

## HOW DO CARTOONISTS USE ART TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS?

Political cartoonists from Ben Franklin onward have used pictures to express their opinions about things with which they disagree. Stan Mack, through his comic art, has always tried to convey, if lovingly and sympathetically, his own feelings about the contradictions of everyday life, whether in the present or in history, whether about politics or human nature.

Throughout *Taxes/Tea Party*, Stan Mack fairly often shows us in pictures, for example, how he feels about the fact that the Patriot leaders say that their goals include liberty, but at the same time, they continue to exploit those who are not white, male property owners.

It's a useful skill, especially living in a time when we are so constantly bombarded with images that are competing for our attention and our opinions, for us to see how images try to get us to feel a certain way.

Choose a few panels in which you feel Stan Mack sets up the picture to convey a certain message, one that may even seem to contradict what the characters are saying. You will find that in some of these, the dialogue is related to the action of the picture, but in others, it may not be.

As you make your way through the book, direct your students to pictures you feel are particularly ripe with irony or other meaning and ask them to discuss what Stan Mack may be trying to get the reader to feel about what is going on. An extension of this activity might be to have students find their own panels to analyze or to challenge each other to interpret.

Sample student directions for this activity:

1. Look at the two panels on page 14. Read the narration on the page. What do we learn from this narration?
2. Look at the two people standing on the dock in the top panel. What does the expression on their faces tell you, if anything, about how they are feeling about the immigrants who are about to get off the boat?
3. Now look at all the people who come ashore. What is the response to this group by those two people?
4. What do you think Stan Mack is trying to tell us?