

## **Common Political Cartoon Devices**

The following are common devices used by cartoonists to get across messages to their audience:

**Size:** An oversize figure appears powerful, threatening, and serious. A small figure appears powerless and intimidated.

**Light and Dark:** Dark design creates a feeling of disaster, fear, and mystery. Light design, in contrast, conveys a feeling of light heartedness, hope and goodwill.

**Lines:** Light lines are often used to create a feeling of whimsy and humor, dark lines one of seriousness. Crooked lines convey tension.

**Caricature:** This technique emphasizes physical characteristics or defects to a point where the person looks ridiculous, while still being instantly recognizable.

**Symbolism:** Examples of common symbols are Uncle Sam for the United States; a bear for Russia; a mortar board for education; a gavel for justice; a dove for peace; and the hobnailed boot for an oppressor.

**Stereotyping:** Often groups of people are represented in an oversimplified and inaccurate way that makes them, nonetheless, easily recognizable.

**Exaggeration:** An object, person, situation, or idea is overstated. A politician who is besieged by problems might be depicted tied to a burning stake, with each piece of firewood labeled with the name of a political problem.

**Labels and/or Captions:** The use of signs or some other form of labeling to clearly identify a person and/or object in the cartoon. Captions are used either to allow the persons in the cartoon to speak or express their thoughts and views on a topic or event, or(if they are not attributed to a person in the cartoon) the cartoonist to make a comment about the events in the cartoon.