

Is It Only a Shadow?: The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt

Compiled by the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Target Grade Level: 4–12 in United States history classes

Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be better able to:

- Identify and analyze key components of a political cartoon and relate visual elements to relevant historical context and significance.
- Create political cartoons analyzing the reaction of Theodore Roosevelt’s critics to key moments in his political career, including his nomination as vice president in 1900 and his succession to the presidency in 1901.

Portrait

Is It Only a Shadow?

By Grant Hamilton

Chromolithograph and red halftone screen, 1898

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

AD/NPG.77.8

Materials

Copies of the image

Library of Congress Cartoon Analysis Guide

(http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/political_cartoon/cag.html)

Paper, pens, and markers

Speech bubble template (see end of lesson)

Background Information for Teachers

This cartoon was published in *Judge* magazine in October of 1898, when Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) ran for governor of New York. That summer, he had become a national hero in the Spanish-American War, and many people suspected that he would run for president one day. Roosevelt was known as a reformer, so President McKinley and his chief advisers were uneasy about Roosevelt’s growing popularity and impulsive nature. In an attempt to keep him quiet, they supported his nomination for vice president when McKinley ran for a second term in 1900. This strategy failed when McKinley was assassinated in September 1901, and Roosevelt became the youngest president in American history.

Lesson Procedures

Portrait Activity

Students analyze *Is It Only a Shadow?* in order to understand the story and message of the political cartoon

Portrait Reading Formula for Students:

1. Look at the portrait. Analyze the portrait using the National Portrait Gallery's *Reading Portraiture* guide found at <http://npg.si.edu/docs/reading.pdf>.
2. Gather biographical facts from the portrait's symbols and construct the context of the sitter's life.
3. Use web resources and available books to research the sitter's life and historical contributions.
4. Compare the facts gathered from the portrait with the researched facts, and share with classmates.

Each of these steps may be done as a class, in small groups, or individually.

Questions to consider with your students:

- What building is being touched by the head of the shadow?
- Who is the shadow meant to represent? How can you tell?
- Do the men on the balcony and the men leaning out the windows of the building (President William McKinley and some leading advisers) like or dislike the shadow? How can you tell?
- What do you think this cartoon means? What story is the artist trying to tell?

Political Cartoon Activity

1. Distribute one copy of the image to each student.
2. Ask students: If the cartoonist had included speech bubbles for the men on the balcony (President William McKinley and his chief adviser, Senator Mark Hanna), what do you think they would have been saying to each other?
3. Have students, working individually or in pairs, create speech bubble dialogue for the two men that explains their reaction to the shadow. Students can write their dialogue on paper or use the speech bubble template (see end of lesson).
4. Discuss as a class or have students research in small groups the decision to nominate Roosevelt as McKinley's vice president in 1900 and the events surrounding McKinley's assassination in 1901. See the Web Resources section for more information about these events.
5. Have students work in small groups to create two political cartoons. One cartoon should show McKinley and Hanna discussing the decision to nominate Roosevelt as vice president, and the other should reflect Hanna's reaction to the news that Roosevelt has become president upon McKinley's death.

Provide the following guidelines for student cartoons:

- Each cartoon should have a minimum of one frame and a maximum of four frames.
- Start with a single, clear idea
- Avoid cluttering the cartoon with too many elements (unless they are central to its meaning). Use words and visual elements to make a single point.
- Be sure that the most important visual element stands out.
- Exaggerate for a reason, and don't overdo it.
- Avoid using too many words, and make sure the ones you use are legible.

Optional Extension:

Students can accompany each cartoon with a written explanation of the cartoon's main idea and the techniques used to convey that idea.

Web Resources

Cartoon Analysis Guide from It's No Laughing Matter: Analyzing Political Cartoons, from the Library of Congress website:

http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/political_cartoon/cag.html

A biographical sketch of Theodore Roosevelt, containing a very detailed account of the events surrounding his nomination to the vice presidency and his succession to the presidency, from the U.S. Senate website:

http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/VP_Theodore_Roosevelt.htm

Biographical information and essays about Theodore Roosevelt, from the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia:

<http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/roosevelt>

Information, timelines, and resources from the Theodore Roosevelt Association:

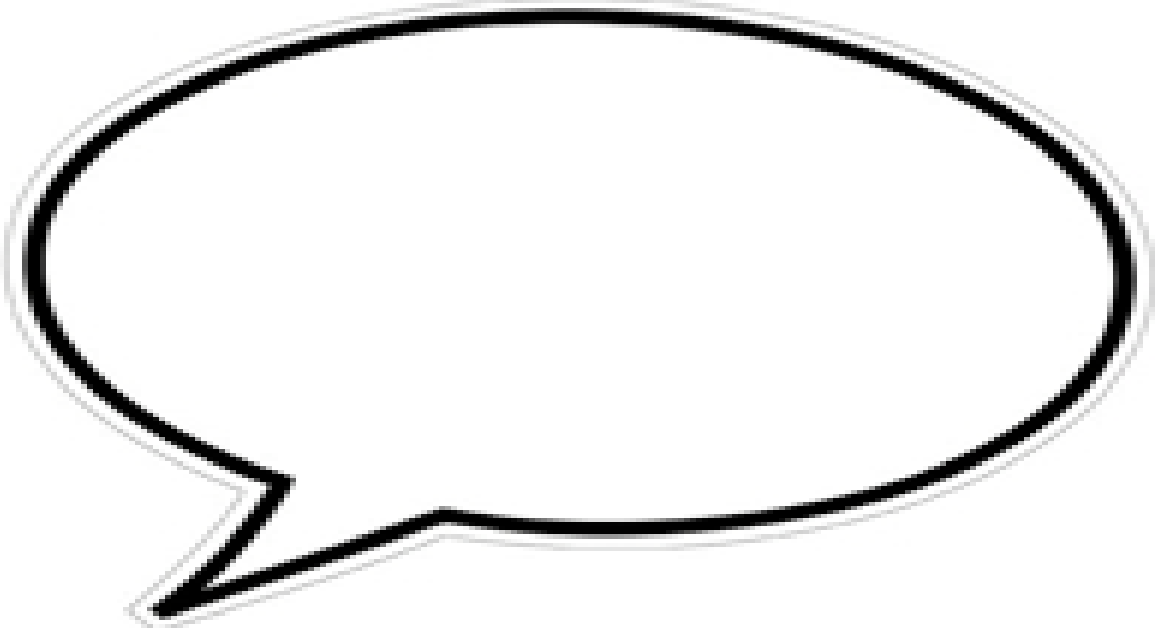
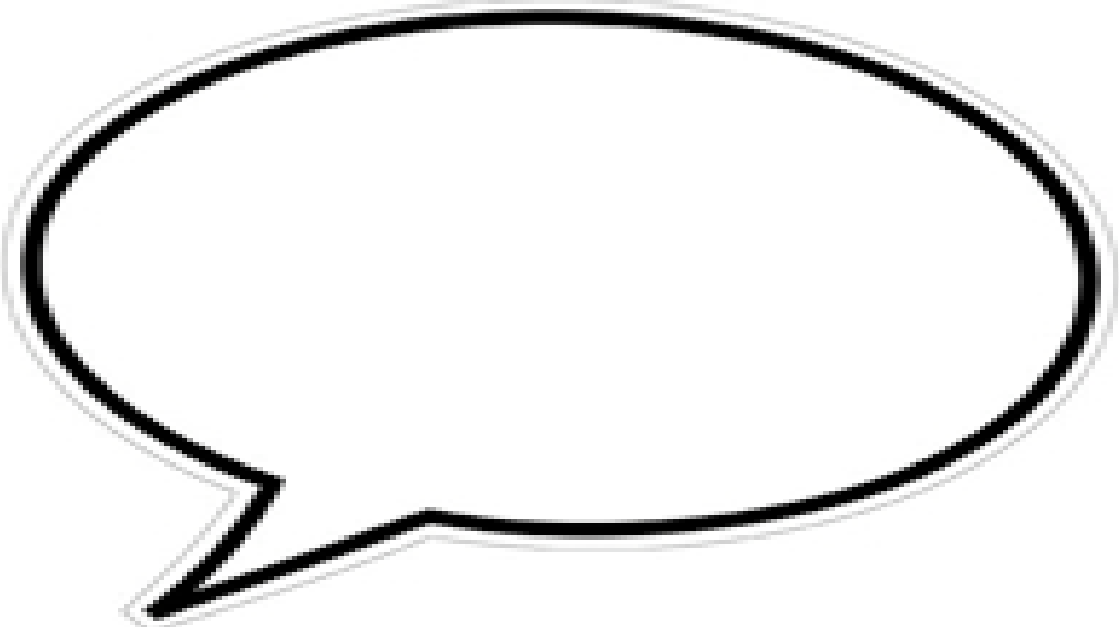
<http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/index.htm>

National Standards of Learning
Standards in History for Grades 5–12

Era 7: The Emergence of Modern America (1890–1930)

Standard 1: How Progressives and others addressed problems of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and political corruption

SPEECH BUBBLE TEMPLATE



Cartoon Analysis Guide

Use this guide to identify the persuasive techniques used in political cartoons.

Cartoonists' Persuasive Techniques

- Symbolism** Cartoonists use simple objects, or **symbols**, to stand for larger concepts or ideas.
After you identify the symbols in a cartoon, think about what the cartoonist intends each symbol to stand for.
- Exaggeration** Sometimes cartoonists overdo, or **exaggerate**, the physical characteristics of people or things in order to make a point.
When you study a cartoon, look for any characteristics that seem overdone or overblown. (Facial characteristics and clothing are some of the most commonly exaggerated characteristics.) Then, try to decide what point the cartoonist was trying to make through exaggeration.
- Labeling** Cartoonists often **label** objects or people to make it clear exactly what they stand for.
Watch out for the different labels that appear in a cartoon, and ask yourself why the cartoonist chose to label that particular person or object. Does the label make the meaning of the object more clear?
- Analogy** An **analogy** is a comparison between two unlike things that share some characteristics. By comparing a complex issue or situation with a more familiar one, cartoonists can help their readers see it in a different light.
After you've studied a cartoon for a while, try to decide what the cartoon's main analogy is. What two situations does the cartoon compare? Once you understand the main analogy, decide if this comparison makes the cartoonist's point more clear to you.
- Irony** **Irony** is the difference between the ways things are and the way things should be, or the way things are expected to be. Cartoonists often use irony to express their opinion on an issue.
When you look at a cartoon, see if you can find any irony in the situation the cartoon depicts. If you can, think about what point the irony might be intended to emphasize. Does the irony help the cartoonist express his or her opinion more effectively?

Once you've identified the persuasive techniques that the cartoonist used, ask yourself:

- What issue is this political cartoon about?
- What is the cartoonist's opinion on this issue?
- What other opinion can you imagine another person having on this issue?
- Did you find this cartoon persuasive? Why or why not?
- What other techniques could the cartoonist have used to make this cartoon more persuasive?

(Source: http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/political_cartoon/cag.html)