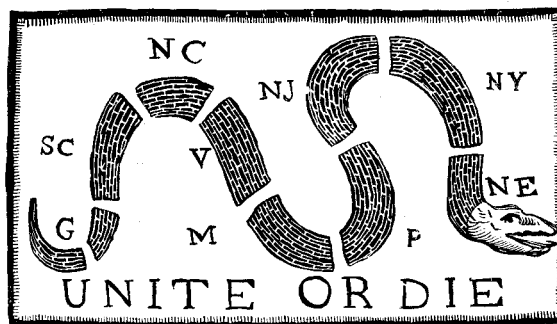


# How to...

## ANALYZE POLITICAL CARTOONS

Political Cartoons have been in existence since the beginning of the American Republic. Benjamin Franklin's rattlesnake cartoon remains a classic. Conceived in 1754 during the debates over the Albany Plan of Union, the point is simple but effective—the colonies needed to unify or they would be destroyed by the French (Join or Die). The rattlesnake itself, became a symbol for America and appears in many early cartoons. A rattlesnake is not dangerous if left alone but when provoked, it can be deadly.



Cartoons remain one of the most effective tools for political commentary and their effect on the public discourse can be dramatic. You can access the work of many of the nation's most famous cartoonist at [Daryl Cagle's](#) website. Most of these materials are easy to understand because they are part of our modern context. We can quickly identify politicians, celebrities, issues, and policies and appreciate the humor. Using historical cartoons, however, is much more difficult because the issues have become obscure with time and the details may be difficult to understand. Still, with a little research and work, you can come to a greater appreciation of a period by looking at these historical resources.

First, download the Cartoon Analysis Guide from the [Library of Congress](#). This guide will explain the major techniques of cartoonists using **symbolism, exaggeration, labeling, analogy, and irony**. Also, read the [Herblock essay](#) about the nature of political cartooning. Herblock was one of the most famous cartoonists of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and his life's work is now at the Library of Congress.



- *(This same phrase was used by Abraham Lincoln on June 16, 1858: “A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other.”)*
- Throughout the United States, the ratification debates were intense and often bitter.
- Connecticut is symbolized in the cartoon by the wagon.
- The wagon is being pulled in opposite directions by two factions—the Federalists (who favor the Constitution) and the Anti-federalists (who oppose it).
- The supporters of the Constitution make statements such as:
  - *“Comply with Congress”* and *“I abhor the antifederal Faction”*
- Those who oppose the Constitution respond with:
  - *“curses on to Foederal Govermt”* and *“Success to Shays”* (referring to the debtor uprising of Daniel Shay in Massachusetts)
- Note: Colonial and federal cartoons often have enormous amounts of text. ***Not all*** of the material is relevant to your understanding of the cartoon. Look for the major points i.e. this cartoon is about the struggle over the ratification of the Constitution in Connecticut.
- Connecticut was the fifth state to ratify the Constitution and did so on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1788 by a vote of 128 for and 40 opposed.