

## **Using Primary Sources in the Classroom: World War II Unit**

This lesson was created by educators working with the Alabama Department of Archives as part of the “[Using Primary Sources in the Classroom](#)” project in 1996.

### **Lesson 1 - Political Cartoons**

#### **Background information for teachers:**

Once the United States entered the war, Alabamians fully supported the effort. They sent men and women off to serve and geared up the home front to support the troops by rationing, planting home gardens, and recycling needed war resources. Political cartoons of the day, like those of Frank Spangler, Sr. and his son Frank Spangler, Jr., reflected citizen concerns. Drawing for the *Montgomery Advertiser* from 1940 to 1974, the Spanglers' cartoons raised issues of local, national, and international importance in a simple, direct way. This lesson helps students understand that a political cartoon is very much like an editorial--both present personal opinions.

#### **Content Standards:**

Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies (2010)

- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade:
  - 13. Describe the economic and social impact of World War II on Alabamians, including entry of women into the workforce, increase in job opportunities, rationing, utilization of Alabama’s military installations, military recruitment, the draft, and a rise in racial consciousness.
    - Recognizing Alabama participants in World War II, including the Tuskegee Airmen and women in the military
    - Justifying the strategic placement of military bases in Alabama, including Redstone Arsenal, Fort Rucker, Fort McClellan, and Craig Air Force Base
- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade:
  - 6. Identify causes and consequences of World War II and reasons for the United States’ entry into the war.
    - Locating on a map Allied countries and Axis Powers
    - Locating on a map key engagements of World War II, including Pearl Harbor; the battles of Normandy, Stalingrad, and Midway; and the Battle of the Bulge
    - Identifying key figures of World War II, including Franklin D. Roosevelt, Sir Winston Churchill, Harry S. Truman, Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Michinomiya Hirohito, and Hideki Tōjō
    - Describing the development of and the decision to use the atomic bomb
    - Describing human costs associated with World War II Examples:the Holocaust, civilian and military casualties
    - Explaining the importance of the surrender of the Axis Powers ending World War II

- 7. Identify changes on the American home front during World War II.
  - Example: rationing
    - Recognizing the retooling of factories from consumer to military production
    - Identifying new roles of women and African Americans in the workforce
    - Describing increased demand on the Birmingham steel industry and Port of Mobile facilities
    - Describing the experience of African Americans and Japanese Americans in the United States during World War II, including the Tuskegee Airmen and occupants of internment camps
- 10<sup>th</sup> Grade:
  - 10. Describe the impact of World War II on the lives of American citizens, including wartime economic measures, population shifts, growth in the middle class, growth of industrialization, advancements in science and technology, increased wealth in the African-American community, racial and ethnic tensions, Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (G. I. Bill of Rights), and desegregation of the military.
    - Describing Alabama's participation in World War II, including the role of the Tuskegee Airmen, the Aliceville Prisoner of War (POW) camp, growth of the Port of Mobile, production of Birmingham steel, and the establishment of military bases

#### National Standards for History

- Era 8 The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)
  - Standard 3: The causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs:

#### National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Standard 2 – Time, Continuity, and Change
  - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy
- Standard 3 – People, Places, and Environments
  - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments
- Standard 5 – Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
  - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions
- Standard 6 – Power, Authority, and Governance
  - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

#### Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Define a political cartoon and its purposes.
2. Analyze a political cartoon.
3. Identify symbols in a political cartoon.

4. Synthesize an editorial to support a political cartoon.

### **Suggested Activities:**

1. Give a copy of a different political cartoon for each student. **SAVE ONE CARTOON TO BE COPIED FOR ALL OF THE STUDENTS.**
2. Make overhead transparencies of each cartoon.
3. Use the [general suggestions for analyzing a political cartoon](#). Allow each student enough time to complete his/her analysis of his/her assigned cartoon.
4. After the students have finished, place each cartoon on the overhead and allow the students to assist you in compiling a class analysis for each cartoon.
5. Give the copy of the cartoon that you have saved to each of the students. Ask each student to write an editorial which supports the political cartoon. They must analyze the cartoon in order to write about the subject. However, remind students that the cartoon and the editorial will be placed side by side on the editorial page. They **MUST NOT** describe the cartoon in their editorial.
6. For a bonus, ask the students to draw their own cartoon discussing an area of concern for them in their school or community.

### **Primary Sources:**

[Document 1](#): Spangler, Frank M. *Bearing Down*. n.d. Frank M. Spangler Cartoons & Clippings, PB Range I, Section 4, Shelf e, Box 1, Folder 2, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 2](#): \_\_\_\_\_. *The Big Coach*. n.d. Frank M. Spangler Cartoons & Clippings, PB Range I, Section 4, Shelf e, Box 1, Folder 2, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 3](#): \_\_\_\_\_. *Help Wanted*. n.d. Frank M. Spangler Cartoons & Clippings, PB Range I, Section 4, Shelf e, Box 1, Folder 2, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 4](#): \_\_\_\_\_. *Open House*. n.d. Frank M. Spangler Cartoons & Clippings, PB Range I, Section 4, Shelf e, Box 1, Folder 6, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 5](#): \_\_\_\_\_. *Scrap Evolution*. n.d. Frank M. Spangler Cartoons & Clippings, PB Range I, Section 4, Shelf e, Box 1, Folder 10, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 6](#): \_\_\_\_\_. *Bringing In The Sheep*. n.d. Frank M. Spangler Cartoons & Clippings, PB Range I, Section 4, Shelf e, Box 1, Folder 6, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 7](#): \_\_\_\_\_. *The Right Steps*. n.d. Frank M. Spangler Cartoons & Clippings, PB Range I, Section 4, Shelf e, Box 1, Folder 6, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 8](#): \_\_\_\_\_. *Speeding Up Time*. n.d. Frank M. Spangler Cartoons & Clippings, PB Range I, Section 4, Shelf e, Box 1, Folder 2, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 9](#): \_\_\_\_\_. *The Trenchmen*. n.d. Frank M. Spangler Cartoons & Clippings, PB Range I, Section 4, Shelf e, Box 1, Folder 11, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

## General Suggestions for Analyzing a Cartoon

### Words

1. Identify the cartoon and/or title.
2. Locate three words or phrases used by the cartoonist to identify objects or people within the cartoon. (Not all cartoons include words.)
3. Record any important dates or numbers that appear in the cartoon.
4. Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so? (Not all cartoons include words.)

### Visuals

#### Level 3:

1. List the objects you see in the cartoon.

#### Level 2:

1. Which of the objects on your list are symbols?
2. What do you think each of the symbols means?

#### Level 1:

1. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.
2. In your own words, explain how the words in the cartoon explain or clarify the symbols.
3. What techniques or devices does the cartoon use? Symbolism? Ridicule? Caricature? Metaphor? Satire? Puns? Other? (describe)
4. In your own words, explain the message of the cartoon.
5. State your own opinion on the issue.
6. What special interest groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?

### Other suggestions for student activities:

1. Collect several political cartoons and make a cartoon booklet. Use the chart presented here to analyze the elements.
2. Design a cartoon that illustrates your opinion on a specific issue of interest to you.
3. Compare and contrast a political cartoon with one of your favorite comic strips. What are the differences in symbols, characters, and messages of each?