

6 Criteria for an analysis of visual materials

a) Analyzing Cartoons

Like written texts visual materials, i.e. pictures (photographs, paintings, drawings, cartoons), tables, graphs and charts use certain elements to convey information. In your analysis of visual texts you are expected to identify those visual elements, describe them systematically and explain their use and function. Furthermore, with regard to pictures, you need to evaluate their effect on the reader; with regard to tables, graphs and charts, you need to evaluate the quality of the information provided.

PREPARATION

- 1) Study the task carefully.
- 2) Examine the cartoon in detail, keeping the task in mind. Find out where and when the cartoon was published; study the visual elements of the cartoon (people, objects, setting, speech bubbles etc.) and, if provided, the caption; consider symbolism and (metaphorical) meaning with regard to your task and/or a specific (topical) context.
- 3) Take notes.
- 4) Structure your notes/key words.

WRITING ABOUT A CARTOON

INCLUDE:

- the following elements in the introductory sentence(s):
 - the central idea/aspect of the cartoon, i.e. say what the cartoon is about
 - the cartoonist's name, where and when the cartoon was published
- a detailed description of the cartoon:
 - Name the different parts the cartoon consists of (visual elements, captions, speech or thought bubbles).
 - Describe the depicted objects or people (striking/physical features, clothing, positioning and size of objects/figures, facial expressions, body language, colour, what people say or think), the action and the setting (i.e. where and when the action takes place).
- an explanation of what the cartoonist wants to say or show and what techniques he/she uses:
 - Analyse the different elements (the visual elements, captions, speech or thought bubbles) of the cartoon.
 - Analyse the techniques used to convey the message (symbols, exaggeration, caricature, irony, all of them often with a critical intention).
 - Say which elements are striking and why (exaggerated, distorted, etc.).

- Say which of the objects and characters carry a meaning that goes beyond the obvious. Explain what they represent.
- Say how the different elements interact.
- Say what effect the elements have on the reader.
- Explain what message the cartoonist wants to convey.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- On the basis of your notes/key words structure your text.
- Use appropriate linking words.
- Use present tense/present continuous for actions.

6.1 Self-assessment grid: Analysis of visual materials

a) Analyzing Cartoons

Use this self-assessment grid to evaluate your own work. While checking your work, answer the questions below and tick:

☺ - Yes, well done 😊 - Ok, needs some improvement ☹ - No, needs improvement

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Date:</i>			<i>Date:</i>			<i>Date:</i>		
	☹	😊	☺	☹	😊	☺	☹	😊	☺
I have structured my text carefully.									
I have written what the cartoon is about and I have mentioned the source.									
I have written what the cartoon consists of.									
I have described the visual elements (objects/ characters) the action and the setting.									
I have paraphrased captions, speech or thought bubbles.									
I have explained the cartoonist's message.									
I have explained the cartoonist's use of visual elements, how they relate to each other and their effect(s).									
I have used the present simple/continuous tense for actions shown in the picture.									
I have used paragraphs in my text.									
I have connected my ideas and sentences logically.									
I have checked my vocabulary/grammar/spelling with the help of a dictionary / made sure that I have included the relevant aspects from my notes.									

V Supplementary page: Writing about a cartoon

Here are some useful expressions that will help you write about a cartoon.

What kind of picture is it? Where is it from? What is it about?		
The cartoon by...published in...	is about	the attitude towards the problem of
In his/her cartoon, published in..., X/Y	shows/presents depicts	
The scene depicted in the cartoon by ... published in...	deals with	the current discussion on the policy
	addresses	the trend
	alludes to	the use of
	refers to	people who
	criticises	
	is directed at/targets	
	comments on	
	exposes the fact that	

What is depicted?		
The cartoon	consists of is made up of has	several visual elements speech or thought bubbles different frames a caption
	is divided into	x parts
In the foreground/background In the middle/centre At the top/bottom On the left/right In the top right-hand corner In the bottom left-hand corner	there is/you can see ...(a ... /several ..) (a/a number of)... can be seen a ... is shown/depicted several ... are depicted	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The man/woman is characterised/depicted as someone who ... ▪ She/he looks as if ... ▪ She/he appears to be/doing... ▪ It seems as if ... ▪ She/he seems to be/be doing ... ▪ Mr Y looks bigger than... as he is positioned in the foreground. 	
The caption	states that... explains ... is a comment/statement by ... plainly shows that ... reinforces the impression ... forms a contrast to the picture is unexpected/short/ very funny	

What is the message and which techniques are used to convey it?

- The cartoon expresses/points out/aims to show ...
- The cartoon conveys the message that ...
- The key point the cartoon is trying to make is to expose the fact that...
- The message of the cartoon is obvious/plain
- The scene epitomises ... (= verkörpert/ist der Inbegriff von ...)
- The cartoonist's message is clear/unclear
- The cartoonist emphasises/criticises/wants to express the idea that...
- The cartoonist seems to criticise/ridicule/call into question ...
- It is obvious/plain to see that ...
- What we learn from the cartoon is ...
- X (an element in the drawing/he/she/it) stands for/represents/symbolises /shows ...
- X is exaggerated/stressed ...
- X is a caricature of .../X is the stereotypical ...
- X is caricatured/ridiculed as ...
- This indicates that ...
- It is obvious from the way X is depicted that ...
- This assumption is supported by the fact that ...
- The humour lies in the difference/misunderstanding/discrepancy/contrast/parallels between ... and ...

What is your personal opinion?

- The cartoon appeals/does not appeal to me. In my opinion ...
- The cartoon is complex/well done/very clever/effective/of high quality/convincing/entertaining.
- The cartoon is simplistic/confusing/unfair/hurtful to/exaggerated.
- The cartoon achieves its aim of ...-ing. It skilfully/effectively ...
- The point the cartoon is trying to make appeals to me/does not appeal to me because ...
- The message of the cartoon is lost on me/fails to work for me because ...
- I entirely/partly agree with ...
- I have my doubts as to ...
- The message needs further explanation.

How do caption/text and cartoon fit together?

- The text supports the message of the cartoon because ...
- Nevertheless, some detail provided in ... does not appear in ...
- Whereas the text says ... the cartoon seems to imply ...
- In contrast to the cartoon, the text ...