During 2008 the National Museum of Australia will again run its annual political cartooning competition. It is open to all primary and secondary students. You do not have to be a good artist to enter it — the key thing is to be able to get a clever idea across in a visual way. Here are the winning entries for 2007:

**SECONDARY**

- **Lemming07**
  Ann Plummer, Year 12, Dickson College, ACT

- **Christmas at the Dinejads**
  Hannah Bull, Year 11, Lake Tuggeranong College, ACT

- **Kath and Kim**
  Jeff Evans, Year 12, Dickson College, ACT

**PRIMARY**

- **11 years still going wrong**
  Harry Dalton, Year 5, Campbell Primary School, ACT

- **OPEC in Austria**
  Aaron Stephen, Marist College Junior School, ACT

- **What heart problem?**
  Tiahne Douglas, Year 6, Mount Carmel Central School, Yass, NSW

This unit will help you think about what cartoonists do, and to gather examples of their approaches during 2008. You will be able to use this information and understanding to create your own cartoon to enter in the 2008 National Museum of Australia competition. Check out the Museum’s website <www.nma.gov.au/education>, and the last page of this unit for more details.

Good luck!
To understand this we need to look at how cartoonists work.

We can do this by identifying a number of key elements that exist in good political cartoons, and seeing examples of them from the National Museum of Australia’s 2007 display of Australia’s most popular political cartoons.

Here is a list of key features. On the following pages you can see illustrations or examples of how each is used in political cartoons.

**Key elements of a political cartoon**

A good political cartoon gets across its creator’s message through a ‘jolt’ of recognition or identification or agreement. The creation of this ‘jolt’ usually involves …

- **The effective use of caricature**
  - Most political cartoons involve caricature — a deliberate distortion and unflattering emphasis on a person’s physical appearance. This helps give the cartoon its humour — we laugh at the cartoon before we even look at what it is saying.

- **The focus on a familiar and readily identifiable subject**
  - The subject of a political cartoon is nearly always a person, event, issue or idea that is in the news. We recognise what the cartoon is about without having to study it too closely.

- **A clear target**
  - There is a clear target. The target is going to squirm because of the way the person, idea, issue or situation is presented. So a cartoon is usually critical, and at times even cruel.

- **An effective style**
  - The style may vary greatly, from the simplest line drawings that present only the barest essentials, to elaborately drawn pictures that contain a wealth of detail. Cartoons usually only include as much as is needed to make the point clearly.

- **The use of symbolism or visual metaphor**
  - Cartoons use symbols and metaphors. These are ways of expressing the general through the particular. For example, a dove is a symbol of peace; a weapon may be a metaphor for conflict.

- **An identifiable context**
  - Viewers need to recognise the setting of the cartoon in order to make sense of it. Usually this involves a current situation, but it may also involve a culturally recognisable element from the past — for example most viewers would recognise a cartoon using the figure of Jesus, and realise that the cartoon was about a religious situation.

- **The use of stereotyping**
  - Cartoons often rely on stereotypes and exaggeration both for their humour, and also to make a point clearly. Over-simplification is often a major element in getting a message across.

- **Appropriate but usually minimal captioning**
  - Words and written explanations are often used to make the meaning clear and explicit.

- **A variety of possible tones**
  - Cartoons may be: humorous, ironic, gentle, savage, bitter, wistful, nostalgic, wry, or contain many other possibilities.

All the above elements are used for one purpose: to convey the cartoonist’s message and ideas to viewers in an effective way.

Let’s see how we can identify these features in the National Museum of Australia’s 2007 cartoon collection, which can be seen in more detail at [http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/behind_the_lines_2007_the_years_best_cartoons/](http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/behind_the_lines_2007_the_years_best_cartoons/).

Note that in the following pages we have usually not identified the individuals in the cartoons, or their specific context. In most cases we want you to concentrate on what the cartoonists are doing, and how they are doing it, rather than focusing on the individuals involved. However, you can see the context of the cartoons on the Museum’s website address.
Caricature

Here are examples of the way the new Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, has been portrayed in the collection.

1. Compare these examples, thinking about such questions as:
   - What do they all emphasise?
   - Are they trying to be realistic?
   - Are they trying to be funny?
   - Are they trying to be kind or cruel?

2. Are they all recognisable?
   Is that important?

3. Which do you think is the best caricature? Why?

4. What would you now say that a caricature does? Discuss your ideas.

Target

During the election campaign of 2007 the former Midnight Oil singer Peter Garrett, once a strong environmental campaigner, was Shadow Environment Minister for the Australian Labor Party. He was criticised in the press for seeming to have abandoned many of those beliefs that he once strongly supported.

5. Look at these three critical cartoons. How is Peter Garrett the target of the cartoonists?
The subject of a cartoon is usually easily identifiable. However, the message is not always the same. Here are four cartoons that deal with the same subject — the news that the Australian Government would intervene in Indigenous communities where there were huge social problems. But the four are really very different.

Compare the subject and style of the four, and the final message each presents on this subject.

Which of these cartoons do you think is the most effective? Explain your reasons.

Symbolism is where an object is used to represent something else. A visual metaphor is where an aspect of the cartoon makes a point. In this cartoon, the cartoonist is using symbolism and visual metaphor to criticise the then Prime Minister John Howard’s supposed policy of spending big to advertise his ‘green’ policies, while really failing to create effective policies about climate change.

In this cartoon, what does the crown and throne symbolise?

What is the visual metaphor of the wave?

Are they effective metaphors? Explain your reasons.
The impact of this cartoon depends on the viewer knowing the context — who the person is, why he has wings, and why the glass has been broken by stones. In 2007 Labor leader Kevin Rudd was dubbed ‘Saint Kevin’ by some commentators, because he seemed to be ‘squeaky clean’ and religious. It was then revealed that he had spent some time one evening in a New York strip club.

Using this knowledge of the context, what is the message of this cartoon?

Look at the left-hand frame of the image opposite. It relies on stereotyping. What does the clothing, chains and context suggest is happening with Prime Minister Howard?

If you only saw this part of the cartoon, what would you say was its message?

What is the stereotype that is being used?

Now look at the full image. What is the real message of the cartoon?

How has the stereotype in the left-hand panel been used to create a state of mind that makes the humour and the final message of the cartoon come through?

Most cartoons have a caption. The caption is usually brief, and helps to make the point of the cartoon. Sometimes captioning is needed within the cartoon for the message to be clear. In this cartoon the then leader Prime Minister Howard and President Bush are in trouble.

Look at this cartoon. What is the message of the cartoon if the caption ‘Iraq’ is not included? What does it mean if the caption is used?
The tone of a cartoon depends on its subject, and its style.

18 What would you say was the tone of each of these cartoons?

19 What are the elements of the cartoon that create or result in that tone?
Now look at this cartoon, and put together all the aspects you have been considering to analyse this cartoon about the result of the 2007 election.

To do this you first need to answer these questions:
- Who is each figure?
- What is each doing?
- Why is one figure wearing a tracksuit?
- What is the car?

Now identify each of these aspects or features in the cartoon, and explain how each is contributing to create the overall result. If you need help, look at the bottom of the page.

What is the pole?
What is on the pole
Why has the car crashed?
Who was the driver?
Why is one figure running away?

Once you have analysed a cartoon you can start thinking about whether it is a fair and accurate representation or presentation of an issue. For example on page 6, with the Aboriginal intervention cartoons, looking at the cartoon leads you to ask other questions, such as:
- What information would you need to decide if the cartoons were fair and accurate?
- What other solutions might exist to addressing problems in these communities?

So cartoons can be excellent starting points to explore themes and issues in Australian society.

In the 2007 election the Liberal-National coalition government of Prime Minister John Howard was defeated by the Australian Labour Party led by Kevin Rudd. Prime Minister Howard lost his seat. The deputy leader, Treasurer Peter Costello, surprisingly refused to become the new leader of the Liberal Party in Opposition.
Now that you have a method for analysing political cartoons you can use this to investigate a cartoonist, or the way cartoonists depict issues throughout the year. And you should also take the Prime Minister’s advice:

![Steps to draw a cartoon](image)

How to draw Kevin Rudd, Bill Leak, Weekend Australian 22-23 December 2007

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**Resources on analysing political cartoons**

‘A licence to mock’ in *STUDIES* 3/2007 available at


*Behind the Lines. The Year’s Best Cartoons*, National Museum of Australia, 2007:

<www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/past_exhibitions/behind_the_lines_2007_the_years_best_cartoons/>

*Behind the Lines. The Year’s Best Cartoons*, National Museum of Australia, 2006:

<www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/past_exhibitions/behind_the_lines_2006_the_years_best_cartoons/>

‘Using cartoons to investigate social and environmental issues’, Dr. Grant Kleeman, *Ethos* September 2006 (Social Education Victoria)

‘Behind the Lines — Investigating political cartoons’ in *STUDIES* 1/2004 available at


Australia Day 2004 — Cartoon perspective interactive at


‘Behind the Lines: Exploring Political Cartoons from 2003’ which can be found at:

<www.nma.gov.au/education/school_resources/civics_and_citizenship/behind_the_lines/>


Michael Hogan, *Perspective*, ABC, 4 July 2003


Haydon Manning and Robert Phiddian, ‘In defence of the cartoonists’ licence to mock’, *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, December 2004, vol. 5, no.1, p 41,

<www.australianreview.net/>

You can see an interactive interview with cartoonist Geoff Pryor at:


Cartoonist Michael Leunig reflects on the life of a cartoonist:


A collection of Nicholson cartoons is at:

<www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au>

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WISH LIST
1. ISRAEL
2. ISRAEL
3. ISRAEL

CHRISTMAS AT THE "DINEJAD'S"
Election '07!
DEBATE

Kath and Kim

I'm not voting for either of them
I think I've found the cause of those green-house emissions!

Now let's solve that refugee problem...

11 years still going wrong
Okay, that's what you want to call it, sir.

A.P.E.C.

I'm at APEC in Austria.
WHAT HEART PROBLEM?
*BLAH, BLAH, BLAH...

* MANDARIN
IN POLITICS NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM
LAbOR PARTY HAIRSTYLE #17: THE COMB-OVER......

[Cartoon image of a person combing a large amount of hair, with a sign that says 'SAVE THE FORESTS']
DREAM TIME  NIGHTMARE TIME

THE WRITING'S ON THE WALL

PETRO SHIFTS
ABUSE!
GROG
PORN

DRUGS

CHILD ABUSE
A BASIS FOR SCEPTICISM

2003
THIS IS A NATIONAL EMERGENCY!
CHILD ABUSE
FAMILY VIOLENCE

2004
THIS IS A NATIONAL EMERGENCY!
SEXUAL ASSAULT OF CHILDREN

2005
THIS IS A NATIONAL EMERGENCY!
GRADE TWO CHILDREN WITH STD'S

2006
THIS IS A NATIONAL EMERGENCY!
CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULTS CONTINUE

2007
THIS IS A NATIONAL EMERGENCY!
PRE-ELECTION POLLS HOWARD NOT OPEN TO IDEAS OUT OF TOUCH

CHILD ABUSE RIVERS OF Gron
..THE DETAILS’LL BE ALONG LATER...
I want everybody to know I'm no Johnny-come-lately on this subject...
PARACHUTES...?!
I THOUGHT YOU BROUGHT THE PARACHUTES!
NO NO NO BRENDAN... WE'RE THERE FOR THE BEACHES, THE BABES, & THE OUTRAGEOUS HOLIDAY-STYLE AMBIENCE ... CAPICHE???
HEY...YOU THREE...THIS IS STRICTLY OFF THE RECORD!
1. Draw a circle using a compass...
2. Add some hair and a little ear...
3. Add glasses, eyes and eyebrows...
4. Add a mouth and a little chin. Now you can colour him in and make him say whatever you want!

Make sure you enter the NMA political cartoon competition!