

Section Two: Scaffolding Cartoons suitable for years 9 and 10

Disclaimer: There could be more than one valid student response to cartoon interpretation. All student responses have to be judged in relation to the cartoon being analysed.

'Look, Bert...'

Step by step instructions

- (i) Inform the students that cartoonists can communicate opinions with humour and the use of dialogue. Cartoons do not always have a serious tone.
- (ii) If the students have not studied the Australian home front during World War Two take them through that information now using the following context points.



CONTEXT

- Australia entered World War Two in 1939 against Germany and later Italy.
 - Shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 the United States, Britain, Australia and other allies declared Japan an enemy.
 - The Japanese forces captured Singapore on 15 February 1942 and bombed Darwin on 19 February 1942. Many Australians thought that the Japanese then intended to invade Australia.
 - Prime Minister John Curtin appealed to President Roosevelt of the United States for military assistance and it was granted. Shortly after, General MacArthur arrived in Australia along with thousands of American servicemen.
 - On arrival the American servicemen were warmly welcomed as the saviours of Australia. However, the US servicemen ('Yanks') were better paid and better dressed than Australian troops. On the black market or through their own canteens, Americans could buy silk stockings, chocolates and other items that most Australians could not get due to wartime rationing. When taking a girl out on a date the 'Yanks' could afford to buy flowers and hire a taxi.
- Soon many Australian service men became worried about the 'Yanks' taking their girls. Japanese and German propaganda helped to inflame these concerns into jealousies.
- On some occasions American and Australian troops fought in the streets. The Battle of Brisbane, which was fought from 26-27 November 1942, was one such case. One of the main causes was the concern over the 'Yanks' stealing Australian women.

Teaching point of the cartoon:

Australian male perspective on the attractions of American servicemen in Australia during World War Two.

Sheet 1: Origin of Cartoon

Teaching point: Context of events occurring around 23 December 1942.

Ask students to think about what was happening in Australia around 23 December 1942. Some leading questions could be:

- In what overseas actions had Australian servicemen been involved since 1939?
- Who had come to Australia in 1942 to help Australians win the war?

Once they answer that US troops under MacArthur arrived to help drive back the Japanese tell them that the *Bulletin* was a magazine that was biased in favour of the Australian fighting male. It was also a publication that used a lot of humour about the Australian soldier and the Australian way of life in its articles and cartoons.

The Cartoonist: Norm Rice was one of the artists who worked for Frank Johnson Publications which produced some of the best-remembered comics of the war years. He drew such strips as *Dr Darbill*, *Steele Carewe* and *Powerman*.

Sheet 2: Figure of Australian soldier

Teaching point: Stereotype of a typical Australian soldier.

- Who is this man? (*Australian soldier*)
- How do you know he is an Australian soldier? (*Slouch hat, uniform, boots*)
- What impression of the man do you gain from the drawing? A happy impression/feeling or a sad one? (*Happy*)

Sheet 3: Another soldier

Teaching point: Indication that this is a lighthearted cartoon.

- Who is this second man?
- What are they doing?
- Guess what they are looking at.
- What impression of the men do you gain from the drawing?

Sheet 4: The girls

Teaching point: Further indication that this is a light-hearted cartoon

- Describe the girls' clothing.
- What impression are the girls trying to create?
- What is the message now?

Sheet 5: Caption

Teaching point: Dialogue can often be the caption that gives the overall message.

- Who is speaking?
- Why would Bert be happy there are no Yanks around?
- What is the implication of what would happen if there were Yanks around?

Questions for students to answer in writing

Candidates' responses to some of the following questions will vary according to their understanding of the symbols and captions of the cartoon. **Teachers should reward valid explanations where students can logically explain and justify their interpretations with details from the cartoon.**

Level of difficulty of questions:

LO= Low Order of difficulty MO=Middle order of difficulty HO= High order of difficulty

Question: What is the message of the cartoon? **MO**

Example Answer:

- *The message is that Australian soldiers have a chance to 'pick up' or have girls interested in them, if there are no Americans ('Yanks') about.*
- *The cartoonist is implying that, ordinarily, Australian girls favour 'Yanks' rather than Australian males.*

Question: Identify the bias in the cartoon. **HO**

Example Answer:

- *The cartoon is negatively biased against Australian girls in suggesting that they are more interested in American males than Australian males.*

Question: Why would the cartoonist have presented his message (opinion) about the Yanks and Australian women in a humorous manner? **HO**

Example Answer:

- *The major readership of the Bulletin would have been Australian males. The use of humour to state that women liked Americans more than Australians would not offend male readers.*
- *Another reason for the use of humour was that in 1942 the Americans were allies and were needed to fight the Japanese who were attacking northern Australia. It would not have been appropriate to openly criticise Americans who were fighting, and dying, to protect Australia.*

Question: Is the use of humour in this cartoon an effective method for conveying its message? Justify your answer. **HO**

Example Answer:

- *The use of humour is an effective method of making a critical or controversial statement about events or current affairs. Many Australian soldiers were concerned about the willingness of Australian women to go out with Americans.*
- *It is important not to upset friends and allies in wartime so humour, such as that shown in the cartoon, allows statements to be made without serious consequences.*

Point of historical interest:

Japanese propaganda such as the regular broadcast of Tokyo Rose to Australian servicemen overseas stated that the 'Yanks' were dating Australian wives, fiancées and girlfriends while the Australian service men were away from home.

Extension Work

Written Questions

- Investigate the Battle of Brisbane and then decide if you think the *Bulletin* would have published this cartoon after the fight between American and Australian servicemen.
- To what extent is this cartoon useful in gauging (evaluating) the amount of concern about American servicemen in Australia during World War Two?

Group work

- Design a cartoon which presents the American serviceman's perspective of being in Australia during World War Two. The dialogue caption for your cartoon is:
'Look, Joe; and no Aussies about!'
- Design an Australian propaganda poster that presents its message as a cartoon. The propaganda message is that Americans and Australians are working together happily to win the war against the Japanese.

Draw a cartoon and write a caption

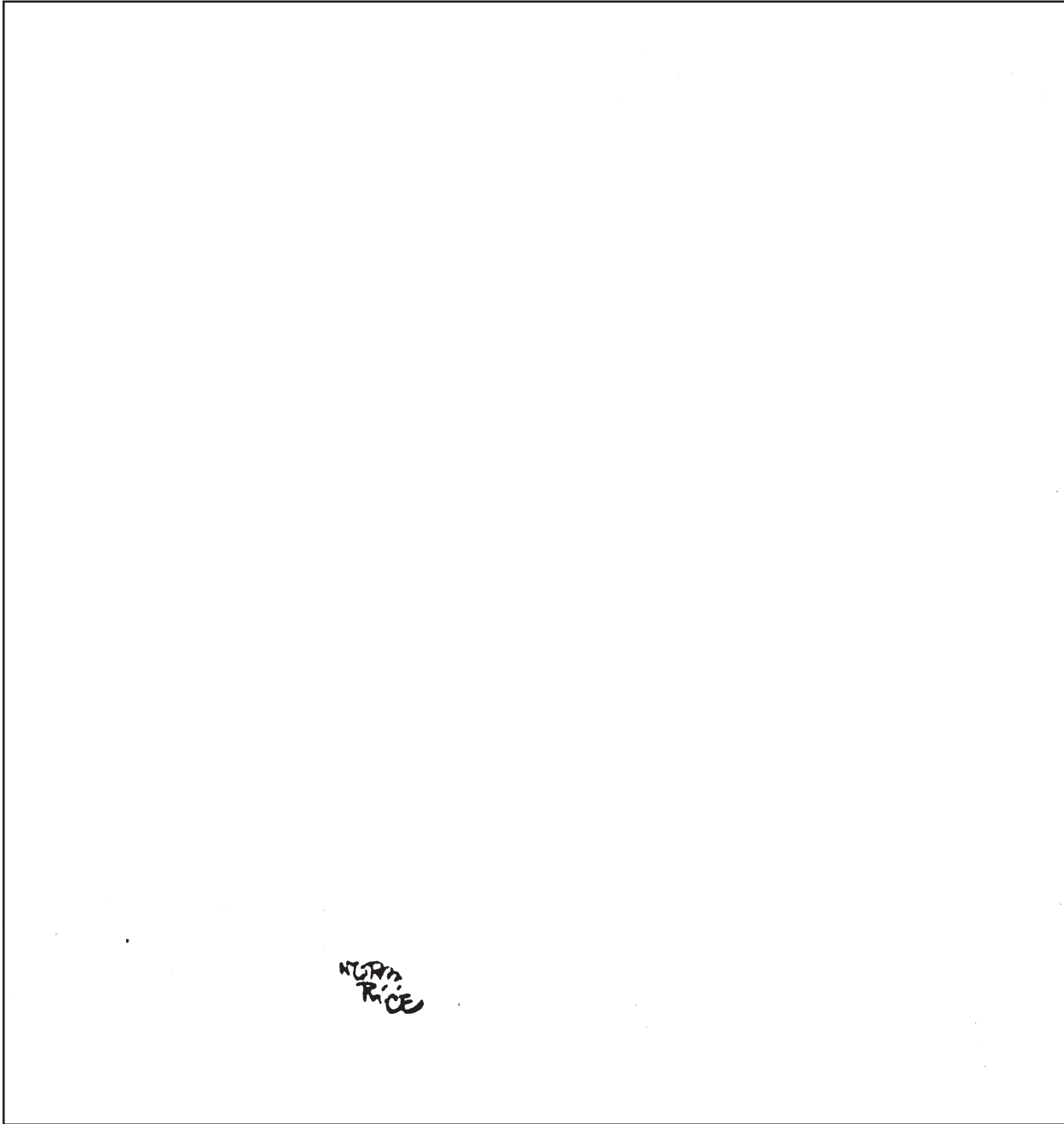
(This can be done individually and can also be used as a possible assessment tool.)

- Brainstorm or use the list of historical events that could be used as a **message** for a cartoon.
- If there is time do a quick review of how cartoonists construct cartoons. The cartoonist:
 - ◆ has a particular topic or event in mind and has an opinion about it;
 - ◆ uses visual symbols to construct his message about the topic or event;
 - ◆ often uses the caption to highlight his opinion through the use of irony, humour or sarcasm.

Historical events that could be used to create a cartoon

- The arrival of the Americans in Australia
- Conflict between American and Australian soldiers
- The Battle of Brisbane
- Australians and Americans fighting the naval Battle of the Coral Sea
- An Australian soldier on the Kokoda Track getting a 'Dear John' letter from his girlfriend who has become engaged to an American soldier
- The 'Yanks' dating Australian women
- The 'Yanks' saving Australia from the Japanese
- Australian and American troops fighting the Japanese

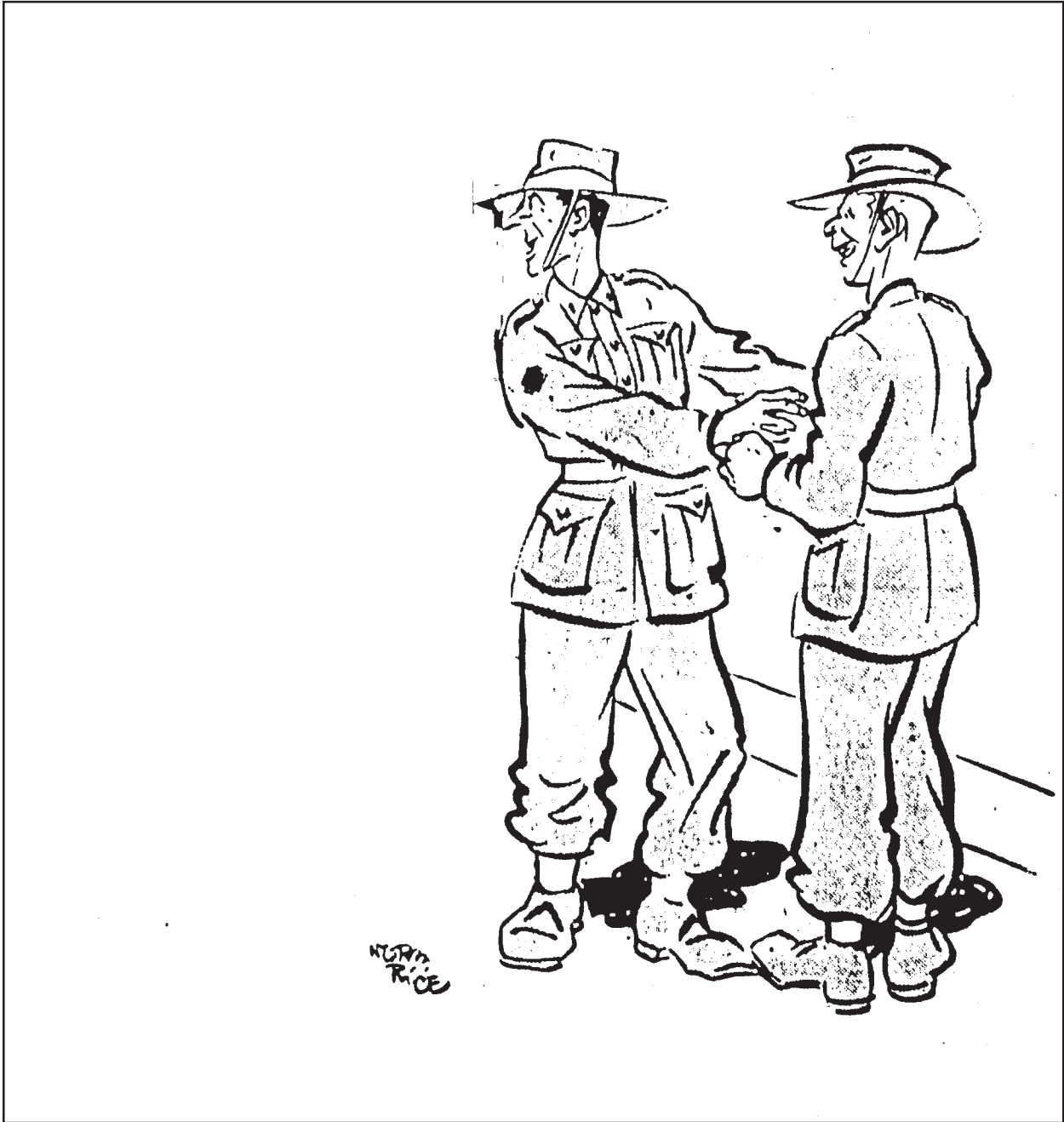
Sheet 1



Published in the *Bulletin*, 23 December 1942



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