

The Best Political Cartoons of the Year, 2005

Edited by Daryl Cagle and Brian Farrington

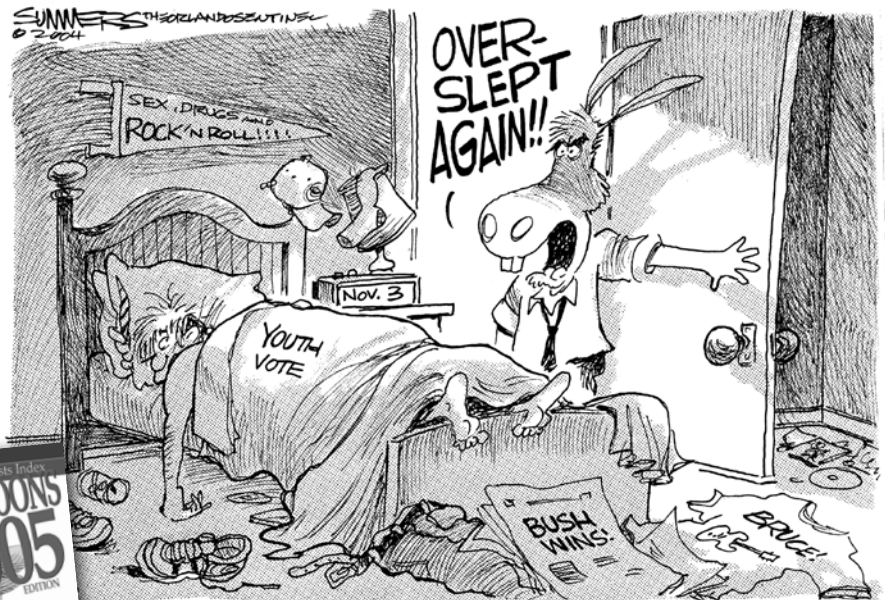
Reviewed by Syd Golston

FOR EDUCATORS WHO VALUE teaching American history at the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy, political cartoons inject challenge and delight into a diet of standards-based topics. This selection from the thousands of cartoons published last fall by the internet journal *Slate.com*, edited by Daryl Cagle and Brian Farrington, is particularly effective because the subjects are so recent that students can easily understand the satire (not as accessible in their textbook's Thomas Nast drawings).

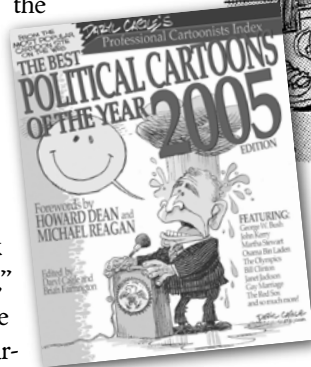
The book mirrors the topical organization of Cagle's website (cagle.slate.msn.com), with such chapters as Howard Dean, healthcare, the war in Iraq, "Where's Osama?", the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, Dick Cheney, "Bush Bashing," and "Rippin' Kerry." Cagle notes that most political cartoonists are liberal, and thus the collection may have a liberal slant—an issue about political cartoonists over the last two centuries of U.S. history that's worth exploring and discussing with students.

Even so, the very first chapter features sentimental farewells to Ronald Reagan, notably Doug Marlette's "St. Peter, tear down this wall!" and co-editor Farrington's own version of Reagan in Western gear, sporting a button reading "Heaven is Now Reagan Country."

Naturally, Kerry and Bush bore the brunt of the cartoonists' glee last fall. Bush was frequently depicted as a runt in a flak



Dana Summers, *The Orlando Sentinel*



jacket, and Kerry as an indecisive wimp. The "two Kerrys" appeared frequently in cartoons, as in Steve Kelly's pair of frames, "There are two Americas," next to "And I have a position for each of them."

The Cheney cartoons are some of the most hilarious (expletives and all). Drew Sheneman depicted a scowling Cheney with his arm around a little dog, proclaiming, "If you make the wrong choice in November, terrorists will attack this puppy." Cameron Cardow of the *Ottawa Citizen* drew Cheney in a Darth Vader costume.

Both this volume and Cagle's website add an invaluable section of political cartoons from abroad. These remind students of the global context that's often missing in

their daily newspapers. For example, editorial cartoonist Gurel of Turkey drew Bush as a croupier casting a small globe into the roulette wheel, a cartoon that might start a classroom debate or a thoughtful daily bellwork journal entry.

Political Cartoons of the Year, 2005, which is really about the best cartoons of 2004, but titled 2005 for the publication year, contains prompts for all kinds of classroom activities. The most challenging assignment could be creating your own political cartoon, perhaps with the theme used after the Bush victory in the *Orlando Sentinel* by Dana Summers (above). The book is hugely useful to teachers—and great faculty room reading, too. 📖

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