

Cartoon

Description

Cartoons can be an excellent means for explaining concepts and content, expressing opinions and feelings, summarizing ideas and theories, and enhancing reports and projects. They provide a way to convey important thoughts using both words and pictures.

Cartoons and comic strips have advantages over other forms of reporting. They are short with a few well-chosen words, and the simple drawings can be creatively and cleverly designed.

Before you do a cartoon report, become familiar with the art and science of cartooning. Try these warm-up exercises:

1. Study the comic section of your newspaper and note the size of the frames.
2. Study comic books and note how cartoonists use exaggerations in the drawings of the figures; how they use balloons and bubbles to show what cartoon characters are saying, doing, or thinking; how they draw faces to show varied expressions; and how the size of letters shows various pitches and intensity of voices and sounds.
3. Study a selection of editorial cartoons (cartoons on the editorial pages; usually political or social in nature) from newspapers and magazines to determine how these cartoons express opinions, make important points, and offer personal comments on current events mostly through the use of exaggeration and insults.

Planning

1. Collect and cut out a wide variety of cartoons and comic strips that appeal to you. Paste them into a mini-scrapbook or on a large poster and write characteristics you see in these examples that you could use in your own cartooning. Try to summarize the major idea, message, or episode that is being conveyed by the cartoonist.
2. Decide on a topic for your cartooning project. There are suitable topics in all subject areas. You can use cartooning to design a display or billboard, retell a fable or myth, and/or explain the meaning of vocabulary words or parts of speech. Cartooning can also highlight the accomplishments of a famous explorer, the action of a famous leader, or the life of a pioneer. It can illustrate the life cycle of a frog, the formation of rocks, or the habitats of endangered species. And cartoons can even explain math processes, geometric formulas, and how to solve word problems.

3. Determine the major concepts, terms, theories, or events you want to show in your cartoon. This preplanning will help you decide on the total number of frames you will need as well as what will go in each one. Make one or two rough drafts.
4. Construct your cartoon or comic strip on heavy drawing paper using fine-tipped magic markers or colored pens and pencils. Refer to your scrapbook samples for ideas on development of cartoon characters and dialogue. Be sure that each frame of the comic strip shares important information on the topic so that the reader can learn something from it.

Assessing

1. Count the number of cartooning features that you were able to incorporate into your own cartoon/comic strip project.
2. Count the number of major ideas and terms that you were able to incorporate.
3. Evaluate how well you were able to use cartooning as a means for reporting the information you had researched by adding the totals from numbers one and two above and by judging the quality of information on the topic that you taught. Ask readers of your comic strip to help you assess your work by telling you everything they learned about the topic from your cartoon.

Technology Connection

The Comic Creator at www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/comic allows you to compose dialogue and to choose backgrounds, characters, and props for cartoons.