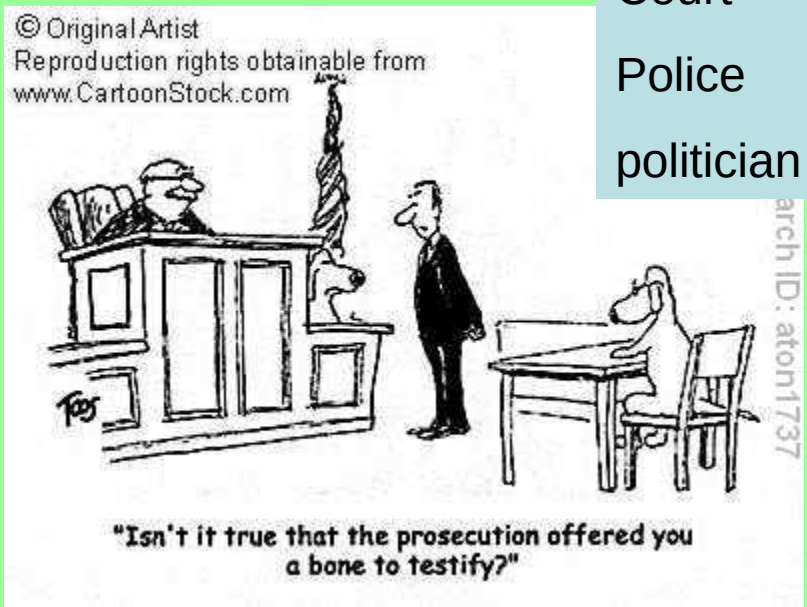
Nuclear

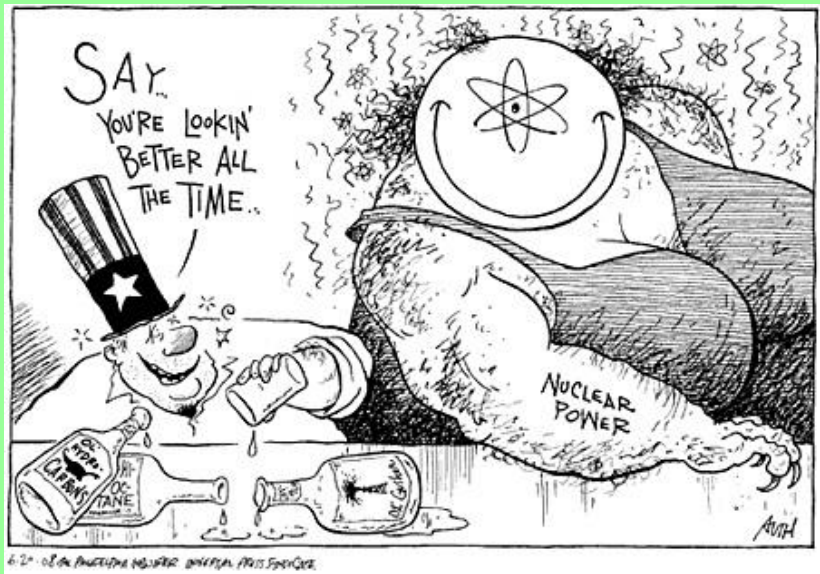
Ballot box

Court

Police

politician





IT LOOKS LIKE WE MAY LOSE.
THE TEXAS HISTORY BOOKS WILL TAKE CARE OF THAT.
ALAMO
TOLES
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'REMEMBER THE... OH, WAIT... FORGET ABOUT IT.

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