

Working historically

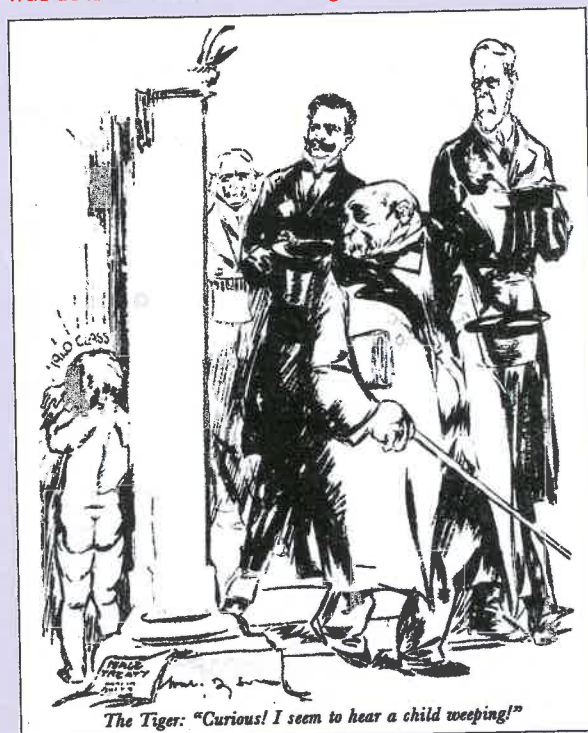
Interpreting political cartoons

Political cartoonists use words and pictures to make a comment on a current event, issue and/or personality. They want to make people think more deeply about a particular situation. To understand their cartoons, you have to know the situation to which they are referring and be able to recognise people they might include as caricatures.

Cartoonists often use symbols that have a deeper meaning than what is there on the surface. They can also use irony — words or images that state the opposite of their true meaning. To understand and interpret the political cartoons below, you need to identify:

Source 3

Australian cartoonist Will Dyson's famous 1919 cartoon 'Peace and Future Cannon Fodder' commenting on the Treaty of Versailles for London's *Daily Herald*. 'Tiger' was the nickname of French leader Georges Clemenceau, who, unlike US President Woodrow Wilson, was determined that the treaty be a harsh one.



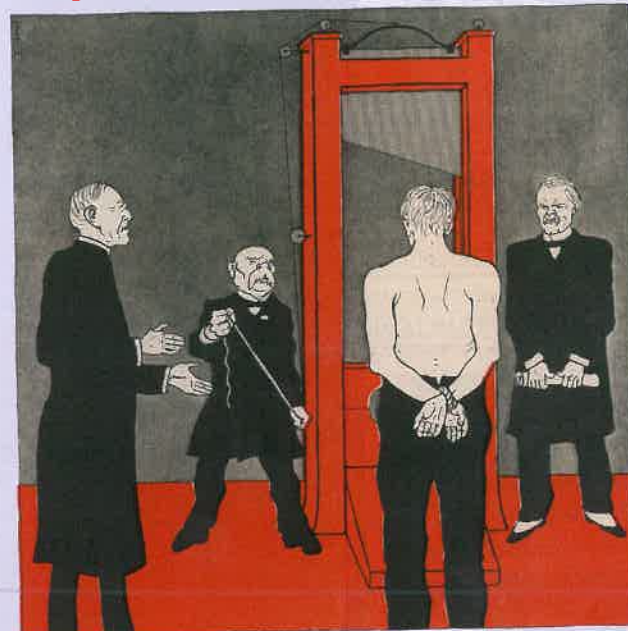
Source questions

- For each of sources 3 and 4:
 - provide three to five facts about the context for the cartoon
 - describe what is happening
 - identify and explain any symbols or irony
 - explain the cartoonist's messages
 - explain what the cartoon reveals about the perspective of the cartoonist.
- Based on the sources and your own knowledge, to whose ideas is each cartoonist giving voice and what values and attitudes do these express?

- the context in which the cartoonists created them (i.e. the 1919 Paris Peace Conference has decided on the terms of its peace treaty with Germany)
- the specific content of each cartoon by looking carefully at what you see and thinking about what each element represents. Look at the child crying behind a pillar, the man standing in front of a guillotine and the well-dressed men. Who are they? What are they doing?
- the people or things that the cartoonists have used as symbols for something or somebody else and any words that have a double or a deeper meaning. Look at the man at the guillotine, the guillotine itself, the cartoons' captions and headings and the words '1940 class' and 'Curious'. What might these things symbolise?
- the message of each cartoon.

Source 4

Thomas Theodor Heine's cartoon for the 3 June 1919 edition of the German satirical magazine *Simplicissimus*. The caption accompanying it was: 'You too have the right of self-determination. Do you want your pockets cleared out before or after you're dead?' At the Paris Peace Conference, Woodrow Wilson fought for self-determination, which is the moral principle of nations having the right to decide their own forms of government.



Hitler and the rise of Nazism

Hitler and the Nazi Party, 1919–23

The small, right-wing National Socialist German Workers' Party — the NSDAP or Nazi Party — hated the Weimar Republic. One of its members, Adolf Hitler, worked hard to increase the party's public profile. He issued a 25-point program outlining the party's goals; encouraged the use of its symbol, the swastika; and organised mass meetings and a party newspaper to promote its ideas and help spread these to a wider audience. When the Nazi Party formed in 1919, it had 50 members. By 1923, it had over 50 000 members, Adolf Hitler had become its leader and the party had its own armed force of storm-troopers (the *Sturmabteilung* or SA) to attack those who opposed it.

Source 5

An extract outlining Hitler's goals, from the German newspaper *Kreuzzeitung*, on 28 December 1922

Hitler is in close contact with the Germans of Czechoslovakia and Austria, and he demands the union of all Germans in a greater Germany...

Hitler demands the cancellation of the Treaties of Versailles and Saint Germain [the peace treaty that the Allies signed with Austria-Hungary] and the restoration of the German colonies.

A very important part of the Party Programme is the idea of race... He wants only people of German race to be citizens of Germany... He wants all immigrants into Germany since 1914 to be expelled.

Hitler opposes the parliamentary system. Hitler's party wants first of all to set up a dictatorship which will last until Germany's present troubles are ended... The dictator in question is evidently Hitler.

The party's economic programme is as follows: ... profit-sharing among workers of profits from large companies, public ownership of big shops, help for small industry and the middle class.

Source question

What does source 5 indicate about to whom Hitler did and did not want to appeal?

In November 1923, Hitler and the Nazis attempted to overthrow the government of the German city of Munich. This attempt, known as the Beer Hall *Putsch* (rhymes with 'butch' as in 'butcher'), failed. Hitler was arrested, charged with treason, tried, convicted and sentenced to five years imprisonment. He was eligible for parole after six months and was out of jail in time for Christmas 1924.

Hitler and the Nazi Party, 1924–32

After his release, Hitler re-organised the Nazi Party and worked to gain power by legal means. In May 1924, the NSDAP gained 24 seats in Germany's parliament, the Reichstag. The onset of the **Great Depression** created a situation that the Nazis used to gain a major increase in support.

Hitler flew all over Germany making speeches claiming that the Weimar Republic's policies had caused the Great Depression, that the Jews were responsible for all of Germany's problems and that the government's signing of the Treaty of Versailles had been a 'stab in the back' for the German nation. Crowds of uniformed, flag-waving Nazis marched through city streets stirring up nationalist sentiment in support of their leader. In the 1930 Reichstag elections, the Nazi party won 107 seats.

By late 1932, about eight million Germans were unemployed and those who had jobs worked part time and/or at greatly reduced wages. The Weimar Republic, at this time a coalition of up to five parties, struggled to agree on policies that would help the problems of unemployment and homelessness.

In the November 1932 elections, the Nazis gained 196 seats and 33 per cent of the total vote. While it did not have a majority, the Nazi party held more seats and a higher

Great Depression: a period from the late 1920s until the outbreak of World War II when most nations suffered severe economic hardship and massive unemployment