

## LESSONS

# Call for Change: Editorial Cartoons

KQED Education

GRADES 6–12

## TYPE

MEDIA  
PERSUASIVE

This lesson from KQED Education asks students to choose an issue they care about and create an editorial cartoon advocating for change on a local, national, or global level.

## SESSION 1 : INTRODUCE THE PROJECT

### YOU WILL NEED

- Slides: [Call for Change Project Roadmap](#)
- Slides: [Media by or about youth advocates](#)
- Handout: [Call for Change Editorial Cartoons: Student Project Checklist](#)
- Handout: [Call for Change Editorial Cartoons Single-Point Rubric](#)

### BEFORE YOU START

1. Review KQED’s Submission Requirements to submit student work.
- Submission requirements: [Step-by-step instructions](#)
  - Editorial cartoon file requirements:
    - Image(s) (10MB or less)
    - File formats: jpg, png, pdf
    - Thumbnail image to display on showcase (2MB or less)
    - Title, brief project description and short producer’s statement

1. Optional, but recommended: Plan to make your own Call for Change project as a model. Going through the steps from start to finish is invaluable for guiding students. Peer mentor texts are also key, but there you only have the finished product. You'll be able to model the brainstorm, drafting and production process, and use your own model to practice KQED's peer feedback protocol (or any protocol you use).

### ***Educator Note: Media Making in a Classroom Setting***

*Before you begin, confirm which digital platforms/tools students can choose from to draft their cartoon in STEP 4. You don't need to be an expert media producer or artist to help students get started creating. In STEP 4, you'll find slides to introduce the basics of Adobe Express and Canva—and there's an entire internet out there of how-to videos and articles on these tools, and others. Your job is to set up students with the basics AND put a media workshop structure in place to help students stay on track.*

*If your students are new to making media, or if you don't yet have a workshop structure in place, we recommend KQED's media workshop guidelines:*

#### **1. Establish or reinforce classroom norms and routines for when students are making media in your classroom.**

- • Make sure they know how to charge their device and access headphones or other equipment they need.
- Show them how to seek help from how-to videos or classmates before asking you.
- Discuss openly that creativity can feel risky and weird. It's awkward to speak into a mic or try an art form you're not familiar with. Involve students in coming up with norms for supporting each other as they create. This is another place where your experience making a model will come in handy.

**2. Get students signed on to the digital production tool**, if you're using one. Make sure they all have access and know how to log in. Do this whether you are all using the same tool or giving them a choice of tools. *This is a great time to practice your media workshop norms and routines!*

Some tools like Soundtrap and WeVideo let you create class groups. We recommend each class period be its own group with its own class code.

**3. Walk students through the very basics of the tool:**

- • How to start and save a new project
- How to download/turn in a finished project
- How to record a script into the tool, if relevant
- How to add music, images and sound effects by uploading them OR by using the built-in library, if relevant
- Reinforce what they can do if they run into tech issues (ex: how-to videos or ask a peer before asking you)

**4. For audio and video projects: decide where students will record.** One of the biggest challenges with audio and video production in a classroom is finding quiet spaces to record scripts. Perhaps an even bigger challenge is getting middle and high schoolers to record where their friends can see or hear them. Here are suggestions from educators who have solved this issue: Students leave the room individually or in pairs to record in the hallway or a nearby empty classroom. Others record at home. Reserve the library or theater space, if you have one, so students can spread out enough to record. Arrange for students who can't record at home to record during breaks, lunch or prep periods.

**5. Reinforce norms and routines every day you make media in class.**

## HOW TO BEGIN

**Why this project?** Young people are leading the way as advocates for change on a local, national and global level. **The genre of editorial cartoons combines personal experience and/or artistic interpretation with research-based evidence** to help young people connect with an audience beyond the classroom and share their ideas for how to make the world a better place.

**This project is about choice and voice. Students should choose an issue they care about and use that interest, curiosity or passion as the starting point for their Call for Change project.**

Before giving students the project checklist, share your commentary model and/or talk about why this project is a good fit for your class. These reasons may include:

- Empowering them with the research and media-creation skills to articulate their views on important issues
- Supporting their participation in civic life by expressing their voices as members of a democratic society
- Encouraging them to publish their work, perhaps for the first time, to build a positive digital footprint or add to a portfolio of work
- Connecting class content and skills to issues in your local community or to youth-led movements nationally and globally.
- Building on other projects you've done or plan to do

In addition to your own model commentary, you can share examples of this project from [KQED's youth media showcase](#) or [media by or about youth advocates](#). Note that students will also analyze two youth mentor texts in Step 2. These first examples will instead provide students with an example of the finished product, and offer early inspiration for content ideas.

Next, distribute copies of the [Call for Change Editorial Cartoons: Student Project Checklist](#) that will serve as their road map to the project process, as well as links to key materials they'll use along the way.

Finally, review the [Call for Change Editorial Cartoons Single-Point Rubric](#) together, before you begin the project, so students know what success looks like from the start.

## SESSION 2 : ANALYZE

### YOU WILL NEED

- Slides: [What is persuasive commentary?](#)
- Graphic Organizer: [Analyze editorial cartoons graphic organizer](#)

Show students slides 1-4 in [What is persuasive commentary?](#) and work together to analyze peer-created Call for Change editorial cartoons. This guided activity is essential because it will show students what they'll be making and help them practice media analysis and listening skills.

**Approach the analysis phase the same way you usually do when asking students to read and understand course material.** We recommend analyzing at least one cartoon together as a class, then offering time for small group and/or independent practice. The graphic organizers above are simply guides for this process, though students should feel welcome to use the analysis methods they are most familiar with.

***Educator Note:** For a deeper look at the history of editorial cartooning in the United States before students make their own, check out [The Power of Art: the Watchdog Role of Editorial Cartoonists](#) from the News Literacy Project's Checkology site.*

If time allows, you may also introduce students to the life and career of Roz Chast, an editorial cartoonist for *The New Yorker*, with the 826 Digital lesson [Find Your Funny with Roz Chast](#).

## SESSION 3 : BRAINSTORM

### YOU WILL NEED

- Graphic Organizer: [Brainstorming and planning](#)
- Topic bank: [KQED's Above the Noise catalog on PBS LearningMedia](#)
- Video: [What Happens Inside a Cartoonist's Brain](#) by Mark Fiore (the finding your spark section ends at 4:00)

After analyzing mentor texts, students will be ready to brainstorm and choose their topic.

If students are unsure which issue to choose, check out [KQED's Above the Noise collection](#) on PBS LearningMedia, which unpacks current issues through the lens of data, historical context and multiple perspectives. All *Above the Noise* episodes come with a student view guide, glossary of Tier 2 vocabulary, and transcripts in English and Spanish.

Teachers have also referred students to [ProCon.org](#), [Pulitzer Center Issues](#), [Facing History and Ourselves: Current Events in the Classroom](#), or the [New York Times Learning Network](#) to help decide on an issue.

For editorial cartooning, students should decide on an issue using the resources above to find their spark. For Mark Fiore, who won the Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning in 2010 and 2018, his spark usually comes from a headline or phrase in an article or video about a news event or current issue. Once he finds that spark, he builds a cartoon around it.

Show the students [Fiore’s “Cartooning in Place” video](#) about how he finds his spark. Then, guide students to discover their spark by viewing or reading about their chosen issue.

***Educator Note:** At the brainstorming stage, students should look at headlines, photographs, news articles, or videos, but **not** other editorial cartoons, so they can find an original spark related to their chosen issue.*

## SESSION 4 : CREATE A DRAFT

### YOU WILL NEED

- Graphic Organizer: [Draft your cartoon](#)
- Video: [Drawing Games to Jump-Start Your Imagination](#)
- Video: [Drawing Political Caricatures](#)
- Video: [How to Age a Smiley Face](#)

### Media making tools:

- [KQED’s tool help library](#)
- Slides: [Adobe Express how-to basics](#)

Slides: [Canva how-to basics](#)

Editorial cartooning has a long history in the United States and draws on a rich visual and symbolic vocabulary to communicate complex ideas in a creative, accessible way. Remind students of the visual symbols they analyzed earlier and encourage them to think about how to communicate that message symbolically and not solely through literal or representational drawing. If they can’t accurately draw the governor or mayor, for example, they can use more abstract symbols to communicate their views on the issue in question.

Just as cartoonists use digital tools to draft and refine their work, students may opt to use digital tools like Canva or Adobe Express to create their cartoon, after they complete the quick sketch in the graphic organizer. Remind students that no matter how they draft their piece, they should focus on incorporating symbolism into their cartoon.

## **SESSION 5 : REVISE AND EDIT**

### **YOU WILL NEED**

- Graphic Organizer: [Cartooning peer feedback form](#)

First, students will participate in providing peer feedback.

Remind students that feedback is an essential part of the creation process for students, as well as professional filmmakers, podcasters and cartoonists. If giving peer feedback is already part of your classroom routine, use whatever format students are used to. KQED's feedback protocol helps students support each other and reflect on the feedback once they receive it.

Once students have completed the peer feedback process, encourage students to immediately revise and edit their work while the feedback is fresh on their minds.

## **SESSION 6 : PUBLISH AND CELEBRATE!**

### **YOU WILL NEED**

- Slides: [Submitting to the Showcase](#)



## BEFORE YOU START

There are so many ways to publish, share, and celebrate your students' incredible work and efforts! You'll find directions and tips for submitting to KQED Education below, but you may also consider:

- A Gallery Walk
- Publishing select cartoons in your school's newspaper, literary magazine, or other student produced outlets
- Displaying cartoons in your classroom and/or hallway

We strongly encourage your students to submit their work to KQED Education, where all student submissions will be published on their Youth Media Showcase! This is an exciting opportunity for students to get their work published, share their voice with an authentic audience beyond your classroom, and add to their digital portfolio.

***Educator Note:** If you choose to direct students to submit to the KQED Education Student Showcase, we strongly recommend going through the submission process yourself first (without submitting) to better understand the requirements and process, as students will experience it.*

Display KQED Education's [Submitting to the Showcase](#) slides.

In KQED's Student Showcase, student work is published as it is submitted. We recommend reserving most or all of a class period to publish and celebrate! Many teachers put the showcase site on a screen where students can see and appreciate each submission as it appears at the top of the feed!

To submit to KQED Education, begin by reviewing their [submission requirements](#) for educators below. Students should complete the submission form template so they (and you!) have everything they need to publish.

*Educator Note: Student creators retain the rights to the media they publish on the Youth Media Showcase. A teacher, student or parent can request a piece be removed from the Showcase at any time by emailing [ymc@kqed.org](mailto:ymc@kqed.org).*

### **Publish on KQED’s Youth Media Showcase!**

1. **1. Create an account on the Youth Media site and get a submission code.** Students do not create accounts. Your code allows students to submit their work (recommended), or you can submit on behalf of students.
  2. **Students should complete a graphics submission form template before submitting,** so that they have everything ready to go. The submission code is a key part of the submission template. Here are [student-facing slides](#) all about submitting. We suggest pre-filling your code for students. ([Citation guidelines](#))
  3. **Make sure sharing permissions are open.** If using a Google Drive link, go over how to open permissions to “everyone can view.” If submitting using YouTube or Soundcloud, submissions should be “public” or “unlisted,” not private. *Student work will not be visible on the showcase if it is published without permissions.*
- **Celebrate and share widely!** Each student submission will have a unique URL, which students can then share with family, school and the wider community.

**The KQED Education Showcase is only the first step.** After you submit, each student submission has a unique URL that can be shared with:

- Families and the school community
- Community or nonprofit organizations connected to the issue
- Other publishing opportunities for young creators (youth film festivals, district events, other contests or challenges)

- Individual elected officials and stakeholders connected to the issue
- City council, school board or associated committees
- NGOs, governmental departments, universities and research institutions

If you are doing an Action Civics project, your students' media pieces can be part of a wider campaign.

Please share other ideas for where students can make their voices heard by email us at [ymc@kqed.org](mailto:ymc@kqed.org)