

## Analyzing Political Cartoons

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**Introduction:** The strong feelings raised by politics and international issues are the fodder of political cartoonists in the United States and around the world. Cartoons not only reflect the events of the times, but they often offer an interpretation or express a strong opinion about these events as well.

Cartoonists use a variety of methods to convey their ideas. The techniques they use include:

- Labels:** Cartoonists often identify or name certain things in their cartoons so that it is apparent what the things represent.
- Symbolism:** Cartoonists may use simple objects to represent larger ideas or concepts.
- Analogy:** Cartoonists may compare a complex concept or situation to a simpler concept or situation in order to help the viewer understand the complex situation in a different way.
- Irony:** A cartoonist may express an opinion on a topic by highlighting the difference between the way things are and the way the cartoonist thinks they ought to be.

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**Instructions:** Work with your group to analyze the two cartoons your teacher has assigned you. You will be asked to identify the techniques each cartoonist used. The following questions will help guide your thinking.

If the cartoonist used **labels**, what things in the cartoon are labelled? Why do you think the cartoonist chose to label those things?

If the cartoonist used **symbolism**, what things in the cartoon are symbols? What do they stand for?

If the cartoonist used an **analogy**, what two concepts or situations are compared? How does this comparison help the viewer see the complex situation in a different way?

If the cartoonist used **irony**, what does the cartoonist show about the way things are? How does the cartoonist think things should be?



### 1. Observation

Describe the objects or people in the cartoon.

Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.

2. Identify at least two techniques that the cartoonist used and explain what ideas are conveyed through each technique.

a.

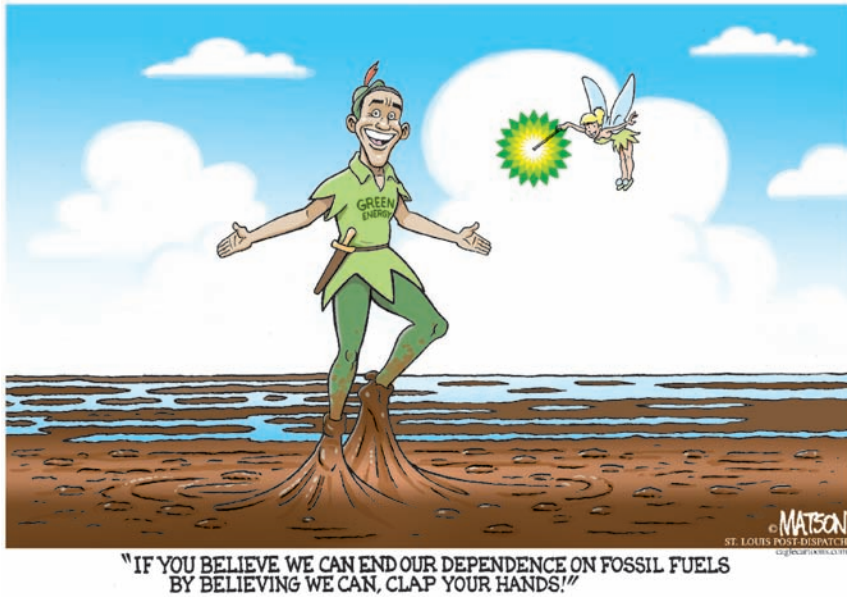
b.

c.

3. What is the message of the cartoon?

4. How is this cartoon related to what you know about the oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico?

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\*Note: This cartoon was published on April 11, 2010, shortly before the Gulf oil disaster.

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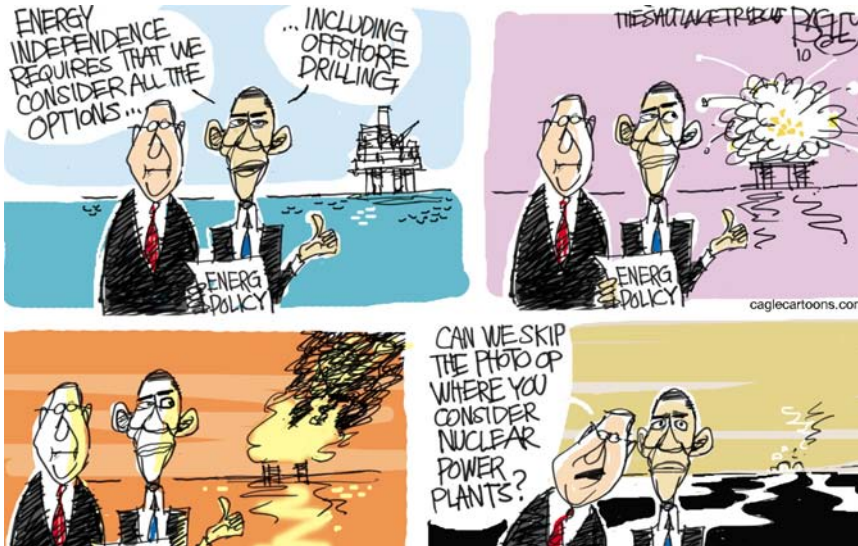
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\*Note: "Dispersants" are chemicals that can be used to break up oil slicks. Dispersants were sprayed in the Gulf following the recent oil disaster.

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