

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

How To Draw an Editorial Cartoon



Herbert Block knew something about drawing editorial cartoons. His first daily political cartoon was published on May 24, 1929. More than 70 years later, Herblock cartoons appeared six days a week in The Washington Post. He wrote essays and books about his art and life as a cartoonist. Block gave the Library of Congress more than 100 cartoons; his essay, "The Cartoon," was included in the exhibit book, Herblock's History: Political Cartoons from the Crash to the Millennium. Herb Block used these steps. Quotations from Block were published in "The Cartoon," his essays and books.

1. Know What's Happening

Read the newspaper and listen to news broadcasts. Know what the school board and administrators are deciding about your school's physical and learning environment. What concerns student government officers and the kids who sit next to you in class?

2. Select a Topic

Of the many actions taking or not

taking place, which one should get attention first? "Unless there is one subject of overriding importance or timeliness on a particular day, or some special outrage, I generally try to narrow down the list of subjects to two or three," wrote Block.

3. Decide What Needs to Be Said

"It may not sound very exciting or 'cartoony,' but to me the basic idea is the same as it ought to be with a written opinion—to try to say the right thing. Putting the thought into the picture comes second." The editorial cartoon is similar to a column. Both are signed and express a personal point of view. State your idea in a sentence. Then try to express it another way.

4. Get the Comment Into Graphic Form

Is there a metaphor, allusion or symbol that comes to mind? Sketch several ideas. "A series of 'roughs' may approach a subject from different angles or may be variations on a theme." At this stage Block often shared his sketches to get reaction and "to get out any bugs that might be in the cartoon ideas."

5. Research to Get Accurate Information

You don't want to be guilty of libel. You also want readers to trust you. Get the facts. Block would ask reporters who covered certain beats for information or research for "who said what or exactly what happened

when." For Herblock, "Such help—not 'ideas for cartoons,' but background information and relevant facts—is of enormous value."

6. Complete the Cartoon

Block kept a supply of lead and non-reproducible blue pencils. His cartoons were composed with crayons, graphite, ink and opaque white. You will use the tools that best suit you. Practice making lines, hatch and cross-hatch marks to give dimension to your cartoon. Keep the drawing uncluttered. You may wish to use a balloon, labels or title. "Wordiness can be awkward in a cartoon—though sometimes needed to explain an issue or provide dialogue," explained Block.

7. Share It

Share your cartoon with others to make them think, to start them talking or just to see them enjoy your work. When Block was starting his career he experienced "The Thrill That Comes Once in a Lifetime." He wrote, "Such a moment came in one of those early days on the News when I was riding a bus, seated behind two men who were reading the papers. One of them nudged the other and handed across his folded paper, pointing to something in it. And looking between their shoulders I could see what he was pointing at my cartoon! Not family or classmates or colleagues, but a couple of people I didn't even know!

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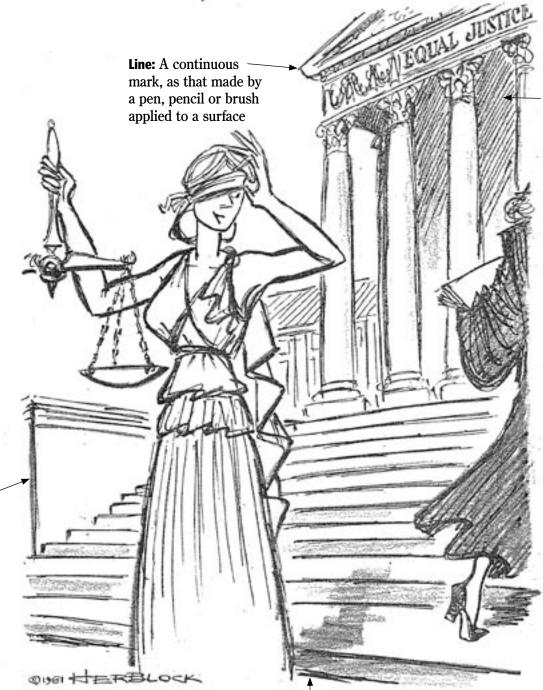


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The Mechanics of Editorial Cartooning

Ben Day: A way to add a tone or texture to a printed image by imposing a transparent sheet of dots or other patterns on the image at some stage of a photographic reproduction process. (Also known as benday, Ben Day dots.)

Hatch mark: Line used to create shade



shade by drawing or etching fine parallel lines

Hatch: To

Cross-hatch:

To mark or shade with two or more sets of intersecting parallel lines

Non-photo blue: Color that does not photograph so does not reproduce on a printed

page.

Shading: Part of a picture depicting

darkness or shadow