USING AND ANALYZING

POLITICAL CARTOONS

EDUCATION OUTREACH
THE COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG FOUNDATION

This packet of materials was developed by William Fetsko, Colonial Williamsburg Productions, Colonial Williamsburg.
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INTRODUCTION TO LESSONS

Political cartoons, or satires, as they were referred to in the eighteenth century, have provided a visual means by which individuals could express their opinions. They have been used throughout history to engage viewers in a discussion about an event, issue, or individual. In addition, they have also become a valuable instructional resource.

However, in order for cartoons to be used effectively in the classroom, students must understand how to interpret them. So often they are asked to view a cartoon and explain what is being depicted when they really don’t know how to proceed. With that in mind, the material that follows identifies the various elements cartoonists often incorporate into their work. Once these have been taught to the students, they will then be in a better position to interpret a cartoon.

In addition, this package also contains a series of representative cartoons from the Colonial period. Descriptors for these are found in the Appendix. Finally, a number of suggestions are included for the various ways cartoons can be used for instructional purposes.

When used properly, cartoons can help meet many needs, and the skill of interpretation is something that has life-long application.
POLITICAL CARTOONS

AN INTRODUCTION

Cartoons differ in purpose, whether they seek to amuse, as does comic art; make life more bearable, as does the social cartoon; or bring order through governmental action, as does the successful political cartoon.

Comic art is the most innocent form of cartoon comment. The artist’s goal is simple entertainment in a weary world. This kind of art tries for a humorous and good-humored observation on daily life and problems.

A second type of cartoon is that of social comment, with a little more cutting edge added to the comic art. In such cartoons the artist aspires to comment about daily life and its problems. His or her main purpose is to bring on the wry smile of recognition, hopefully to make life and its irritations a little easier to take. The social cartoon tends to have a more objective viewpoint than the third type of cartoon, the political cartoon.

The political cartoon has a very subjective viewpoint. The goal of a political cartoonist is to try to influence the viewer to a particular viewpoint and predispose him or her to a particular action. Political cartoons are drawings with a partisan message for viewers about what they should think or do politically. Most political cartoons are a form of journalistic comment designed to influence viewers with regard to specific political events of the day just as the editorial usually tries to do.

The birth of the political cartoon can be traced back to the 1400’s, however, it took hold as a popular art form in the 1700’s, in Europe. Originally a cartoon might be attached to a pamphlet or broadside. The broadside would then be posted in prominent places throughout a city.

The development of the printing press brought the cartoon to life. Before that an artist’s drawing suffered from two handicaps. It would be seen by only a few people and could easily be “killed” by destroying the original. The printing press allowed a drawing to be seen by a wide audience as well as to reproduce these drawings more quickly and more cheaply.

The success of the political cartoon can be found in its appeal to the “masses”. In a society such as colonial America where many of the citizens were uneducated, a cartoon could convey political thought and sway among citizens that were unable to read editorials written with the same intent.

The period leading up to the Revolutionary War provided many events that would be satirized in cartoons and help to unite the colonists in their struggle for independence from Britain.
CARTOONS
AS AN AID
TO INSTRUCTION

➢ Presents History In A High-Interest Format

➢ Encourages Classroom Discussion

➢ Motivates Visual Learners

➢ Promotes Critical Thinking
USES OF CARTOONS

➤ Propaganda

➤ Draw Attention To An Idea, Event, Etc.

➤ Present A Point Of View

➤ Encourage A Course Of Action

ELEMENTS
OF
CARTOONS
INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT

- Students are familiar with cartoons but generally think of them as a form of comic art meant to entertain. However, editorial cartoons differ in that they express opinions about very specific news events in the real world. An editorial cartoon focuses on a specific public issue, personality, event, or trend in the real world and actually makes a statement about that issue or event.
SYMBOLISM

- The term symbolism means the use of a sign or object in a work of art to stand for something other than itself. A symbol’s effectiveness depends on the presumption that its meaning can be understood by its audience. The use and treatment of such symbols in a cartoon suggests how the cartoonist and perhaps the public as well viewed the object to be symbolized. Symbols call attention to several aspects of an issue, problem, event, or public figure.

- The first portrayal of America in European cartoons in the early 1700’s was that of a Pocahontas-type Indian girl or an Indian princess. It is fairly easy to understand why this representation of Americans was devised by Europeans to symbolize the New World. It is also easy to understand why it was not accepted by settlers. The first American political cartoon in 1747 was thought to have been drawn by Benjamin Franklin for the cover of one of his pamphlets. The cartoon focuses on the frontier battles with the Indians and the need for colonial self-defense. The colonial Americans did not adopt a sentimental view of the natives, nor did they seemingly wish to be represented by an image of the Indian.

- During the period leading up to the Revolutionary War a new
symbol appeared. Benjamin Franklin, in the first American newspaper cartoon in 1754, drew the familiar snake divided into eight pieces labeled with the names of colonies and titled “Join or Die.” The rattlesnake was then adopted as a symbol of many fiery revolutionary bodies, such as the Culpepper Minutemen. They used it with the accompanying phrase “Don’t tread on me.” And featured it on their emblems and on several flags. The rattlesnake typically will not strike until provoked but will defend itself when necessary. Loyalist editors pointed out the negative symbolism of the rattlesnake. James Rivington in the New York Gazatteer of 1774 published a poem that taunts: “Ye sons of sedition, how comes it to pass, that Americans [be] typed by a snake-in-the-grass.”

On the same date that the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed, July 4, 1776, the continental Congress also set up a committee to design a Great Seal. The committee consisted of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin. Benjamin Franklin favored the use of the turkey for the seal because of its peaceful image, while he rejected the eagle, because he saw it as a predator. However, in 1782 the Congress finally adopted a design by William Barton that featured the Eagle. Even though other symbols have surfaced over the years, (Columbia, Lady Liberty and Uncle Sam), the American Eagle has become the longest lasting symbol in the history of American cartoon symbols.
INTERPRETING EXAGGERATION AND DISTORTION

- Editorial cartoons do not try to present a literal picture of reality. They combine visual elements and words in many odd ways. Cartoonists frequently exaggerate or understate the relative sizes of the objects they draw – often to stress the power or weakness, the importance or the insignificance, the dangerousness or helplessness of some person, group, or social force. Distorting shapes of objects can also be a way to call attention to different aspects of the idea or issue being represented.

- Exaggerated size and distorted shape are only two of many visual features or techniques that add meaning to a cartoon's symbols. Facial expressions, the positioning of one object in relation to another, odd forms of dress, the unusual shading of certain features, typefaces used for captions and other words – all these features and more can add to a cartoon's meaning or the point it makes. In the best editorial cartoons, every feature or element contributes to the overall message.

- The distorted images in a cartoon can have a powerful emotional impact – and they often reveal the artist's unstated assumptions. We think mainly in words. In editorial cartoons, a visual image may do no more than stand for a word or phrase. For example, a drawing of Uncle Sam stands for "the United States." However, in an effective cartoon, Uncle Sam's facial expression, body language, shape and size might also add to the cartoon's meaning. We often respond to these visual features on an emotional level without being aware of what is affecting us. That's how the cartoon gets us to accept its point of view. But this power of visual imagery can make it hard for us to think a point through on our own. Editorial cartoons may clarify many issues. But they can also manipulate us into agreeing to ideas we might not otherwise accept.

STEREOTYPING

- Stereotyping eliminates anything uniquely individual by exaggerating features associated with an entire group. Cartoonists often attempt to play on our own unconscious biases but the results can be misleading and insulting. It’s not always easy to tell whether a given stereotype is just a quick way to communicate or a demeaning slur. Care should be taken when using stereotypical symbols for they tend to elicit emotional responses. Stereotypes have the potential to reinforce harmful prejudices.
CARICATURES

Caricatures help us identify news figures quickly. A caricature is generally an exaggeration or distortion of one or more of a person’s prominent features. Since cartoons are designed to stir emotions and provoke debate, caricatures are often not very flattering. Consequently the cartoonist will choose to emphasize those features which are the least flattering. However, the best caricatures distort features in a way that reveals something important about the individual being depicted. When utilized properly, they can raise important questions about public figures while providing insight into a particular subject or topic.
HUMOR

Humor is a way of “taking the edge” off of a serious subject and gives the reader an honorable way out. An editorial cartoon must respect its dissenters enough to avoid implying that they are fools for disagreeing. Each reader needs to be allowed to decide what the cartoon's implications are and what their position is relative to the issue.

Irony (a strong statement that is obviously the opposite of reality) and Satire (the use of exaggeration to poke fun at people) are often major elements of cartoon humor. They can be used to deride public figures or create a dynamic that forces the viewer to become an even more active participant in the “dialogue” identified in the cartoon.
CAPTIONS

- Words can be used in cartoons in many ways and work best when they reinforce the cartoon's non-verbal features. Words should only help the other parts of the cartoon make one overall point. In that way, the reader usually has to think about the cartoon and decide whether or not to agree with its main point. Famous sayings, slogans, song lyrics, and other well-known phrases can be used as captions. Keep in mind that captions should not detract from or even make it unnecessary to look at the visual elements in the cartoon.
CARTOONS AND HISTORY

- Students need to know their history as well as Economics, Geography, International Relations, etc. in order to be able to interpret cartoons. Editorial cartoons expect the viewers to use their knowledge of society to form opinions, make judgements, and take action. Many visual elements and words in a cartoon can only be interpreted by someone who is knowledgeable about the individual or issue being depicted.
# ELEMENTS OF CARTOONS: A SUMMARY

**NOTE TO TEACHER:**  
This summary may be distributed to the students to assist them as they analyze cartoons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT</strong></td>
<td>Editorial cartoons are NOT just like other comics. They may be funny, but their main purpose is to offer an opinion or point of view about some issue or problem in the news.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SYMBOLISM</strong></td>
<td>A symbol is any object or design that stands for some other thing, person, or idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAGGERATION AND DISTORTION</strong></td>
<td>Changes in size or shape often add to the cartoon’s point. Distorting an object means changing it in some way to make it look funny, ugly, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEREOTYPES</strong></td>
<td>A stereotype is a simplistic view of some group. It is often insulting, but it can also help the cartoon make its point quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CARICATURE</strong></td>
<td>Caricature is a portrayal of an individual’s features in an exaggerated or distorted way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HUMOR AND IRONY</strong></td>
<td>Humor is important in many editorial cartoons. Irony is one kind of humor. In it, a viewpoint is expressed in such an odd way as to make that view actually seem ridiculous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CAPTIONS</strong></td>
<td>Words are used to reinforce the cartoon’s nonverbal features. Words help the other parts of the cartoon make one overall point. Famous sayings, slogans, song lyrics, and well known phrases can be used as captions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXAMPLES
The Bloody Massacre perpetrated in King Street, Boston on March 5, 1770 by a party of the 29th Regt

Unhappy Boston! See thy Sons deplore
Thy hallowed Walks bedimmed with guiltness Gore
While Faithful F—n and his Savage Bands
With murderous fanes our stretch their bloody Hands
Like fierce Barbarians grinning o'er their Prey,
Approve the Guilt and enjoy the Day.

If shedding drops from Rage from Anguish Wounds
But know these Simmons is that woful Goal
If SpeechLESS Sorrow labring for a Tongue
Or if weeping World can mourn appease
The plaintive Ghuls of Victims such as theirs
The Patriot's Compassions for each are fixed
A glorious Tribute which exalts the Dead

The unhappy Sufferers were Miss S— Gray S— Maverick, J—m Catholic, G—rus Attucks, & Pat. Cale
Killed. Six wounded two of them (Christiph Monk & John Clark) Mortally
The BOSTONIAN's Paying the Exciseman, or Tarring & Feathering

Plate I.
The British Lion engaging Four Powers.

By J. Barrow June 4, 1782. Sold by Richardson Printseller, No. 68 High Holborn.

Behold the Dutch and Spanish Curs, Professions gallus in his power, a bad Batchman with head upright. The British Lion join to fight. He roars the Baff, the Jaff, the Crown, That he's a Lion soon they'll know.
Recrues Angloïce partant pour l'Amérique

Angliche Recruits going to America
AMERICA in FLAMES.
EXPLANATION.

I. America sitting on that quarter of the globe with the Flag of the United States displayed over her head, holding in one hand the Olive branch, inviting the ships of all nations to partake of her commerce, and in the other hand supporting the Cap of Liberty.
II. Fame proclaiming the joyful news to all the world.
III. Britannia weeping at the loss of the trade of America, attended with an evil genius.
IV. The British flag struck on her strong Fortresses.
V. French, Spanish, Dutch, and shipping in the harbours of America.
VI. A view of New York, wherein is exhibited the traitor Arnold, taken with remorse for selling his country, and Judas like hanged himself.
The American Rattle Snake.

Britons within the Yankee Flats,
Mind how ye March & French,

The Serpent in the Congre's reigns,
As well as in the French.
THE ALTERNATIVE OF WILLIAMS-BURG.

Plate IV.

Printed for R. Sayer & J. Bennett, No. 33 Fleet Street, by the 1st冬天 of 1793.
THE REPEAL,
OR THE FUNERAL OF MISS AME-STAMP.
A Society of Patriotic Ladies,
AT
EDENTON in NORTH CAROLINA.

Plate V.

London, Printed for R. Sayer & J. Bennett, 1770, in Fleet Street, on the 4th day of March 1770.
CARTOONS AND INSTRUCTION
ANALYZING CARTOONS

➢ Analyze the Cartoon Using the Cartoon Analysis Form

➢ Engage In Critical Interpretation
  ♦ Identify and Discuss the Major Elements
  ♦ Compare to Other Cartoons and Situations

➢ Take This Opportunity To Work On Specific Critical Thinking Skills:
  ▪ Drawing Conclusions
  ▪ Identifying Central Issues
  ▪ Demonstrating Reasoned Judgement
  ▪ Identifying Alternatives
  ▪ Making Generalizations
  ▪ Making Inferences
  ▪ Synthesizing Information
  ▪ Checking Consistency
  ▪ Recognizing Ideologies
  ▪ Analyzing Information
  ▪ Predicting Consequences
  ▪ Understanding Cause and Effect
  ▪ Expressing Problems Clearly
  ▪ Evaluating Information
  ▪ Recognizing Bias
  ▪ Identifying Assumptions
  ▪ Making Comparisons
CARTOON ANALYSIS FORM

1. Who drew the cartoon? ________________________________________________________

2. Where was it published? Title and date of the source. ____________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

3. List the key objects in the cartoon and describe what each represents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Symbolizes</th>
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4. What techniques or devices does the cartoonist use? (Ridicule, caricature, satire, puns, etc.)
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

5. What issue or event does the cartoon deal with?
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

6. Describe the action-taking place. ______________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

7. What is the cartoon’s message? _______________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

8. Who is the intended audience? _______________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

9. What is the cartoonist’s point-of-view? ________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

10. Does the cartoon clearly convey the desired message? Why or why not?
    __________________________________________________________________________
    __________________________________________________________________________

11. What groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon’s message? Why?
    __________________________________________________________________________
USING CARTOONS IN THE CLASSROOM

- Use A Cartoon As An Anticipatory Set

- Compare Two Cartoons of the Same Event From Different Perspectives

- Compare 21st Century Cartoons with Those From the 18th Century (See Appendix A)

- Compose A Poem (See Appendix B)

- Draw A Cartoon (See Appendices C & D)

- Utilize Cartoons As A Part of the Assessment Process
AS AN AID TO READING AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Before assigning the students a passage to read, have them view and analyze a cartoon relating to the topic being studied. Discuss the issues being depicted with the class, recognizing that at this point their interpretation of the cartoon may be very superficial. Use this as a lead in to a reading assignment which further develops the event(s) under investigation.

Provide the students with a cartoon and graphic organizer that requires them to engage in some preliminary vocabulary development before undertaking a reading assignment dealing with the topic being studied.

Give students two images dealing with the same event, issue, etc. (See "British caricature of an American rifleman" & graphic of "A Real American Rifleman"). After a brief discussion, assign the class a reading that deals with the topic portrayed in the cartoons. Upon completing the reading, have the class write a paragraph indicating which visualization they believe is accurate and why.
AN AMERICAN RIFLEMAN

Write down several words or phrases you think describe the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIS ATTITUDE</th>
<th>HIS POSTURE</th>
<th>HIS CLOTHING</th>
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</thead>
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List the details in the drawing that led you to choose your words

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</table>
What did the British cartoonist think of the American Rifleman?

As an American, how would you want your rifleman to be drawn or described?

MAKE A SKETCH OF WHAT YOU BELIEVE THE AMERICAN RIFLEMAN SHOULD LOOK LIKE.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

POLITICAL CARTOONS: A COMPARISON OF TWO CENTURIES

A COMPARISON OF POLITICAL CARTOONS FROM THE EIGHTEENTH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

NOTEWORTHY FEATURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>18TH CENTURY</th>
<th>21ST CENTURY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

SIMILARITIES:

DIFFERENCES:
APPENDIX B

FIVE SENSES POEM FRAMEWORK

I see ________________________________

I hear ________________________________

I taste ________________________________

I smell ________________________________

I feel ________________________________

And I can ________________________________
APPENDIX C

DEVELOPING A CARTOON

➢ Begin With A Single, Clear Idea

➢ A Cartoon Is Not A Literal Statement But Should Force The Viewer To Use Their Imagination

➢ Avoid Cluttering Up A Cartoon With Too Many Elements

➢ Sizes And Shapes Of All Objects In The Cartoon Should Help Make Clear What The Cartoon Is All About

➢ The Cartoon Should Be Carefully Designed
  ♦ Is There Visual Balance?
  ♦ Do The Components Relate In A Logical Sequence Or Order?
  ♦ Is There A Sense Of Unity?

➢ Draft Your Own Cartoon:
# APPENDIX D

## RUBRIC FOR GRADING A POLITICAL CARTOON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>EXCELLENT CARTOON</th>
<th>GOOD CARTOON</th>
<th>FAIR CARTOON</th>
<th>POOR CARTOON</th>
<th>ZERO CARTOON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF CARTOON BASED ON THEME</strong></td>
<td>Unique/Creative Approach to the Theme; Appropriate Usage of Symbols, Captions, and/or Titles</td>
<td>Shows some Creativity; Mostly Appropriate Usage of Symbols, Captions, and/or Titles</td>
<td>Uses a Predictable Approach; Somewhat Conventional, Symbols, Caption, or Titles</td>
<td>Mimics Original Example; Little or no Creativity Shown; Borrowed Symbols, Captions, or Titles from Example</td>
<td>Assignment Not Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACCURATE INFORMATION</strong></td>
<td>Completely Accurate, Information Illustrated; Reflects the Time Period or Event Shown</td>
<td>Mostly Accurate Information Illustrated; Is Generally Correct for the Time Period or Event Shown</td>
<td>Mixed Information, Some Accurate, Some Not Accurate, Imprecise; May Not Reflect the Time Period or Event</td>
<td>Little Accurate Information Illustrated; Point of View Unclear; Generally Does Not Reflect Time Period or Event</td>
<td>No Accurate Information; No Point of View Illustrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QUALITY OF PRODUCT</strong></td>
<td>Neatly Drawn; Correct Spelling of Captions; Is Carefully Designed with Main Idea Evident</td>
<td>Generally Neat; 1 or 2 Spelling Errors; Generally Well Designed with Main Idea Understandable</td>
<td>Good Sketch; Readable with Few Errors; Design Somewhat Cluttered and Main Idea Needs Focusing</td>
<td>Barely Understandable; Lack of Clarity Relative to Design and Main Idea Poorly Illustrated</td>
<td>Not Turned In, or Illegible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

CARTOON DESCRIPTORS

THE COLONIES REDUCED

During the period when the Stamp Act was nominally enforced, English industrial interests were threatened financially by the restrictions placed on colonial trade. Benjamin Franklin, then residing in London as a colonial agent, worked arduously for repeal of the tax, constantly reminding the men in power of the dangers inherent in its continuation. In 1765 he designed a card on which was engraved a picture, Magna Britannia-Her Colonies Reduced, which he then had printed early in 1766. Britannia, all her appendages (Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and New England) removed, her ships idle in the harbor, is depicted in a destitute position.

There is nothing to indicate that Franklin may have offered the satire for sale in England; rather, he probably distributed it as a propaganda item to influential government and business leaders. However, by 1768 the work had become well known and was copied with only a slight alteration in the title, The Colonies Reduced.
Dolmetsch, Rebellion and Reconciliation, p. 43

“THE BOSTON MASSACRE” BY PAUL REVERE 1770

The scene is set in Boston, on March 5, 1770. The streets are covered with a layer of snow. There is a cry of “Fire!” and numerous young men emerge from their houses to answer the alarm. Someone starts a snowball fight. An English soldier on sentry duty becomes a target. The guard hurries out in a fury; gunshots are fired, and the crowd disperses. Five bodies remain in the snow. The incident came to be known as the Boston Massacre, one of the many episodes that were the prelude to America’s War of Independence. Among the artists who used the theme was Paul Revere. He engraved this print at his own expense using a popular blatant style.

THE BOSTONIANS IN DISTRESS

Immediately after the “tea party” the British closed the port of Boston, which greatly concerned the other colonies, most Englishmen, and also friendly European nations. When other colonies attempted to send supplies, the English quickly stationed more troops in the area to enforce the blockade. The satirist has symbolized the closing of the port by placing the Bostonians in a cage suspended from the Liberty Tree. Three men in a small boat are attempting to feed the hungry citizens with fish placed on the ends of long poles that are then thrust through the bars. British soldiers on the shore are supported by cannons, and the ships in the harbor symbolize the continued blockade.
Dolmetsch, Rebellion and Reconciliation, p. 69
THE BOSTONIAN’S PAYING THE EXCISE-MAN, OR TARRING & FEATHERING

This satire is a version of the tarring and feathering of John Malcomb. Slightly more complex in design, it has no accompanying verse or explanation. The Liberty Tree becomes the gallows in the print, and the tar bucket and dabber can be seen in the lower left corner. Malcomb is depicted spewing out the tea that he is being forced to drink. The background vignette of the Boston Tea Party in progress is an important feature of the satire as it is one of the earliest known pictorial representations of the event. The scene is frequently extracted from the print and is used to illustrate the tea party.

Dolmetsch, Rebellion and Reconciliation, p. 67

THE BRITISH LION ENGAGING FOUR POWERS

At the conclusion of the Revolution the nations of Europe struggled to extend their influence and authority in the world. It was therefore crucial for each of the participating countries to achieve the most satisfactory agreement possible during peace negotiations. To depict this continued aggressive spirit among the nations, satirists resorted to the symbolic use of animals.

With paw raised and tail held high the British lion tells the four allies, “You shall all have an old English drubbing to make you quiet.” From the lower right corner a fox (Charles Fox) supports the lion, “I counsel your Majesty to give Monsieur the first gripe.” A pug dog, Holland, responds, “I will be Jack of all sides as I have always been”; the snake, America, says “I will have America and be Independent”; France, a cock, boasts, “I will have my Title from you and be call’d King of France”; and Spain, a dog replies, “I will have Gibraltar, that I may be King of all Spain.” The verse below further explains the allusions:

Behold the Dutch and Spanish Currs,
   Perfidious Gallus in his Spurs,
And Rattlesnake with head upright,
The British Lion join to fight;
He scorns the Bark, the Hiss, the Crow,
That he’s a Lion soon they’ll know.

Dolmetsch, Rebellion and Reconciliation, p. 180

RECRUES ANGLOIA PARTANT POUR L’AMÉRIQUE
(English Recruits Going to America)

A favorite subject for eighteenth-century humorous satires was that of a nondescript group of recruits being processed for army duty. Sometime around 1780 Henry William Bunbury did a rendering of it, and shortly after France allied itself with the American colonies the Bunbury satire was adapted by J. Juillet to comment on the recruitment of French troops for the conflict.

Three motley conscripts have been lined up for inspection in a tavern yard under a sign of a wounded soldier. The inscription “Retour de l’Amérique, Pauvre Fortune” (Back from America, bad luck) presents a very pessimistic picture of what they can expect. Undisturbed by the affair, a young woman is resting against the side of the building mending breeches, presumably for one of the tattered group.

Dolmetsch, Rebellion and Reconciliation, p. 13

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CUPID'S TOWER, BUNKERS HILL OR AMERICA'S HEAD-DRESS

The London shop of Matthew Darly became well known in the early 1770s for its engravings of Macaronies, one of the most satirized of English social fads. The term was contrived to describe dress, hair, and lifestyles affected by those who traveled on the Continent and, upon their return, greatly exaggerated in their own habits that which they had observed and admired. While none of the eccentricities escaped the eye of the humorist, it was the high, overblown, and ornately curled coiffures that provided the greatest inspiration.

These two works from Darly and his wife, Mary, who did most of the engraving, were published on the same plate and demonstrate how suitable the hair style was for both social and political commentary. To the left Cupid’s Tower depicts an enormous hairdo engulfing a pretty young woman. Perched high on top of it is a very small cupid with bow and arrow. Beneath is inscribed:

Fair tresses Man’s imperial race ensnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.

By contrast, far more alarming is the action occurring on the Macaroni headdress to the right, for now the curls and plateaus have become the setting for the battle of Bunker Hill. The top three sections depict British troops who appear to be firing at each other, while just below colonial troops pull cannons toward the battle. Three flags are inserted in the hair in imitation of the more usual feather accessory.

AMERICA IN FLAMES

In December 1774 the Town and Country Magazine published this unusual satire concerning events in the colonies just before the Revolution. An old woman, America, is engulfed by flames as her foes add more fuel to the fire. Bute, in highland dress, pumps a bellows labeled “Quebec Bill” representing the act that had given some northern colonial territory to French Canada. Mansfield, abetted by the devil, fans the flame with “Massachusetts Bay”, a reference to the many troubles now harassing that colony. Standing beside America, North holds the Boston Port Bill that had just closed the harbor. A teapot from which liquid is spilling rolls down the steps in front of America to symbolize the Boston Tea Party. Beside and in front of America her friends attempt to extinguish the flames, but to little avail.

AMERICA TRIUMPHANT AND BRITANNIA IN DIS’TRESS’

Many of the satires comment on America’s victory over Britain in the Revolutionary War, but none is of more importance than the work shown here because it was one of only a few that appeared in an American publication. Not only does the designer celebrate the triumph of America, but more important he depicts the overtures of reconciliation and friendship tendered by the colonies to the defeated mother country. The figures are numbered and a full explanation appears at the bottom: I. “America sitting on that quarter of the globe with the Flag of the United States displayed over her head; holding in one hand the Olive branch, inviting the ships of all nations to partake of her commerce; and in the other hand [a staff] supporting the Cap of Liberty.” II. “Fame proclaiming the
joyful news to all the world.” III. “Britannia weeping at the loss of the trade of America, attended with an evil genius.” IV. “The British flag struck, on her strong Fortresses.” V. “French, Spanish, Dutch, &c. shipping in the harbours of America.” VI. “A view of New York, wherein is exhibited the Trator [Benedict] Arnold, taken with remorse for selling his country, and Judas like hanging himself.”

Dolmetsch, Rebellion and Reconciliation, p. 193

JOIN OR DIE

In 1754 the Pennsylvania Gazette (Philadelphia) printed a political satire believed to have been designed by Benjamin Franklin. In an attempt to promote Colonial unity, he represented America as a dissected rattlesnake. Each piece was then labeled with the abbreviation for one of the thirteen colonies, omitting Delaware and Georgia. The point of the cartoon being that unless the colonies were willing to join together to defend themselves against England, then surely they would “die”.

THE AMERICAN RATTLE SNAKE

Believed to be the work of James Gillray, the American rattlesnake, formerly shown disjointed as a symbol of the rebelling colonies, is now whole and coiled into three sections. An exposed tongue is inscribed:

Two British Armies I have thus Burgoyn’d,
And room for more I’ve got behind.

British soldiers representing the surrendering forces of Burgoyne and Cornwallis are surrounded by two of the snake’s circles. The remaining tail section is empty and advertises: “An Apartment to lett for Military Gentlemen.” A verse beneath explains:

Britons within the Yankeean Plains,
Mind how ye March and Trench,
The Serpent in the Congress reigns,
As well as in the French.

Dolmetsch, Rebellion and Reconciliation, p. 170

THE ALTERNATIVE OF WILLIAMS-BURG

In August 1774 the Williamsburg Resolutions were passed and by February 1775 Sayer and Bennett had published this commentary on the citizens’ reactions. Virginians were urged to sign a pledge of loyalty to the resolves of the Continental Congress and to withhold the export of tobacco, the colonies’ major and most profitable crop, until all taxes on imported goods were repealed.

In the capitol courtyard at Williamsburg liberty fighters have suspended a plank across two tobacco barrels to serve as a table upon which the pledge has been placed for signing. One of the barrels is labeled tobacco, a gift intended for John Wilkes, lord mayor of London, in appreciation for his support of colonial causes. Some of the colonists appear reluctant to sign the pledge, because curtailing the export of tobacco would cause great financial loss. The alternative is obvious: Behind the table, suspended from a gallows, are barrels of tar and feathers.
In the left background is a statue honoring Lord Botetourt, the highly respected royal governor of Virginia from 1768-70, which was erected in 1774 as a symbol for what was then British-American unity. This is the earliest known depiction of the monument, which now stands in the gallery of the Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.  

Dolmetsch, Rebellion and Reconciliation, p. 78

THE TOMBSTONE

Imposed in March 1765, the Stamp Act taxed all printed materials in America and was intended to help finance the British troops stationed in the colonies. It was the first direct tax to be levied against them and was bitterly opposed by colonial leaders. The inscription on the tomb explains that William, duke of Cumberland, is buried within. His untimely death is greatly mourned by many who had supported his selection of a ministry opposed to the American stamp act and further excise taxes. Decorating the base of the vault are busts of Britannia and America weeping at his unfortunate fate.

In contrast, dancing jubilantly on top of the tomb encouraged by the devil and clerics are his foes, pro-taxation political leaders including George Grenville, Lord Bute, Lord Temple, the earl of Sandwich, and the duke of Bedford. A small dog in clerical garb is added to the group. He is labeled Anti-Sejanus to represent the Reverend W. Scott, author of a political tract of that title strongly opposing any repeal of the act. From the pockets of each figure protrude papers inscribed with past acts and plans for future levies. The joy of these leaders was short-lived, for they soon found themselves either differing on ideas or completely out of office.

Dolmetsch, Rebellion and Reconciliation, p. 36

THE REPEAL, OR THE FUNERAL OF MISS AME-STAMP

One of the most famous and popular of the political satires commenting on the Stamp Act is this one, which actually celebrates the demise of the tax. A funeral procession composed of supporters of the act carry a small coffin containing the remains of the bill toward an open vault, appropriately adorned with two skulls. It has been prepared for the internment of all unjust acts that would alienate Englishmen. Leading the cortege and preparing to deliver the funeral eulogy is the Reverend W. Scott, who is followed by the mourners: Grenville, carrying the coffin, Bute, Bedford, and Temple, the same government officials whom jubilantly celebrated the passage of the act.

On the dock, are depicted the large unshipped cargoes destined for America that accumulated during the period when the act was in force. Ships labeled “Conway,” “Rockingham,” and “Grafton” that represent Whig leaders responsible for the repeal of the bill now stand ready to carry the goods to their destinations. Stamps just returned from America are also stacked on the wharf. One crate contains the statue of William Pitt, another English leader responsible for the repeal. It is probably the one intended for Charleston, South Carolina, where such a monument was subsequently erected.

Dolmetsch, Rebellion and Reconciliation, p. 38

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“A Society of Patriotic Ladies at Edenton in North Carolina”

A group of women have gathered in the parlor of a fashionable home to sign a loyalty oath similar in content to that presented to Williamsburg citizens. A woman of stern countenance presides at one end of the table upon which rests the document to be signed. Inscribed on it is the following resolve:

We the Ladys of Edenton do hereby solemnly Engage not to Conform to that Pernicious Custom of Drinking Tea, or that we the aforesaid Ladys will not promote ye wear of any Manufacture from England until such time that all Acts which tend to Enslave this our Native Country shall be Repealed.

One lady bends over the table to add her signature while on the other side another is distracted by the attentions of a gentleman who has intruded into the female sanctuary. Directly behind stand two women, one drinking an alternative to tea from a large punch bowl. In the doorway there women pour the contents of tea caddies into the hats of men who will take it away. Other empty caddies suggest the real sacrifice these ladies oar making in behalf of the cause. The unknown marker has added a delicate touch to the otherwise stern reminders of the difficult time by placing a small child under the table playing wit a miniature tea set. A pet dog affectionately licks the child’s face while it urinates on a tea caddy.

Dolmetsch, Rebellion and Reconciliation, p. 80
APPENDIX F

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