



Cold War Controversies Through Political Cartoons

This MysteryQuest examines various issues associated with the climate of fear and suspicion operating during the Cold War period through the lens of political cartoons.

A critical thinking challenge to accompany

Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History **Death of a Diplomat: Herbert Norman and the Cold War**

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/39/indexen.html>

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based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium

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Ages

14-16

Courses

Canadian history, social studies, 20th century world history

Key topics

- issues in the Cold War
- analyzing political cartoons

Critical Challenge

- Revise political cartoons created during the Cold War based on information found in newspaper articles published at that time.

Broad Understanding

- Students will learn that political cartoons offer rich sources of information about Cold War controversies.
- Students will learn of the pervasive fear and distrust that characterized the Cold War period.

Requisite Tools

❖ **Background knowledge**

- knowledge of Cold War issues
- knowledge of techniques used by cartoonists

❖ **Criteria for judgment**

- criteria for a thoughtful interpretation (e.g., identifies main features, plausibly explains intended meaning)
- criteria for a visual representation (e.g., captures the main ideas, uses techniques effectively)

❖ **Critical thinking vocabulary**

- visual representation

❖ **Thinking strategies**

- data chart

❖ **Habits of mind**

- attention to detail

Independent Study

- This lesson can be used as a self-directed activity by having students work individually or in pairs through the guided instructions and support material found on [MysteryQuest 39](#).

Whole Class Activities

- On the following pages are suggested modifications of the self-guided procedures found on the MysteryQuest website for use with a class of students. For convenience, each support material and set of procedures are linked next to the relevant suggestions for whole class instruction.

Suggested Activities

Set the context

- Using [Introduction](#) as a guide, set the context for the investigation. If available, view a film clip of the McCarthy era trials. Project an image of Herbert Norman. Suggest that the circumstances surrounding this Canadian diplomat's death remain a mystery because he, too, was caught in the crosshairs of anti-communist hysteria during the Cold War.

Discuss the challenge

- Use [The Task](#) to explain to students that their challenge is to learn to interpret the techniques of political cartooning and to use these techniques to adapt political cartoons dealing with various Cold War issues.

Learn about the period

- Using [Step 1: Learn about Herbert Norman](#), direct students, in pairs, to read [Herbert Norman and the Cold War](#). While reading, ask students to underline up to ten important details and then formulate the overall message of the article in one or two sentences. As a class, determine which student pairing best captures the overall message.

Learn to read political cartoons

- Using [Step 2: Learn to read political cartoons](#), as a guide, explain that political cartoons offer a unique perspective into an historical period, and that cartoonists use specific techniques to communicate their message. Draw student's attention to the four cartooning techniques identified in [Decoding Political Cartoons](#).
- Practice recognizing these features by examining the 1957 cartoon, [RCMP Dilemma](#). In pairs, ask students to use the chart, [Decoding Political Cartoons](#), to identify one or more examples of each technique, and to explain the meaning of each. As a class, determine the cartoon's overall message.

Revise the cartoon's message

- Using [Step 3: Revise the cartoon's message](#), explain that political cartoons differ in style and depth of analysis from written articles. Invite students to re-examine the cartoon in the previous example and compare it with the accompanying newspaper article, [Unexplained Role of RCMP in the Norman Case](#). Direct students in pairs to record the differences between the cartoon and the article on the top section of the chart, [Representing Ideas in a Cartoon](#). Then ask students to suggest and explain in the bottom section of the chart one change for each technique to make the cartoon more closely reflect the article's message. Encourage students to modify the cartoon by sketching the suggested changes on a printed copy of the drawing.

Modify other cartoons to represent a different message

- Using [*Step 4: Modify other cartoons to represent a different message*](#), as a guide, invite students to modify the following cartoons to better reflect the message in the paired newspaper article:
 - Adapt the cartoon [*No Fooling*](#) to reflect the article [*The “Fifth Column” Agitation of the Warmongers*](#),
 - Adapt the cartoon [*Doing some Undercover Work on your Neighbour*](#) to reflect the article [*This “Screening” Business*](#).

For each pairing, ask students to

- complete a separate copy of [*Decoding Political Cartoons*](#)
- complete a separate copy of [*Representing Ideas in a Cartoon*](#)
- modify the cartoon itself by drawing in suggested changes.

You may want to suggest that students work in pairs to complete the first revision and work independently for the second.

Share cartoons with others

- Arrange students within groups of four to compare one of their adapted political cartoons. Invite each group to identify the most revealing and effective techniques used by various students, and to create a composite version of the cartoon to share with the rest of the class. Invite the class to select the best visual representations of each of the newspaper articles.

Evaluation

- Use the rubric [*Assessing the Representation of Ideas*](#) to evaluate how well students were able to analyze the cartoons’ key features and accurately and appropriately represent the articles’ messages in the cartoons.

Extension

- Invite students individually or as a class to pursue the suggested activities listed in [*Extension*](#).