

Analyzing Democracy Principles: Case Studies in the News

In his February 5, 2005 State of the Union Address, President Bush outlined an important goal of our nation's current foreign policy—advocating the development of democracy in other nations in an effort to eliminate the continuing threat of terrorism and promote peace in the world: "...Our aim is to build and preserve a community of free and independent nations, with governments that answer to their citizens, and reflect their own cultures.... And because democracies respect their own people and their neighbors, the advance of freedom will lead to peace..."

In this activity students examine political cartoons and news clippings to apply their understanding of one or more of the democratic principles from the previous lesson to a current controversy about their own democracy and/or the development of democracies in other nations.

Objectives: At the conclusion of this activity students will be able to:

- Analyze and discuss core principles of democracy related to current controversies in their own and other nations.
- Examine news clippings and political cartoons to cite evidence about the implementation of democratic principles in other nations.

Materials:

Transparency: Principles of Democracy

Student Handout, "Principles of Democracy," from previous lesson

Student Handout, "In the News: Analyzing Democratic Principles"

Current political cartoons or news clippings about their own democracy and democratic reforms occurring in other nations (see internet sites provided at the end of the lesson).

Teaching Time: One class period with homework; also could be an on-going activity throughout the course.

Procedure:

1. Begin the lesson by reviewing the principles (signposts) of democracy that were the focus of the previous lesson. Which principles of democracy can students identify as a focus of a recent news story? What part of the world or what nation is involved?
2. Distribute current news clippings or political cartoons about democracy in the U.S. as well as other nations. Provide students with handout, "In the News: Analyzing Democratic Principles." Tell students to examine the clippings and cartoons to determine which democratic principle students consider is the focus. Students should analyze the clipping or cartoon and cite evidence to defend their choices.
3. Some of the internet sites below provide cartoons from artists from other countries. If students are given these cartoons, ask them if they can discern the point of view of the artist.

The following Internet sites for political cartoons on democracy (U.S. and foreign artists) will be helpful:

- Cagle's cartoon site: <http://cagle.slate.msn.com/>
- Cagle-- cartoonists from around the world:
<http://cagle.slate.msn.com/politicalcartoons/PCcartoons/persitoons.asp>
- Time Magazine political cartoons: <http://www.time.com/time/cartoons/20050218/>
- International Herald Tribune-- Editorial cartoons on world affairs:
<http://www.globecartoon.com/>
- Cartoon Arts International: Editorial cartoons from the New York Times Syndicate, Middle East
http://www.nytimes.com/portal/*viva_TMH?ws4d_nav=true&source=CNJ&page=1
- Atlantic Monthly political cartoons: http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/index/sage_ink
- Political cartoons from Canadian artists:
<http://www.mapleleafweb.com/community/editorial/cartoons/>
- Political cartoons from the Guardian Newspaper (London):
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/cartoons/archive/stevebell>
- Op Ed Art-- Images on world events: <http://opedart.com/html/Political/05/>

Student Handout 3:
In the News: Analyzing Democratic Principles

1. What essential principles (signposts) of democracy do you think apply to this situation? Cite evidence to explain your choice in several sentences.
2. What do you think is hindering democracy in this situation? What additional information do you need to more fully explain the situation in this clipping or cartoon?
3. How do you think democratic principles can be enhanced in this situation?
4. What do you think is the artist's point of view in the cartoon? How is it conveyed?
5. What comparisons can you make to your own democracy using the principle illustrated or conveyed in this cartoon?