Memes and TikToks as Political Cartoons

Memes and TikTok videos can provide engaging messages that influences the political thinking and actions of people regarding local, state, and national issues. In this activity, you evaluate the design and impact of political memes, TikTok videos, editorial cartoons, and political comics and then create one of your own to influence others about a public or educational issue.

Political cartoons and comics, as well as memes and TikToks, are visuals with a purpose. Writers and artists use these genres to entertain, persuade, inform, and express fiction and nonfiction ideas creatively and imaginatively.

As with other forms of social media, memes and TikTok videos must be approached from a critical media literacy perspective. They can misinform rather than inform viewers -- 60% of whom are between the ages of 16 and 24. In one study analyzing search results on TikTok, researchers found that that one in five videos suggested to viewers contained false and misleading claims on topics such as vaccines, climate change, the 2000 election, the January 6 insurrection, abortion, and the war in Ukraine (Beware of the 'New Google:' TikTok's Search Engine Pumps Misinformation to Its Young Users, Brewster et al., 2022).

What political and policy information and messages do you find in the memes and TikTocs you view?

[Watch on YouTube](#)

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Activity: Analyze Political Cartoons, Memes, and TikToks

- Examine the following editorial cartoons, memes, and TikToks using the [Teacher and Student Guide to Analyzing Cartoons, Comics, and Memes](#) & the [Teacher and Student Guide to Analyzing Social Media](#):
  - **Editorial Cartoons**:
    - https://www.heraldnet.com/opinion/editorial-cartoons-for-monday-june-1/
    - https://www.stltoday.com/opinion/editorial/in-the-cartoons-executive-privilege-u-n-biodiversity-report-trade-wars/collection_2e24a97e-aa88-57cc-8143-1c93a62f66fd.html#1
    - https://www.newsday.com/opinion/cartoons/2020-presidential-election-cartoon-gallery-biden-sanders-warren-1.41785205
    - https://theweek.com/cartoons/945539/political-cartoon-trump-biden-debate
  - **Memes**
    - https://memes.com/blog/even-more-memes-about-the-spicy-presidential-elections
    - https://www.nbcnews.com/pop-culture/viral/these-are-internet-s-favorite-memes-first-presidential-debate-2020-n1241566
    - https://www.timesnownews.com/the-buzz/article/worse-than-real-housewives-fight-donald-trump-joe-biden-presidential-debate-triggers-meme-fest-online/660203
  - **TikToks**:
    - https://www.tiktok.com/@anania00/video/6878105995684367622
    - https://www.tiktok.com/@emilyesenn/video/6877587251593891078
    - [The Political Pundits of TikTok](#)
- Using what you learned during your analysis of editorial cartoons, memes, and TikToks, **create your own meme or TikTok about a political issue** you care about.
- Consider the following:
  - What is the message(s) of your meme or TikTok?
  - How will you effectively communicate your message?
  - How will your meme or TikTok inspire a change in thinking and/or behavior about the political issue you chose?
  - How do you imagine your creation will fare in comparison to more typical, written opinion pieces or editorial cartoons? Which do you think is more effective?

Designing for Learning: Student-Created Activity Example

[Memes and TikTok as Political Cartoons](#) by Gianna Merian

Additional Resources

- BOOK:
  - [Meme Wars: The Untold Story of the Online Battles Upending Democracy in America](#). Joan Donovan, Emily Dreyfus, & Brian Friedberg, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022
- [Analyzing Political Cartoons](#)
- [The Hidden Biases of Internet Memes](#)
- [Political cartoonists are out of touch – it's time to make way for memes](#) (The Conversation)
- [Political Cartoonists Impact Presidential Races](#) (US News, 2008)

Connecting to the Building Democracy for All eBook

[Building Democracy for All: Evaluating Editorials, Editorial Cartoons, and Op-Ed Commentaries](#)

Connecting to the Standards

- [Massachusetts Civics & Government Standards](#)
  - *Analyze the point of view and evaluate the claims of an editorial, editorial cartoon, or op-ed commentary on a public issue at the local, state or national level.* (Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for History and Social Studies) **[8.T7.6]**
- [ISTE Standards](#)
  - Digital Citizen
    - 2c: Students demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the rights and obligations of using and sharing intellectual property.
  - Knowledge Constructor
    - 3b: Students evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data, or other resources.
    - 3d: Students build knowledge by actively exploring real-world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories and pursuing answers and solutions.
  - Creative Communicator
    - 6a: Students choose the appropriate platforms and tools for meeting the desired objectives of their creation or communication.
    - 6b: Students create original works or responsibly repurpose or remix digital resources into new creations.
    - 6d: Students publish or present content that customizes the message and medium for the intended audiences.
- [DLCS Standards](#)
  - Ethics and Laws (CAS.b)
  - Interpersonal and Societal Impact (CAS.c)
  - Digital Tools (DTC.a)
  - Collaboration and Communication (DTC.b)
- [English Language Arts > History/Social Studies Common Core Standards](#)
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.5
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6