

**Dr. Seuss' in World War II**

**Author:** Rich del Rio, Teacher Coordinator Midway Institute for Teachers

**Intended Audience:** Grades 7-12

**Title:** Analyzing Dr. Seuss' World War II Political Cartoons

**Objective:** Students will examine a group of cartoons from the Dr. Seuss Collection at the University of California, San Diego to understand wartime issues, the tools of a cartoonist and how cartoons were used to influence public opinion.

**Time:** An initial introduction to political cartoons and the related materials (30 mins).  
Each cartoon analysis (20-30 mins).

**Materials:**

There are five cartoons identified here for the variety of issues presented. All five are attached below with analysis graphic organizers.

[Background info On Theodor Seuss Geisel \(Dr. Seuss\)](#)

[Abbreviated Timeline of Dr. Seuss and the Opening Phases of World War II](#)

A) "Talk, Talk, Talk" May 8, 1941



B) Isolationism May 15, 1941



Ho Hum! No chance of contagion. By Dr. Seuss

C) "End of Nap" December 9, 1941

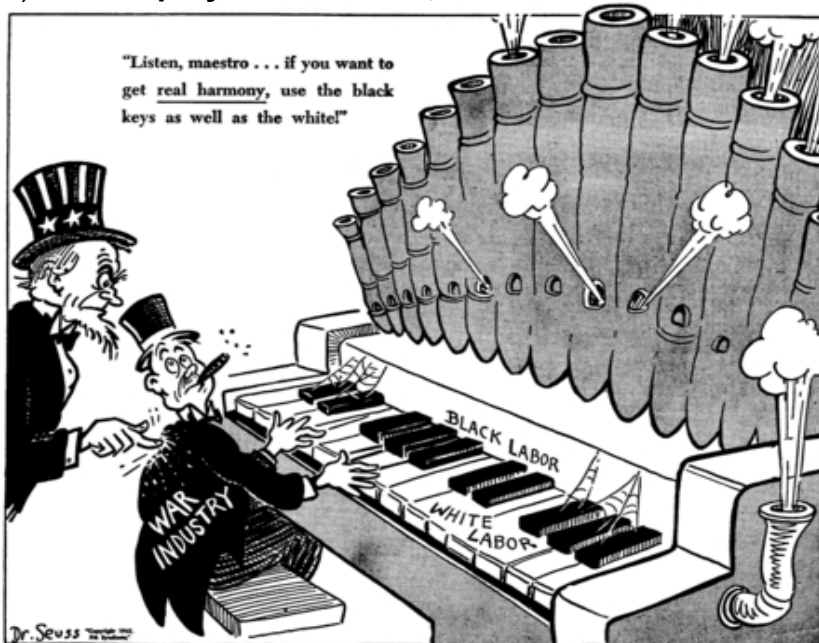


D) Domestic Sacrifice May 11, 1942

Giving the Axis a Lift



E) Fair Employment June 29, 1942



The UCSD Seuss Collection contains over four hundred cartoons from 1941-43 from PM, a New York daily newspaper.

[https://library.ucsd.edu/speccoll/dswenttowar/index.html#q=%221942-06%22&&op=AND&f\[collection\\_sim\]\]=Dr.+Seuss+Political+Cartoons&fq\[\]=date+tesim:"1942-06"&sort=object+create+dti+asc%2C+title+ssi+asc&format=json](https://library.ucsd.edu/speccoll/dswenttowar/index.html#q=%221942-06%22&&op=AND&f[collection_sim]]=Dr.+Seuss+Political+Cartoons&fq[]=date+tesim:)

1. Cartoon Analysis Handout (attached to this doc as well)
2. Profile of Dr. Seuss as cartoonist in WWII
3. Abbreviated Timeline of Dr. Seuss and WWII

**Essential Question:** How did the United States and its allies prevail in World War II through its war mobilization?

Lesson:

- 1) Teachers start the lesson with a review of the tools of a cartoonist. What is a symbol? Caricature?
- 2) Discuss examples of what constitutes a successful political cartoon and why it remains an important medium. Why are cartoons one sided? Why do cartoonists try to use few words? Why are the cultural references embedded in the image so important?
- 3) Distribute the attached Cartoon Analysis Handout.
- 4) Introduce students to Dr. Seuss's background as an illustrator and editorial cartoonist. Read the attached profile.
- 5) Share with students the attached timeline of WWII to be used as a resource.

**Assessment:** Students should be assessed in terms of their understanding of the skills of a cartoonist and the content of WWII. The cartoon analysis document should be assessed for understanding and interpretive use of materials provided.

Extensions (optional):

1. Students can search the Seuss Collection at UCSD and put together a gallery exhibit of his WWII political cartoons organized by a theme or chronological evolution.
2. Students can further research the related topics of:
  - Japanese WWII caricatures of Americans
  - The Japanese-American internment
  - The connections between Seuss' children's books and his experiences in WWII.
3. Students might investigate the relation of a particular cartoon's message to a primary source in the Midway Archive. President Roosevelt's executive order on the Japanese internment (# 9066) or A. Philip Randolph's demand for an end to discrimination in wartime industries ("Why Should We March?") for example.
4. Ask students to consider viewing the cartoons from the perspective of someone of the time period. How do the students think someone in the photograph might have reacted to the crude depictions of the Japanese and Japanese Americans in the Seuss cartoons?
  - A. Reiko Nagumo and classmates, 1942  
<https://calisphere.org/item/ark:/13030/kt1s2016qk/>
  - B. Japanese American soldiers  
<https://csus.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/jaac/id/640/rec/11>
  - C. Shipyard workers, Richmond, CA <https://calisphere.org/item/ark:/13030/kt3d5nd15n/>

## Student Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

For each of the following Seuss Cartoons you will complete the same process modeled in class. Make sure to write in complete sentences and in your own words. Use the list of persuasive techniques included for completing step 2 on each cartoon.

### A) Talk, Talk, Talk” May 8, 1941



**Step 1 Descriptive Breakdown:** Using your own words describe the cartoon in detail focus on the major items and parts that stand out.

**Student Response:**

**Step 2 Techniques Used:** Referring to the list of Cartoonist techniques provided identify techniques used by the cartoonist and describe how they were used.

**Student Response:**

**Step 3 Addressing the Issue:** Using the Title, Date and Cartoon itself what do you think the issue being represented or depicted is in the cartoon? What do you think the cartoonist opinion of the issue is? Why?

**Student Response:**

**Step 4 Popular Opinion at the Time:** Do you think that Dr. Seuss' view was widely held at this time? Why or Why not? In your own opinion do you believe this cartoon would have been effective at Influencing people's view of this issue? Why or Why Not?

**Student Response:**

### **List of Persuasive Techniques: Use this list and terms for Step 2**

**Labeling** -- The artist uses a label to clearly identify something without many words.

**Symbolism** -- using an object to symbolize an idea. Example: the golden arches.

**Caricature** -- an exaggeration of visual elements often physical features. Example: bushy eyebrows, large ears, or baldness.

**Analogy** -- a comparison between two unlike things that share some characteristic(s). When comparing a well known or common situation to the issue of the cartoon, it may help the viewer see it in a new light. Example: The general's battle tactics were like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

**Irony** -- the contrast between the way things are and the way things should be or the way things are expected to be. The cartoonist may express his or her position through irony. Example: "Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink."

**Juxtaposition** -- positioning people/objects near each other to compare and contrast. It often highlights the differences. Example: peasants and aristocrats.

**Exaggeration** -- an overstatement of a truth. Example: "I am dying of laughter."

**Stereotype** -- a fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. Stereotypes can be explicitly negative or seemingly positive. In either case they establish a generalization that limits individuals to a category or essential trait. Cartoonists often use stereotypes to communicate simple, powerful messages without many words. Example: a dumb jock.



## Student Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

For each of the following Seuss Cartoons you will complete the same process modeled in class. Make sure to write in complete sentences and in your own words.

### B) Isolationism May 15, 1941



**Step 1 Descriptive Breakdown:** Using your own words describe the cartoon in detail focus on the major items and parts that stand out.

**Student Response:**

**Step 2 Techniques Used:** Referring to the list of Cartoonist techniques provided identify techniques used by the cartoonist and describe how they were used.

**Student Response:**

**Step 3 Addressing the Issue:** Using the Title, Date and Cartoon itself what do you think the issue being represented or depicted is in the cartoon? What do you think the cartoonist opinion of the issue is? Why?

**Student Response:**

**Step 4 Popular Opinion at the Time:** Do you think that Dr. Seuss' view was widely held at this time? Why or Why not? In your own opinion do you believe this cartoon would have been effective at Influencing people's view of this issue? Why or Why Not?

**Student Response:**

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#### C) “End of Nap” December 9, 1941



**Step 1 Descriptive Breakdown:** Using your own words describe the cartoon in detail focus on the major items and parts that stand out.

**Student Response:**

**Step 2 Techniques Used:** Referring to the list of Cartoonist techniques provided identify techniques used by the cartoonist and describe how they were used.

**Student Response:**

**Step 3 Addressing the Issue:** Using the Title, Date and Cartoon itself what do you think the issue being represented or depicted is in the cartoon? What do you think the cartoonist opinion of the issue is? Why?

**Student Response:**

**Step 4 Popular Opinion at the Time:** Do you think that Dr. Seuss' view was widely held at this time? Why or Why not? In your own opinion do you believe this cartoon would have been effective at Influencing people's view of this issue? Why or Why Not?

**Student Response:**

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### D) Domestic Sacrifice May 11, 1942

Giving the Axis a Lift



**Step 1 Descriptive Breakdown:** Using your own words describe the cartoon in detail focus on the major items and parts that stand out.

**Student Response:**

**Step 2 Techniques Used:** Referring to the list of Cartoonist techniques provided identify techniques used by the cartoonist and describe how they were used.

**Student Response:**

**Step 3 Addressing the Issue:** Using the Title, Date and Cartoon itself what do you think the issue being represented or depicted is in the cartoon? What do you think the cartoonist opinion of the issue is? Why?

**Student Response:**

**Step 4 Popular Opinion at the Time:** Do you think that Dr. Seuss' view was widely held at this time? Why or Why not? In your own opinion do you believe this cartoon would have been effective at Influencing people's view of this issue? Why or Why Not?

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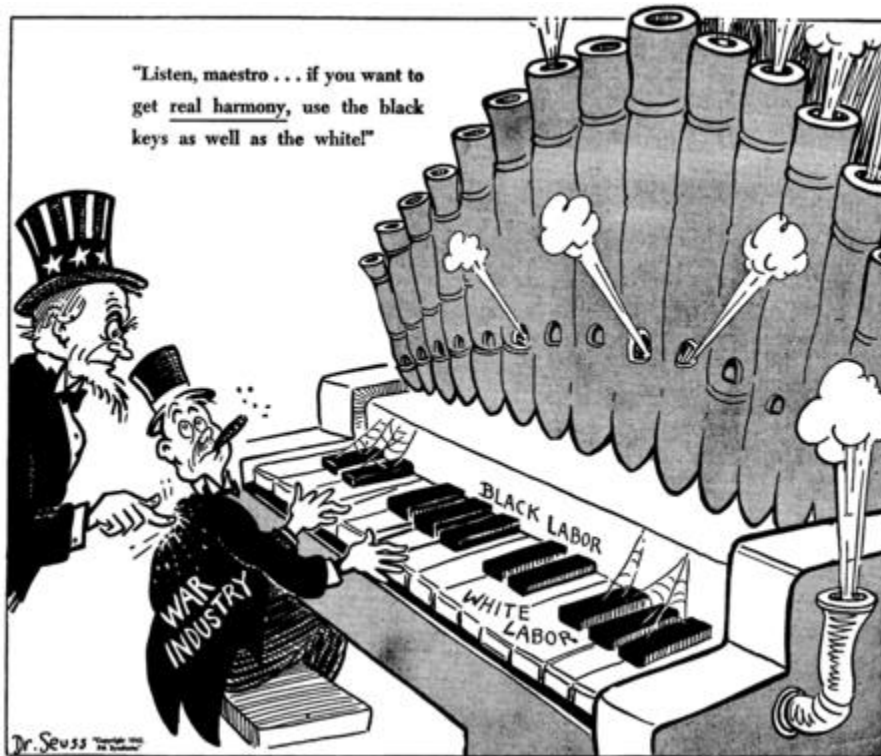
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### E) Fair Employment June 29, 1942



**Step 1 Descriptive Breakdown:** Using your own words describe the cartoon in detail focus on the major items and parts that stand out.

**Student Response:**

**Step 2 Techniques Used:** Referring to the list of Cartoonist techniques provided identify techniques used by the cartoonist and describe how they were used.

**Student Response:**

**Step 3 Addressing the Issue:** Using the Title, Date and Cartoon itself what do you think the issue being represented or depicted is in the cartoon? What do you think the cartoonist opinion of the issue is? Why?

**Student Response:**

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