

3 Worksheet on Visual Literacy

A CARTOONS – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Visual elements can be interpreted just like any text and they have become an important part of all English tests to be taken in classes 10 to 12 and, of course, the Abitur exam.

Cartoons are a combination of a drawing and a text. In a humorous way, they criticize people, incidents or issues, which are mostly depicted in an ironic or/and exaggerated way.

Text: The Sierra Club, “Driving up the Heat: SUVs and Global Warming” from: Peter Freese, *The American Dream*, Viewfinder Topics (München: Langenscheidt, 2011), pp. 57f.

Cartoons on p. 57 (“Sorry to inconvenience you...” and p. 58 “Hey, what fun is life without risk?”

B HOW TO INTERPRET A CARTOON

1. Take a close look at your cartoon and find out about these aspects:

- caption
- speech bubble(s)
- background/foreground
- people (gender, age, facial expression etc.)
- year of publication
- cartoonist

2. Ask yourself these questions:

- What's the cartoon's message? What is being criticized?
- Which emotions does it convey?
- Which associations/connotations does the cartoon bring to mind?
- Is there a target group?

3. Write down your interpretation / analysis:

- (Optional: Start by stating the cartoon's message in one short sentence.)
- Describe *all* the aspects/ details of the cartoon that *contribute to the message*.
- Then summarize your findings from 2.

Don't forget:

- Use the present progressive for activity verbs.
- Watch out for this German-English interference: say "In the picture..." not "On the picture".

C TASKS

To get prepared for the composition part in a "Schulaufgabe" oder the "Abitur" exam:

1. Read the text on pp. 57f. to enlarge your background knowledge about the link between SUVs and global warming. You'll need this to be able to understand the context of the respective cartoons and to be able to talk about what is being criticized and why.
2. Now, write an analysis / interpretation of the cartoons on pp. 57 and 58.

(Daniela Pröls)