

EDITORIAL CARTOONS

PICTURES THAT SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

It's said that "a picture is worth a thousand words." That's a good way of describing editorial cartoons.

"Not everyone has time to read the 1,000 words. But everybody looks at the cartoon," says editorial cartoonist Theo Moudakis. While most cartoons are meant to be funny, editorial cartoons can be humorous but they also make a statement, usually about politics or current events. They're like a visual news article, where the illustrator is trying to tell you something about the world.

Theo Moudakis has a lot to say. He has been a cartoonist for more than 30 years and says editorial cartoons are more important than ever. That's because there is so much happening in the world that he wants to comment on through his cartoons. His cartoons let him "say" things, while making people smile.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, for instance, he wanted to point out that grocery store workers—who were going in to work every day to help get groceries to everyone, despite the fact that they could get infected—were heroes. He did that by drawing comic book superheroes Superman, Batman, Spiderman, Wonder Woman and Iron Man, inviting two grocery clerks to join their league because "grocery store workers are now in the club."

Moudakis gets most of his ideas for his cartoons from the news, which he reads early each morning. He has notepads strewn throughout the house, and he jots down loose ideas to turn into possible cartoons. At 8 a.m. he heads up to his home-office where he sits at his drawing table and sketches in pen and coloured markers until he gets a rough cartoon he's happy with. Around 10:30 a.m. he emails it to his boss Andrew Phillips at the Toronto Star. Phillips can ask for changes but he usually opts to leave the cartoon as-is.

"Once in a while he may not like something, but 95 per cent of the time everything's fine," says Moudakis.

Once Phillips has given Moudakis the go-ahead on the cartoon, the artist draws it again in black marker and scans it into his computer, usually in bits and pieces that he can move around digitally and add colour until he gets it the way he wants it. He sends the final draft to the Star around 2 p.m. where it is put into the next day's newspaper. At 4 p.m. Moudakis posts his cartoon on social media, like Twitter.

The next day, the cartoon is posted on a special website that distributes it to other newspapers as well.

Moudakis likes it when his cartoons get a big reaction—positive or negative. When people get upset about one of his cartoons, for instance because it's critical of a politician, Moudakis says he knows he's making a difference.

"They yell at me, and blast me—for three days (after I post a cartoon) people are just furious with me. I love it."

The first time people got upset over one of his cartoons, he wanted to "crawl under the covers," he says. But now, he enjoys sparring with people on Twitter. "My social media presence has become part of the job."

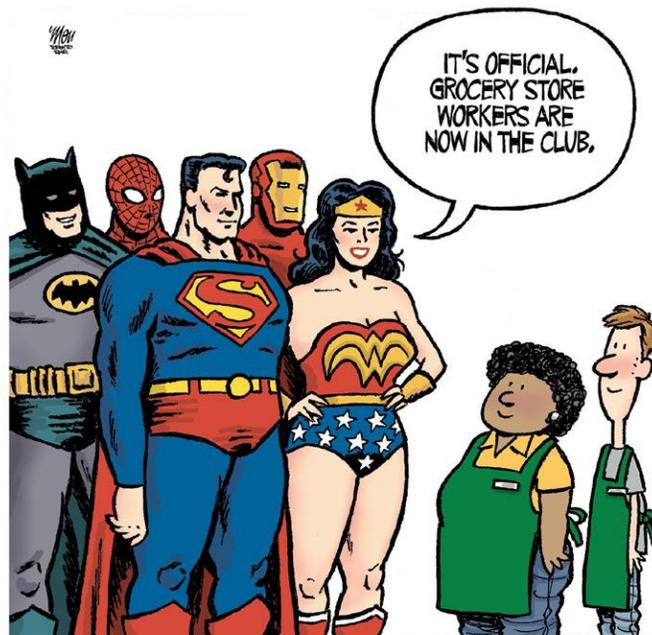
"I want reaction. It's good business. It makes me feel good as a cartoonist, a productive member of society. I want response. And not only that, it's good to just shine a light on the lies and the hypocrisy that's part of society out there. I want that to be shown, to be revealed."

For that reason, Moudakis considers this "the golden age of cartoons. I don't think there's ever been a better time to be a cartoonist."

He said there are relatively few editorial cartoonists left. "It's a job that is slowly disappearing," he says.

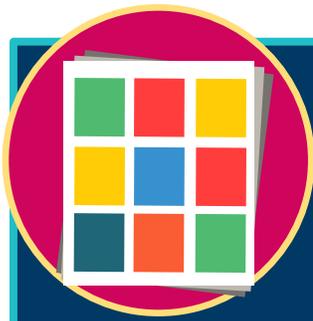
But, he says, it's a job that is just important today as it was a century ago. "The purpose it serves is the same purpose it served 100 years ago—to boil down the story to an easy-to-digest visual."

A picture, in essence, that is worth 1,000 words.



The purpose (an editorial cartoon) serves is the same purpose it served 100 years ago—to boil down the story to an easy-to-digest visual

-THEO MOUDAKIS



JOURNALISM 101:

POLITICAL CARTOONS

Editorial cartoons are also known as “political cartoons.” They are usually published on a newspaper’s editorial page, as opposed to being with the rest of the cartoons, which are usually in the life or entertainment section.



DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to humour, editorial cartoonists often use these devices to get their point across:

Caricatures (drawings of political figures or celebrities with features such as the nose or eyes exaggerated)

Stereotypes (a statement about a group of people that is widely believed but is only partially true—for instance, teenagers play video games all the time and always sleep in)

Symbols (images that represent something else—for instance, a lion might represent bravery)

Analogies (like a visual pun, it shows one thing to suggest something else that is dissimilar to it—for instance, a knee is like a lever)



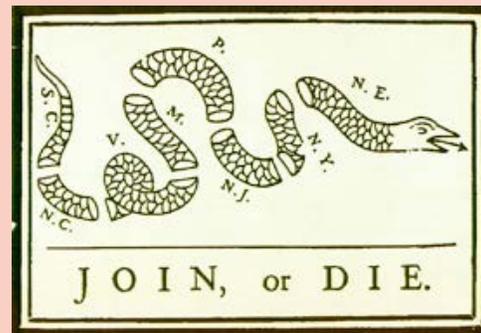
EDUCATION CONNECTION

Discuss!

Theo Moudakis is pleased when his cartoons get a strong reaction from people—even if it’s a negative reaction. Why do you think that is?

Check it Out!

This is one of the earliest editorial cartoons, said to have been drawn by Benjamin Franklin and printed in his Pennsylvania Gazette on May 9, 1754. It was accompanied by a column by Franklin urging colonial unity. The letters on the snake represent American colonies. What do you think the cartoon is trying to say?



SOURCE: www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3g05315/

Investigate!

Editorial cartoons are not the same as comics printed in magazines or even comic strips published in newspapers. Using a newspaper, find different types of cartoons and compare them. How are they different? How are they the same?



DIG DEEPER:

Links to more Information

The Ohio State University has an excellent web page with more information and facts about editorial cartoons. [CHECK IT OUT](#)

See more editorial cartoons, by Theo Moudakis and others, on the Toronto Star website. [CHECK IT OUT](#)