**Analyzing Political Cartoons**

**Look for the following components in each cartoon to help clarify the meaning.**

**Exaggeration:** Sometimes cartoonists overdo, or exaggerate, the physical characteristics of people or things in order to make a point. When you study a cartoon, look for any characteristics that seem overdone or overblown. (Facial characteristics and clothing are some of the most commonly exaggerated characteristics.) Then, try to decide what point the cartoonist was trying to make by exaggerating them.

**Symbolism:** Cartoonists use simple objects, or symbols, to stand for larger concepts or ideas. After you identify the symbols in a cartoon, think about what the cartoonist means each symbol to stand for.

**Irony:** Irony is the difference between the ways things are and the way things should be, or the way things are expected to be. Cartoonists often use irony to express their opinion on an issue. When you look at a cartoon, see if you can find any irony in the situation the cartoon depicts. If you can, think about what point the irony might be intended to emphasize. Does the irony help the cartoonist express his or her opinion more effectively?

**Labeling:** Cartoonists often label objects or people to make it clear exactly what they stand for. Watch out for the different labels that appear in a cartoon, and ask yourself why the cartoonist chose to label that particular person or object. Does the label make the meaning of the object more clear?

**Stereotyping:** A stereotype is a vastly oversimplified view of some group. Stereotypes are often insulting. Yet they may give cartoons a shorthand way to make a complex point quickly. They also reveal broad cultural attitudes.