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Picturing History: Editorial Cartooning in America, 1734-2011

1. Title of Lesson: You've come a long way -- maybe: Female vice presidential candidates in editorial cartoons
2. Content Standard: Grade 12, Language Arts

Ohio language arts content standards fulfilled:

- Analyze the rhetorical devices used in public documents, including state or school policy statements, newspaper editorials and speeches.
- Analyze and critique organizational patterns and techniques including repetition of ideas, appeals to authority, reason and emotion, syntax and word choice that authors use to accomplish their purpose and reach their intended audience.
- Analyze and compile information from several sources on a single issue or written by a single author, clarifying ideas and connecting them to other sources and related topics.
- Distinguish between valid and invalid inferences and provide evidence to support the findings, noting instances of unsupported inferences, fallacious reasoning, propaganda techniques, bias and stereotyping.
- Examine an author's implicit and explicit philosophical assumptions and beliefs about a subject.
- Produce functional documents that report, organize and convey information and ideas accurately, foresee readers' problems or misunderstandings and that include formatting techniques that are user friendly.
- Give presentations using a variety of delivery methods, visual displays and technology.

National language arts standards fulfilled (NCTE)

- Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
 - Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
3. Estimated duration of lesson:

Two class periods and a week allotted for completion of infographic.

4. Learning objectives:

- Students will characterize the depictions of two female vice presidential candidates in editorial cartoons.
- Students will situate these characterizations within the parameters of news and editorial coverage of the candidates as well as those of stereotype, caricature and symbol.
- In light of their learning, students will critique cartoonists' decisions for both efficacy and ethics.

5. Complete summary of the lesson: Using political cartoons, students will become familiar with cartoon representations of female politicians and consider whether and/or how such representations indicate a change in the societal view of high-profile, female political candidates since the 1984 candidacy of Geraldine Ferraro.

6. Prior knowledge to be activated or remediated:

Geraldine Ferraro

John Zaccaro

Walter Mondale

Sarah Palin

John McCain

Results of 1984 and 2004 U.S presidential elections

7. Instructional steps to implement the lesson:

- The class will first view video clips of both candidates making political speeches, and students will volunteer their impressions of each.
- Students will then listen to audio news coverage and read editorial coverage that will provide biographical information and criticism necessary to interpret the cartoons.
- In small groups, students will view both on screen and on paper three cartoons depicting Ferraro and complete cartoon analysis forms for each.
- Groups will then share their analyses with the class and will when possible identify the biographical, editorial and disciplinary antecedents for the cartoons.
- For homework, students will complete the same activities for the Palin cartoons.
- When class reconvenes, Palin cartoons will be screened analyses shared. Students will then generate categories for comparison of the two candidates' portrayals, keeping in mind the supporting texts screened and read at the start of previous class.

- In small groups, students will then compare the two sets of cartoons and generate a written summary of their analysis. These findings will be shared.
- Each group will use desktop publishing software to create an information graphic that communicates their comparative analysis via annotation of the cartoons themselves. For this assignment, students will “chunk” their analyses into tightly-written paragraphs and digitally place the chunks at the appropriate locations within each cartoon.

6. **Post-assessment:** Infographics will be assessed to determine depth of students’ analyses as well as success in communicating analyses to the audience (class). Class will first generate a rubric, then each group will apply it to another’s product. Students’ and teacher’s rubrics will be averaged for final grade.

7. Materials needed:

- Digital and hard copies of the six cartoons chosen for this lesson.
- Digital files providing background on candidates (suggested items follow):
 Geraldine Ferraro Vice Presidential Acceptance Speech
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpiG9_vzp8w
 Republican National Convention Sarah Palin Speech
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXK-LNEU9A0>
 Sarah Palin Biography
<https://www.biography.com/people/sarah-palin-360398>
 Geraldine Ferraro Biography
<https://www.biography.com/people/geraldine-a-ferraro-9293789>
 Ferraro finances (Google News doc)
<http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=deJLAAAAIBAJ&sjid=x4sDAAAAIBAJ&pg=6474,1877623&dq=geraldine+ferraro+vice+presidential+candidate+editorial+wall+street+journal&hl=en>
 McCain Chooses Palin as Running Mate
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/30/us/politics/30veep.html?ref=sarahpalin>
 Sarah Palin Calls Health Care Overhaul “Downright Evil”
<http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/08/sarah-palin-has-weighed-in-on/?scp=1&sq=sarah%20palin%20death%20panels&st=Search>

8. Extension activities:

Students will apply their skills to cartoons featuring Hillary Clinton and Michele Bachmann.

List of cartoons and other primary sources:



Creator Bob Gorrell

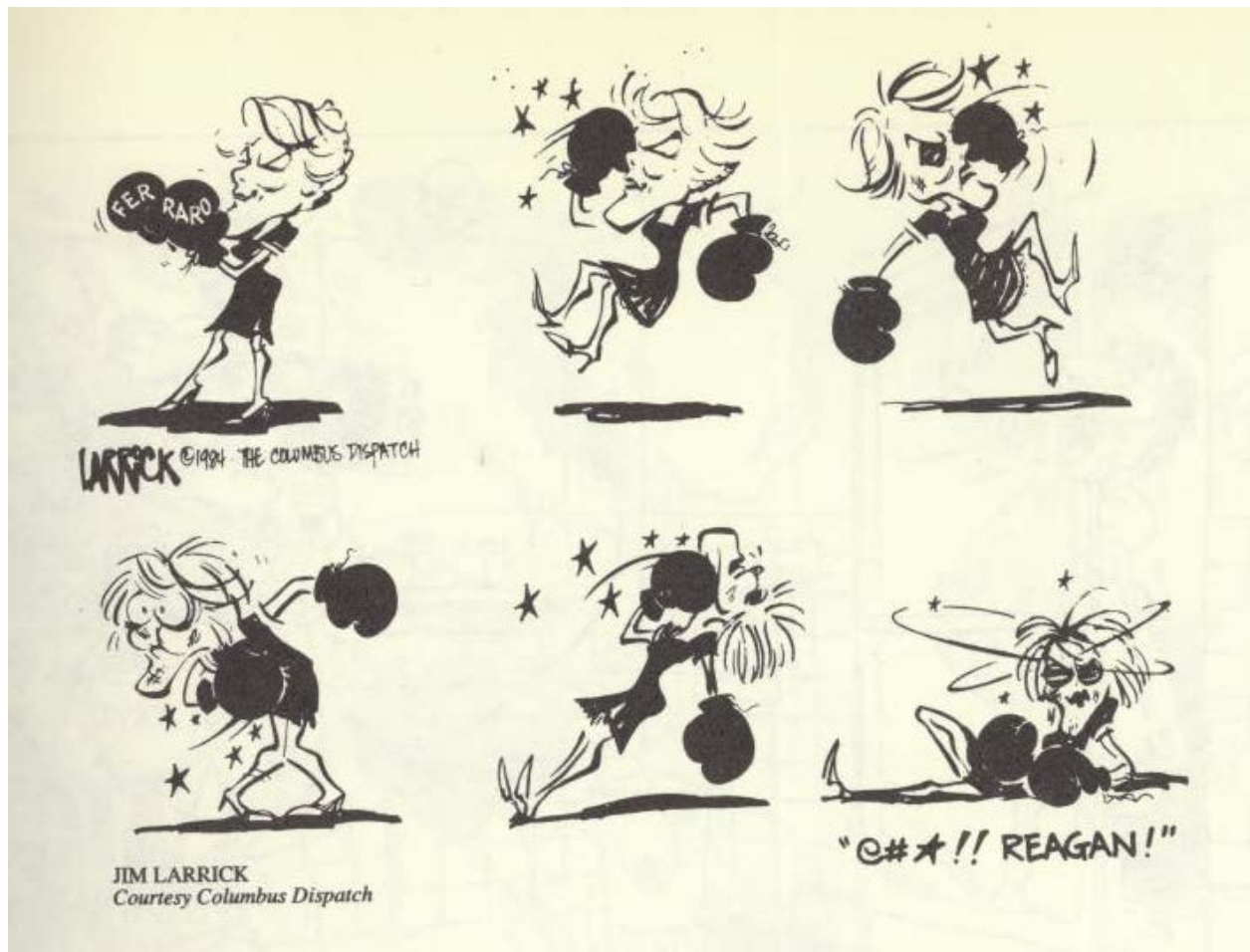
Title "The Donkey Club Presents Ferraro the Blonde Bombshell"

Publication Richmond News Leader

Publication Date 1984

Summary/Description of cartoon In 1984, Democratic Representative Geraldine Ferraro became the first woman to run for vice president as a major party candidate in the history of the United States. While her professional credentials withstood scrutiny, her candidacy foundered when her husband refused to release his financial records, thus provoking questions about the couple's integrity. In this cartoon, she is depicted nude and facing both an invisible audience and catastrophic violence. A long-standing sexist moniker, "blonde bombshell," anchors a pun that is completed by the smoldering bomb labeled "finances."

Source "The Best Editorial Cartoons 1984"



Creator Jim Larrick

Title “* # * !! Reagan!”

Publication The Columbus Dispatch

Publication Date 1984

Summary/Description of cartoon In this cartoon, Ferraro, clad in boxing gloves and poised to spar, wears a little black dress and high heels. She repeatedly suffers brutal, self-inflicted punches to the face until, with blackened eyes and bruised countenance, she collapses, profanely and ridiculously blaming President Ronald Reagan for her wounds. The punches are metaphorical representations of her response to inquiries about her husband’s income and business affairs.

Source “The Best Editorial Cartoons 1984”



Creator Bob Lawlor

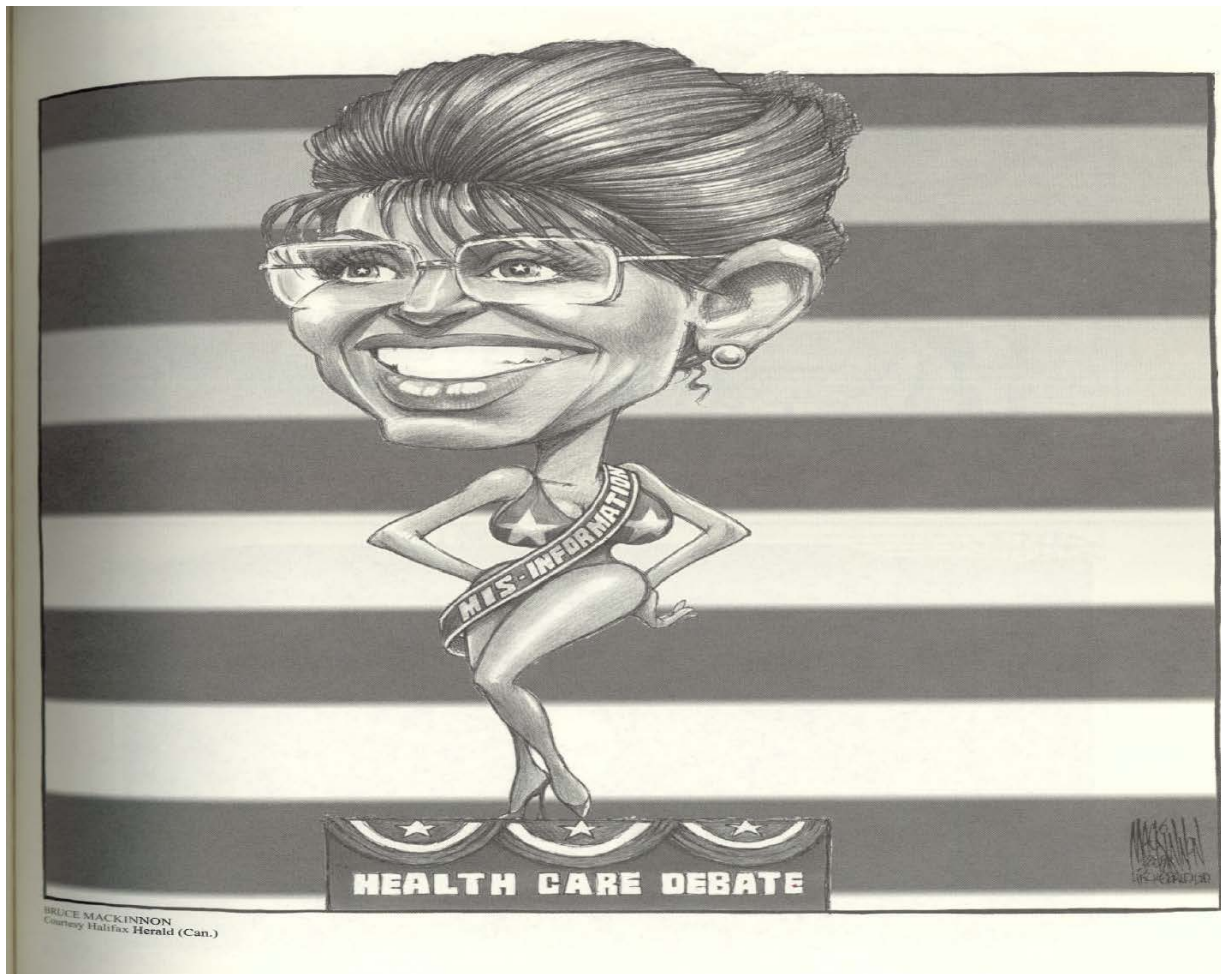
Title "Whew . . . That Last Attack Was Close!"

Publication The Philadelphia Daily News

Publication Date 1984

Summary/Description of cartoon This cartoon depicts Ferraro on donkeyback with her presidential running mate, Walter Mondale. A close count reveals no fewer than 11 arrows piercing Ferraro's body, including one directly through her throat, and two more that fell short of their target. Meanwhile, Mondale, unscathed, sighs with relief while remarking that the last attack was close. One can infer that Mondale's landmark selection of a female candidate relieved him of close scrutiny by the media and his opponents. It is also worth noting that this cartoon is the third to feature extreme violence directed at Ferraro.

Source "The Best Editorial Cartoons 1984"



Creator Bruce MacKinnon

Title "Mis-Information"

Publication Halifax Herald (Canada)

Publication Date 2009

Summary/Description of cartoon: This cartoon severely caricatures former Alaska Governor and 2008 Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin as grotesque pageant contestant who has been crowned "Mis-Information." Palin, a former Miss Alaska pageant runner-up, was criticized, often brutally, when a vice-presidential candidate because she frequently misspoke or, at times, seemed to consciously distort facts to her own benefit. In addition to sexualizing Palin, this cartoon critiques her comments during the debate over health care reform, when Palin repeated a spurious claim that President Barack Obama's plan would convene "death panels" comprising bureaucrats who would determine the value of Americans' lives. The pronounced use of American flag imagery, including the stars in Palin's eyes representing her intense ambition and the striped background, are interesting details given the artist's perspective as a Canadian cartoonist.

Source "The Best Editorial Cartoons 2009"



Creator Ed Hall

Title "Too Messy"

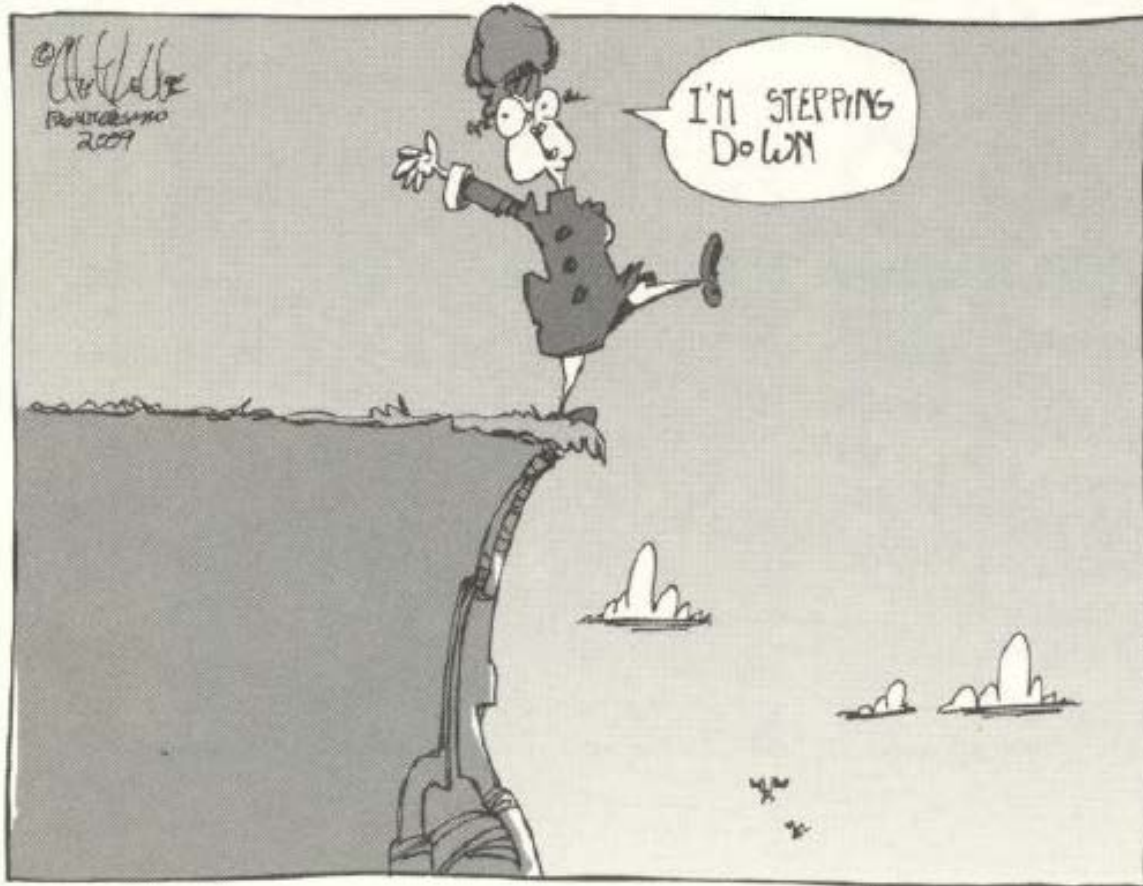
Publication Baker County Press (Florida)

Publication Date 2009

Summary/Description of cartoon: This cartoon relies on Palin's well-publicized affection for hunting in the Alaska wilderness in order to satirize her decision to abandon her governorship before her term expired. During her vice-presidential campaign, Palin became known as the only candidate who could "field dress" a moose, and she capitalized on that knowledge to energize many voters. However, after her failed bid, she returned to Alaska and soon decided to abandon her elected post in favor of pursuing media opportunities, including a commentator's role on Fox News and a reality TV show titled "Sarah Palin's Alaska." The moose carcass in this cartoon has been partially skinned, and its ribcage reveals the word "politics." Meanwhile, Palin, wearing a business suit and snow boots, tosses her knife aside and abandons her conquest because it is "too messy." While it is true that Palin and her family endured relentless ridicule throughout the 2008 campaign, the cartoon may also suggest that Palin has butchered the political culture and does not intend to remedy her mess. It is worth noting that Palin perpetrates rather than suffers violence in this cartoon.

Source "The Best Editorial Cartoons 2009"

CHUCK LEGGE
Courtesy The Frontiersman



Creator Chuck Legge

Title "I'm Stepping Down"

Publication The Frontiersman

Publication Date 2009

Summary/Description of cartoon In another commentary on Palin's decision to abandon her governorship before the end of her term, the artist has depicted a ditzy but conservatively dressed Palin stepping down and off of a steep cliff, as if leaving office would launch her into obscurity. This cartoon echoes others that exploit some people's belief that Palin is unintelligent and ill-suited for governance -- so much so that she can't see that she is ensuring her own demise. However, as Palin travels the country in 2011, capturing media attention without committing to a presidential bid, she defies this cartoon's prediction.

Source "The Best Editorial Cartoons 2009"