

Teacher Guide to Student Worksheet 1-“Now for a round-up,” a political cartoon in support of the Sedition Act of 1918



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Before Viewing the Caption:

1. Write down five words or phrases that come to mind.

Examples of responses students might give:

Determined—Uncle Sam looks determined to get rid of these spies/traitors.

The government of USA—It looks like the cartoon is taking place with the capital in the background.

The power of Uncle Sam—From the contrast of size between Uncle Sam and the spies and traitors and the way he is able to “round them up” by their collars, the power and control lies with the US Government (Uncle Sam, that is).

Portrayal of Groups of Threat—Exaggerated, cartoonish, evil, filthy, even subhuman

“Round-up”—This term is traditionally used to gather animals together.

Leading them away—Uncle Sam is striding away from the capital.

2. What appears to be happening?

Uncle Sam/US Government is gathering together all of the spies and traitors and threats to our country and taking them away.

3. Can you guess by the events and concerns in the cartoon during what time frame it was published?

It was published around 1918.

4. What major world event would have been going on during the creation of this political cartoon?

World War I

5. What questions do you have after viewing this cartoon?

Sample questions may include:

What is the Sedition Act? Why does it matter that it passed into law? (Flag in the background)

What is I.W.W.? Why is it portrayed as a werewolf figure?

What is Sinn Fein?

Who are the other traitor and spy characters?

Who is W. A. Rogers (the cartoonist), and what is his background?

Where was the cartoon first published?

6. What would you say is the message of this political cartoon?

The U.S. Government is taking away spies and traitors.

After Viewing the Caption and Reading Background Information:

7. How has background knowledge affected your interpretation of the cartoon?

The student may express more complete understanding of the content and ability to contextualize the cartoon with events of its day. Specific details of the cartoon may come into better focus. For instance, the blurry background of the flag waving "Sedition Law is Passed" will become clear in its significance. The specific groups rendered as threats will be better understood as radical or leftist threats: the Germans (enemies of Allies during WWI); the Russian communists; Sinn Fein, the Irish left-wing political group; and the International Workers of the World (labor union fighting for rights of workers/working class). Understanding events of the day may also illuminate the underlying fear driving this cartoon.

8. Now what would you say is the main message of the cartoon? Would you make any changes or make any additional observations from #6?

The U.S. Government is determined to protect itself from security threats during World War I. It will "round up" those threats (largely leftist organizations with communist ideology) and take them away.