

INSTRUCTION: HUMOR AROUSES THINKING

A GUIDED LESSON FOR VIEWING THE CARTOON EXHIBITION ON THE SUBJECT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Instructors and Teachers

During October 2004, the City of Haifa hosted the 10th International Cartoon Festival. This year, the theme of the Festival was Environment Issues. Within the framework of the Festival, an exhibition of cartoons selected from works of art submitted to the Cartoon Competition by artists from all over the world was displayed. In the Preface to the Exhibition catalog, the Minister of Education, Culture and Sport wrote the following:

Cartoons speak to the hearts of us all, and through humor, we can improve our awareness about the environment among pupils and our attitude to the preservation of nature and other environmental subjects. For this reason, the Israel National Commission for UNESCO, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, and Haifa Municipality afford great importance in presenting the Cartoon Exhibition in high schools and universities in Israel and throughout the world.

The Cartoon Exhibition was loaned to schools by Haifa Municipality in order to present it to the pupils. The cartoons exhibited present situations of errors, problems, interferences in carrying out the task of increasing awareness and fostering knowledge about preserving the environment recycling projects and other subjects. Should such a painful and serious subject find a home in humor and laughter? To this we must answer that all cultural and propaganda means that could arouse thinking and interest in dealing with these topics and bringing the subject to top of the public agenda should be encouraged, even if done in a humoristic fashion. In order to ensure that viewing the Exhibition will be guided and effective, and that every pupil could be impressed, think and express his feelings, we have prepared the proposed lesson plan.

The program structure begins with Stages of Acquiring Knowledge and Discussion in the Class Acquiring knowledge – Taking a Stand – Taking Action.

Course of the Lesson

The lesson could be given partly in the classroom and partly by viewing the Cartoon Exhibition. It could start out with a brief explanation as to what is a caricature, and continue by viewing the Exhibition, returning to the classroom afterwards, filling in a questionnaire of independent work of the pupils according to criteria, and to encourage careful behavior.

What is a Caricature?

According to the dictionary, this is a clever and sarcastic sketch that describes humans or a situation in lines that characterize them. A caricaturist conveys his message through a drawing that presents things in an exaggerated fashion and with tongue in cheek. In the eyes of the observer, the caricature is a humorous riddle that hides a message he must find. The caricature should bring a smile to the face of the observer but this does not always happen, and the observer does not always understand the full meaning and intention of the caricaturist.

First Stage – Preparation in the Classroom

1. The teacher will clarify with the pupils the concept of caricature and ask them about their familiarity with different types of caricatures (political, social, advertising).
2. The teacher will tell the pupils about the International Cartoon Exhibition and ask them their opinion about the idea of using cartoons as a means of disseminating the subject of preserving the environment or irresponsible behavior of human beings. In addition, the teacher will ask the pupils which motifs, in their opinion, related to the subject could help, and what actually appears in the Cartoon Exhibition.
3. The teacher will present the Observation Sheet to the pupils in the Cartoon Exhibition and will explain to them how to observe the cartoons, and record their impressions on the Observation Sheet.
4. The teacher will distribute a questionnaire to the pupils, the objective of which will clarify their behavior before observing the Exhibition. The pupils will fill in the questionnaire.
5. The teacher will distribute an Observation Sheet to each pupil.

Second Stage – Viewing the Exhibition

The pupils will view the Exhibition and the cartoons freely for at least 20 minutes). Each pupil will choose one cartoon on which to focus. The pupils will record their impressions of the cartoons on the Observation Sheet and explain why they chose their specific cartoon.

Third Stage – Discussion in Class

1. The teacher will ask the pupils about their impressions of the Exhibition and tell them to present and describe the cartoons they chose to focus on, explaining why and what they liked about them according to the Observation Sheet they filled in.
2. The teacher will hold a discussion on the following subjects:
 - a. Can humor be used as a means of conveying messages to prevent damages to our world?
 - b. Can observing the Exhibition influence our behavior in the future, will we take action or stand as citizens in our immediate environment and hope that our world be better?
 - c. Can cartoons succeed in conveying messages and creating feelings that could be internalized in our memory?

Fourth Stage – In the Classroom or as a Homework Assignment

The teacher will ask that the pupils draw a cartoon or make a humoristic collage describing a dangerous situation or irresponsible behavior in daily life, or one that has a message of responsibility.

EXHIBITION OBSERVATION SHEET

Observe all the cartoons in the Exhibition and try to understand the meaning behind each one. Afterwards, choose a cartoon that you are most attracted to and answer the following questions:

1. What cartoon did you choose, and what does it describe?

2. Why did you choose this cartoon?

3. Does the cartoon you chose express humor, irony, fear, anger, warning or criticism?

4. What is the main message of the cartoon?

5. What is the target audience of the cartoon, who is the message directed at?

6. Where does the situation depicted in the cartoon take place?

7. Who is participating in the cartoon or the situation?

8. Is there a need for a verbal explanation beside the cartoon or is it self-explanatory?

9. Write a short slogan or a sub-title expressing the main idea behind the cartoon or your feelings?

10. Write a dialog between the individuals participating in the cartoon or about what the character in the cartoon is saying.

11. Draw a new slogan or sign that reflects a warning about a situation or an event described in the cartoon.

12. What or who could prevent the situation or event described in the cartoon from taking place?

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