

Cartoons: more than just squiggles on the page...

Definitions:

- **Cartoon** – (noun) **1.** a simple drawing showing the features of its subjects in a humorously exaggerated way, especially a satirical one in a newspaper or magazine. (Also, **cartoon strip**, a narrative sequence of humorous drawings in a comic, magazine or newspaper, usually with captions.) **2.** a film using animation techniques to photograph a sequence of drawings rather than real people or objects. **3.** a full size drawing made by an artist as a preliminary design for painting or other work of art. (Oxford Dictionary).
 - The Age defines cartoons as drawings that feature people, issues and events currently in the news. They are usually humorous but contain a serious comment. Cartoons often use captions like ‘punch lines’ in a joke to tell their story.
 - Jane Cafarella says: ‘I think cartoons are about badness. It’s about the one thing journalists avoid – ridicule.
 - Michael Leunig argues that his cartoons are about drawing out the goodness in people. ‘I like to imagine that they provoke the readers to find their own meaning; to find something, no matter how tiny, within themselves as a result of contemplating one of my cartoons.’
- **Cartooning** – the activity or occupation of drawing cartoons for newspapers or magazines. (Oxford Dictionary).

Analysis in two minutes...

You will need to prepare 240 – 250 words covering the following:
(You are NOT to read your notes, they are for guidance only.)

Context: What is the issue to which the cartoon/text refers?

Comment: Is the cartoon making a political or social comment?

Contention: What is the cartoonist’s contention?

Tone: Is the cartoon’s tone serious, funny, dark and gloomy, witty or biting?

Components: What are the different elements of the cartoon?

Use of Irony:

- Situational irony: i.e. absurd, ironic situations based on coincidence or unexpected events.
- Linguistic irony: the use of ironic language such as puns, sarcasm and hidden messages

Symbols: Cartoonists use symbols to convey complex ideas with an economy of detail. In general terms, a symbol is anything that stands for something else. Obvious examples are flags, which symbolize a nation; the cross is a symbol for Christianity; a light bulb is a symbol of inspiration in a cartoon. What symbols are used to convey the cartoonist’s contention? Explain what the symbol means in the context of this particular cartoon.

Intended Impact on the Viewer: How does the cartoonist position the viewer to think, feel and/or act?

Sample analysis:



During late October of 2012 George Lucas sold the film rights for lucrative film franchise 'Star Wars' to Disney who immediately announced they would be creating a new trilogy of films with the first to be released in 2014 following the story continuity after the original trilogy. Fans of the series had mixed responses to this.

The cartoon published in the Herald-Sun on October 1st 2012 by Mark Knight makes is a cultural comment to this significant event which shocked Hollywood. The tone is light-hearted and satirical using the imposing figure of Darth Vader being brought to his knees by the diminutive Mickey Mouse to convey the shock of the occurrence. Mark Knight's signature pig also alludes to his own opinion on the sale by referencing the topical 'Nooooo' of Vader's added to the BluRay edition of the Empire Strikes Back which had fans once more suggesting the Lucas' constant meddling with the original trilogy diminished the once poignant nature of the work.

Most notable in this cartoon is the juxtaposing of the two key figures. Vader is synonymous with the classic trilogy and symbolises here its influence and place in cinema. His imposing size and apparent strength conveys the importance of the work and its popularity in popular culture and especially the ever strengthening geek-chic movement. Standing in front of a robed Mickey Mouse, who has come to represent Disney and its corporate interests, we see him submitting to the company who is most well known for children's entertainment. Mickey also stands in place of the Emperor, the leader of the Galactic Empire and thus the most evil of the characters in the Star Wars universe. This connects Mickey, and so Disney, with the nature of the Dark Side. The suggestion therefore is that this occurrence is a negative one. Knight has chosen to use no colour and has kept Mickey in silhouette which also adds to the foreboding feel of the cartoon.

While this cartoon may be glossed over as a simple depiction of a merger of two film giants and a slight against both Disney and Lucas a deeper meaning can be read when the universality of the figures is accepted. Knight may be commenting on the nature of the business of Hollywood and warning that we should not dismiss the wholesome Disney as the paragon of virtue but instead recognise it as the multinational company it is and see that it is taking control of the 'universe' that is entertainment and bringing the creative vision of film-makers under its control.