Fit to Print

A Problem about Yellow Journalism and the Road to War with Spain

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Problem Log
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In 1874, 23-year-old Ricardo Ruiz traveled from Cuba to America. He wanted to attend the Pennsylvania College of Dental Surgery to obtain a doctorate in dentistry. He graduated in 1878, and in 1880 he became a U.S. citizen. That same year, Dr. Ruiz decided to return to Cuba to open a dental practice. Shortly after his return, he married, and he and his wife had three children. They lived a quiet, comfortable life. Then, on February 4, 1897, everything changed….
**Directions:** You have been asked to compare two articles about the death of Dr. Ricardo Ruiz. Use the chart below to analyze each one of them. Remember, you must think like a journalist: look for differences in the information reported, including details included or omitted. Consider word choice, and pay close attention to the adjectives and emotionally charged words. As you read, try to determine how all of these elements converge to create the overall tone for the article. Create the overall tone for the article. **Use this information to decide which the author's purpose was in writing the article.**

**Reported Facts:** Include at least five for each article.

**Word Choice:** Include at least three for each article. Label them by marking appropriate descriptions with a “+” and misleading ones with a “-“.

**Tone:** For each article, include at least three for each article.

**Other:** Include at least five.

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**The New York Times**

**Article Headline:**

**New York Journal**

**Article Headline:**

**Conclusions:** What differences did you find between the articles? What is the reason for those differences? What do you think were the underlying goals of each author that led to his selection of facts, words, and tone?
Cartoonists’ Persuasive Techniques

**Visuals**

**Symbolism:** Using simple or common objects to stand for more global concepts

*Example:* A picture of Humpty Dumpty could stand for something important yet fragile.

**Exaggeration:** Amplifying and distorting the physical characteristics of people or things in order to make a point

*Example:* All the king’s men could be drawn smaller than Humpty Dumpty to suggest that they are not powerful.

**Analogy:** A comparison between two unlike things to reveal common underlying characteristics

*Example:* Humpty Dumpty might represent something else that is broken—for instance, an idea or a system.

**Irony:** The difference between the way things are and the way they should be or are expected to be; often used in cartoons to express an opinion or to depict an issue

*Example:* Politicians are supposed to be powerful. In a political cartoon they could be represented as all the king’s men to stand for people who should be powerful but are not because they can’t reassemble Humpty Dumpty.

**Words**

**Labels:** Used to identify objects or people to make it clear exactly what they stand for

*Example:* The words “American economy” might be written over Humpty Dumpty so the reader knows what Humpty Dumpty is supposed to represent.

**Captions:** Used outside the cartoon box to give words to characters, to send an ironic message to the reader, or to present the overall message of the cartoon

*Example:* The caption “Humpty Dumpty falls again” might suggest a repeating problem.

Adapted from www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/activities/political-cartoon/lm_cart_analysis_guide.pdf
## Cartoon Analysis

### Level 1

**Visuals**
1. What objects or people are central to the meaning of this cartoon?

2. Which of the objects are symbols?

3. Which of the people are symbols representing a larger group or institution? What group or institution does each represent?

**Words**
1. Record the cartoon caption and/or title.

2. What are the important words or phrases? Why are they important?

**Synthesis**
1. What do you think you are supposed to think or feel about the situation in this cartoon?

2. The editor-in-chief seemed to be glad that the *Times* was not portrayed in this cartoon. What does that tell you about the philosophy that guided *The New York Times* in 1897?
# Cartoon Analysis

## Visuals

1. Which elements of persuasion do you see used in the cartoon? Select at least two:
   - Symbolism
   - Exaggeration
   - Analogy
   - Irony
   - Labels
   - Captions

2. What do you think each element in the cartoon represents?

## Words

1. Which words or phrases (labels, captions) in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so?

   2. List some adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.

## Synthesis

1. Write a sentence that expresses the overall message about the relationship between the press and the public presented in this cartoon.

   2. The editor-in-chief seemed to be glad that the *Times* was not portrayed in this cartoon. What does that tell you about the philosophy that guided *The New York Times* in 1897?
### Cartoon Analysis

#### Level 3

**Visuals**

1. Describe how the cartoonist used elements of persuasion in the cartoon. Choose from among the following: symbolism, exaggeration, analogy, irony, labels, captions.

2. What do you think each element in the cartoon represents?

**Thoughts and Feelings**

1. How did the cartoonist blend intellectual (thinking) and emotional (feeling) appeals? How does the combination affect the impact of the cartoon?

**Synthesis**

1. Write a sentence that expresses the overall message about the relationship between the press and the public presented in this cartoon.

2. The editor-in-chief seemed to be glad that the *Times* was not portrayed in this cartoon. What does that tell you about the philosophy that guided *The New York Times* in 1897?
Reflective Moment: Responsibility, Option A

Directions: What does it mean to be responsible? Here are some related words. Look up at least three of these words, and provide a definition for them.

Amenable
Obligated
Trustworthy
Answerable
Liable
Creditworthy
Accountable

Now describe responsibility in your own words:

________________________________________________________________________
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Reflective Moment: Responsibility, Option B

*The New York Times* has just been purchased by a man named Adolph Ochs. He will be your new editor-in-chief. Here is a picture of Mr. Ochs in 1897.

This is what Ochs said about his goals for the newspaper:

“It will be my earnest aim that *The New York Times* give the news, all the news, in concise and attractive form, in language that is permissible in good society, and give it as early, if not earlier, than it can be learned through any other reliable medium; to give the news impartially, without fear or favor, regardless of party, sect, or interest involved; to make of the columns of *The New York Times* a forum for the consideration of all questions of public importance, and to that end to invite intelligent discussion from all shades of opinion.”

Picture from *The Fourth Estate*, August 26, 1897

Directions: Select one of the six phrases in gray, and discuss why it is important to responsible journalism. Be brief but complete in your response; for example, if you select the first phrase, discuss why it is important for the news to be attractive as well as concise.

A quality response: (1) addresses the question, (2) stays on topic, (3) is plausible or reasonable, and (4) gives enough detail, including specific examples, to make your ideas clear.
**Reflective Moment: Responsibility, Option C**

Directions: Many people rely on the news. They count on newspapers to give them the information they need to know in order to decide what issues to support and how to vote. It is essential that we understand what it means to be a responsible journalist. Complete the graphic organizer below to identify the most important elements of responsibility as it relates to journalism.

**Definition of Responsibility**

**Qualities of a Responsible Person**

**Responsibility**

**Example:**

**What is “responsible journalism”?”**

**Why is responsible journalism important?**

**What makes responsible journalism difficult?**
Journalism Guidelines

Directions: Now that you’ve compared one of our articles with an article by our competitor, the New York Journal, it is time to create a set of guidelines. What makes a piece of news “fit to print”? Create a list of five criteria. Then circle the one you think is most important, and briefly state why.

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   ____________________________________________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

4. ____________________________________________________________________________
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   ____________________________________________________________________________

5. ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

Why do you think the criterion you circled is the most important?

_______________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________