

# Studying U.S. Elections with Political Cartoons

Center for Legislative Archives

## Analysis Worksheet

**Instructions:** Work individually to complete one section of this worksheet at each of the four stations as directed. When you complete your individual analysis of each pair of cartoons, discuss your findings within your small group. Summarize your group's findings on this sheet. Move on to work at the next station as directed.

### Station 1

How is running for office like acting in a play?

	
<p><i>Getting Busy</i> – 10/18/1904 - NAID 6010486 Summary: 1904 presidential candidates look on calmly as the parties battle.</p>	<p><i>How They're Acting and How They Feel</i> – 11/5/1912 - NAID 306083 Summary: the three 1912 presidential candidates (3 parties ran candidates that year) project outward calm, but they are really nervous.</p>

- How does the cartoonist show a contrast in moods within each cartoon?
- Why might it be important for a candidate to be thought of as calm when running for office?
- How is running for office like acting in a play?
- Summarize your group's discussion of the material at this station.

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## Station 2

How do elections put the principle of government by the people into practice?

	
<p><i>Not Such a Restful Month After All – 8/25/1921 – NAID 1693447</i> <i>Summary:</i> An incumbent member of Congress rushes home to explain his votes before an election.</p>	<p><i>Reorganization of Congress – 7/28/1946- NAID 306100</i> <i>Summary:</i> Each Congress organizes itself in Washington, but the voters reorganize Congress as a whole during each election.</p>

- How does the cartoonist show emotion? What emotions are represented in each cartoon?
- How do these cartoons illustrate the saying, “Public office is a public trust”?
- How do elections put the principle of government by the people into practice?
- Summarize your group’s discussion of the material at this station.

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## Station 3

How do political parties build public engagement in elections?

 <p>A political cartoon titled "THE FISHIN' SEASON" showing a donkey and an elephant fishing in a pond. A sign in the water reads "CAMPAIGN ISSUES FISH".</p>	 <p>A political cartoon titled "ROCKING THE BOAT" showing a donkey rocking a boat labeled "PARLIEU LEGISLATION". A speech bubble says "GET INTO THIS FUN!".</p>
<p><i>The Fishin' Season</i> – 6/7/1919 – NAID 1693475 Summary: The donkey (Democrats) and elephant (Republicans) fish for issues to attract votes to their candidates.</p>	<p><i>Rocking the Boat</i> - 6/5/1922 – NAID 6011735 Summary: The parties often represent their supporters by opposing the positions on issues and policy taken by the rival party</p>

- How does the cartoonist depict the rivalry in each cartoon? How would you describe the rivalry between the parties as it is shown in each cartoon?
- How do these cartoons illustrate the fact that rivalry with the opposing party is essential to how each party defines itself?
- How does the cartoonist suggest that the public actions of political parties are done to build public engagement in elections?
- Summarize your group's discussion of the material at this station.

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## Station 4

Do political rivalries end at elections or continue in a different way?

	
<p><i>Democratic New Year's Cheer</i> – 12/31/1931 – NAID 1692375 Summary: The donkey consoles the elephant by saying, “Your loss is my gain.”</p>	<p><i>Post Season Parade</i> – 3/5/1915 – NAID 1693335 Summary: Election losers, “lame ducks,” march from Congress to the White House seeking appointment to a federal position.</p>

- a. How does the cartoonist show irony in each cartoon?
- b. The “lame ducks” in the *Post Season Parade* are candidates who were not reelected and are serving out their last months in office. The cartoonist shows them marching from the Capitol (the home of Congress) to the White House in hope the President will appoint them to jobs in the Executive Branch. How does the *Post Season Parade* show former candidates moving on from the rivalry of an election to the next chapter of their political careers?
- c. Is the cartoonist suggesting in these two cartoons that political rivalries end after the election or that they continue in a different way?
- d. Summarize your group’s discussion of the material at this station.

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## Review Worksheet

Answer the following questions in your group, and prepare to share your answers in a class discussion.

1. How do political cartoons convey ideas about politics that are universal and not specific to one time?
2. How does a cartoonist's use of personification (representing ideas or organizations as a person or animal) help convey complex ideas through simple drawings?
3. The cartoons in this lesson were all created between 1900 and 1931 by one artist, Clifford K. Berryman. Do Berryman's depictions of how parties contested elections in his time match how elections are contested today?
4. Can you identify particular characteristics of elections shown in these cartoons that are most likely present in elections in any time period?



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