Leg-Roped

Step by step instructions

(i) Tell or remind the students that cartoonists often express concerns about Australia’s future or predicted dangers to Australia and its people.

(ii) If the students have not studied the Japanese entry into World War Two and the fall of Singapore, take them through that information now using the following context points.

CONTEXT

• World War Two began for Australia in 1939 when Britain declared war on Germany.
• The Prime Minister of Australia at this time was Menzies.
• Australian soldiers who went to fight in the Middle East and North Africa were volunteers.
• John Curtin, leader of the Australian Labor Party, became Prime Minister in October 1941.
• The Japanese attacked the United States’ Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour (Hawaii) on 7 December 1941. This brought America into the war against Japan and Germany.
• After the Pearl Harbour attack, Australia declared war on Japan.
• After 7 December 1941 the Japanese forces quickly moved south through Asia and by January 1942 were closing in on Singapore. The Japanese aim was to capture the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) within six weeks and the oil wells there.
• Australia was relatively unprotected from a possible Japanese invasion as most of the experienced soldiers were in North Africa or returning to Australia and Singapore in ships.
• There were conscripted militia soldiers in Australia at this time. The militia soldiers were only allowed to fight within Australia as outlined in the 1911 Defence Act, therefore they could not fight in Singapore and the Dutch East Indies.

Teaching point of the cartoon: How a cartoonist presents a message and opinion using symbols, words and a caption.
Sheet 1: Origin of Cartoon

Teaching point: Context of events occurring in January 1942

Tell the students that the date shown at the bottom of a cartoon is the date the cartoon was first published. This date provides major clues for historians of what events were considered important and worthy of comment by the media (newspapers and magazines).

Tell the students that the name of the publication (Daily Telegraph) informs historians where the cartoon was published (Australia) and provides a clue to an Australian bias.

Ask students to think about what Australianians were concerned about in January 1942. Some leading questions could be:

- What events would be on the front pages of newspapers and on the radio?
- What event had occurred on 7 December 1941 that caused great concern for Australia and the United States?


Sheet 2: Map

Teaching point: Maps symbolically show the countries the cartoonist is referring to.

- To which countries is the cartoonist referring? (Point out to the students that the Dutch East Indies was the old name for Indonesia.)
- Why do you think an Australian cartoonist would focus on the Dutch East Indies in early January 1942?

Tell the students, or point out on a wall map, that just north of the Dutch East Indies is Singapore and Malaya. Point out how close these places are to Australia.

Sheet 3: Clouds

Teaching point: A cartoonist always draws something for a reason.

Discuss with students some of the cloud symbols used to represent disasters. Examples: smoke rising from ruins (twin towers of September 11), clouds above dead, burnt out trees in a bushfire. Then ask the students:

- What sort of clouds are these? (weather clouds? clouds from a volcanic explosion? clouds from a bush fire?)
- Where is the point of origin of the clouds? (Singapore)
Sheet 4: The soldier

Teaching point: Cartoonists often use one person (the Australian soldier) to symbolically represent a larger group (Australian conscripted militia)

- Who is this person and where is he going?
- This would be a good time to show a photo of an Australian World War Two soldier. Point out what symbols (pieces of uniform) the cartoonist has used to help the reader recognise an Australian soldier in his cartoon. Photographs of Australian soldiers can be found on the Australian War Memorial website at www.awm.gov.au. Click on Online shop + Photosales, then Photosales: Search our collection. Try ‘army men’ as a search term and ‘second world war (1939-45)’ as the conflict to find many photographs. Some useful samples are 020621% and 051457%.
- Why do you think the cartoonist has drawn the soldier wearing a helmet rather than a slouch hat? (To show he is going into a battle where bullets will be fired)
- What does the soldier’s facial expression indicate: happiness, fear ...? (Concern)
- What is the message of the cartoon so far?

Sheet 5: The leg rope and peg, ‘MILITIA’ and ‘DEFENCE ACT’

Teaching point: Cartoonists often use words to show precisely who or what their symbols refer to.

Explain to the students the role of the ‘MILITIA’ for home defence only. The Defence Act, which was passed in 1911, restricted the conscripted militia to fight only within Australian territory. On the other hand, Australians who volunteered for military service could be sent to fight anywhere in the world. The second AIF was the volunteer army that was sent to fight overseas in the Middle East in 1939.

- What do you think the leg-rope represents? (Halting the militia going out of Australia)
- What is the message of the cartoon now?

Sheet 6: Caption

Teaching point: Cartoonists use captions to make a statement and reveal their opinions or bias.

- Does the caption indicate the cartoonist’s opinion of the Defence Act?
- Does the written caption help to emphasize the visual message of the cartoon?
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 there is fighting to the north of Australia as shown by the smoke/clouds.
- The militia is armed and appears ready to engage in the fight, however, the federal Defence Act, is holding the militia within Australia.
- The caption of ‘Leg-Roped’ relays the message that it is the Defence Act that is stopping the militia from fighting the Japanese enemy in the Dutch East Indies.

Question: Explain the various symbols used in the cartoon.  LO

Example Answer:
- The man dressed in battle uniform with a rifle and bayonet represents the conscripted Australian militia soldiers.
- The smoke/cloud depicts the southward movements of the Japanese enemy and the air-raids and fighting that was taking place in Malaya.
- The map outlines represent places involved in the war.
- The rope and stake represent the Defence Act which is holding conscripted soldiers within Australia.

Question: Is there any evidence of bias in the cartoon? Justify your answer by referring to examples.  HO

Example Answer:
- The cartoon is accurately depicting the fact that in January 1942 Australia was at war but that conscripted soldiers could not fight in the Dutch East Indies at that time.
- The cartoonist, Mahony, is stating his view that the Defence Act is restraining the militia and thereby implies that something should be done to let the soldiers go overseas.
- The cartoon is negatively biased against the Defence Act and implies something should be done.
Question: How effective is this 1942 cartoon in presenting concerns for Australia's future? Give reasons for your answer. 

Example Answer:

- The cartoonist has created a message of concern about Australia's future security and effectively presents a mood of impending danger.
- The clouds of war are drifting towards Australia and the soldier's expression is one of concern at being held back.

Extension Questions

- Why were the militia called the 'chocolate soldiers'?
- What was the Kokoda Track?
- How and when did Prime Minister John Curtin bring in conscription for overseas service during World War Two?
- What was the Australian people's reaction to the introduction for overseas service for militia soldiers during World War Two?
- Where, precisely, overseas were conscripted Australian soldiers allowed to fight?

Note: Use the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library website to help with research - http://john.curtin.edu.au
Published in the *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 6 January 1942
Published in the *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 6 January 1942
Published in the *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 6 January 1942
Published in the *Daily Telegraph (Sydney)*, 6 January 1942
Published in the *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 6 January 1942

Leg-Roped