

# POLITICAL CARTOONS

**Definition:** A political cartoon is a drawing or comic strip containing a political or social message portraying persons, events, situations, etc. in an exaggerated way.

Political cartoonists use **common devices** to get their message across to the audience:

- **Size:** An oversize figure appears powerful, threatening, and serious. A small figure appears powerless and intimidated.
- **Light and Dark:** Dark design creates feelings of disaster, fear, and mystery. Light design conveys a feeling of light heartedness, hope, and goodwill.
- **Lines:** Light lines are often used to create a feeling of whimsy and humour whereas dark lines create a feeling of seriousness. Crooked lines convey tension.
- **Caricature:** This technique emphasizes physical characteristics or defects to a point where the person looks ridiculous, while still being instantly recognizable.
- **Symbolism:** A country or person is represented by another object. For example, the US may be represented by “Uncle Sam”, a bear for Russia, a gavel for justice, a dove or olive branch for peace. Sometimes a nation’s flag is also used to represent a country.
- **Stereotyping:** Often groups of people are represented in an oversimplified and inaccurate way that makes them, nonetheless, easily recognizable. For example, First Nations may be drawn with a feather headdress and bow and arrow.
- **Exaggeration:** An object, person, situation, or idea is overstated. For example, a politician besieged by problems by be depicted floating into the air holding a bunch of balloons, with each balloon depicting a political problem.
- **Labels and/or Captions:** The use of signs or some other form of labelling to clearly identify a person and/or object in the carton. Captions are used either to allow the persons in the cartoon to speak or express their thoughts and views on a topic or event, or the cartoonist to make a comment about the events in the cartoon.