

Abstract

Political cartoons are essential pieces of literature used to communicate political events or other ongoing situations. Political cartoon illustrators use a light-hearted approach to convey serious messages. Political cartoons help the audience become familiar with serious topics by providing comic relief. Matt Wuerker is one such illustrator. In one of his illustrations, Wuerker shared a message concerning the opposition of the ultra-wealthy to raising taxes to build better infrastructure for the entire population. Like other forms of literature, political cartoons use literary elements to reveal their message. Wuerker used physical elements in the cartoon, including colors, text, cars, buildings, water, and boats, to communicate the message. Wuerker uses exaggeration to contrast the state of infrastructure between the ultra-wealthy and the rest of the population, symbolism to elicit different emotions concerning the contrasting conditions of the infrastructures, and captions and labels to call to attention opinions of the parties involved in the situation.

Name:

Course:

Professor:

Date:

Analysis of a Political Cartoon

Political cartoons are pieces of art that illustrators use to convey important messages about society and current events or inform the audience of an ongoing situation. The cartoons often take on a light-hearted approach to provide comic relief and education. Political cartoons are an excellent method of familiarizing the audience with political or social events happening around them. Matt Wuerker is one illustrator using political cartoons to communicate important messages. In one illustration, Wuerker uses exaggeration, symbolism, and captions and labels to talk about the opposition of the ultra-rich against raising taxes to improve infrastructure.

The first element Wuerker employed is exaggeration. The cartoon overstates the physical features of both the wealthy individual representing the ultra-rich and the individuals representing the rest of the population. For example, the wealthy individual is drawn as having yachts and boats in a pool-like body of water. His house is built in the middle of this island and stands extremely tall compared with other infrastructure surrounding it. Meanwhile, the infrastructure of the rest of the population is depicted as crumbling. Exaggeration here takes the form of cars and trains falling off bridges and deep holes on the roads, electricity transmission lines on fire, and burst water pipes. Wuerker uses these exaggerations to point out the differences in the conditions of the infrastructure of the ultra-wealthy compared with that of ordinary citizens (Wuerker).

The second element Wuerker employs is symbolism. For the ultra-rich, the cartoon uses symbols such as the dollar sign to express the value of assets. A green flag with "1%" written on it symbolizes the ultra-rich. A fortress-like mansion surrounded by greenery and clear water, as well as a helicopter, yachts, and boats, in pristine condition, symbolizes how well their infrastructure is doing (Wuerker). Wuerker uses vibrant blue, green and gray colors to draw the ultra-rich. These colors elicit perceptions of prosperity and success. For the rest of the population, Wuerker uses a rundown school, homeless people, cars emitting exhaust fumes, and roads and bridges in bad states to symbolize how deplorable the conditions are for anyone outside the "1%." Additionally, Wuerker uses dull brown and gray hues to draw the infrastructure outside the 1%. These colors elicit visuals of despair, poverty, misery, and hardship (Wuerker).

Finally, Wuerker uses captioning and labels to enhance clarity. The ultra-rich individual in the cartoon is captioned, saying, "RAISE TAXES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE? MY INFRASTRUCTURE IS DOING JUST FINE THANK YOU" (Wuerker). This caption clarifies the message that Wuerker is trying to communicate to the audience. The use of capital letters for the caption indicates strong feelings and comes off as shouting and angry. The audience can interpret that the wealthy individual does not want his taxes raised because his infrastructure is doing well. The "\$" and "1%" labels are used to distinguish the ultra-rich from the rest of the population (Wuerker). The "\$" sign label, additionally, expresses the high value of the assets that the wealthy individual owns. Comparatively, Wuerker uses the "SCHOOL" label on one of the rundown infrastructures to communicate how dire the situation is for other citizens.

In conclusion, Wuerker successfully employs literary elements to educate the audience about the seriousness of the opposition of the ultra-rich against raising taxes to build better infrastructure. Wuerker used physical elements such as colors, buildings, cars, boats,

and trains to inform the audience. Through elements of exaggeration, symbolism, and captions and labels, Wuerker compared and contrasted the infrastructure of the ultra-rich and the rest of the population.

Works Cited

Wuerker, Matt. "Best of 2021." *POLITICO*, 27 Dec. 2021,

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