

Describing and analyzing cartoons

1 A political cartoon about the British monarchy

Step 1 – Brainstorming

Look at the cartoon below. What do you think of when you see it? Write down your ideas in keywords.



Step 2 – The elements of cartoon analysis

- a) Read the information in the Tip box below before you go on to b).
Make sure you understand the all expressions used.

TIP

Analyzing cartoons

- A cartoon is a special kind of visual text. It usually combines a drawing with a text. Cartoons often pick on one current news event and criticize people, institutions or developments in society and politics by making fun of them.
The following devices are often used to achieve this aim:
exaggeration • irony • contrast between picture and text • symbols
- In analyzing a cartoon, you should consider its context (e.g. when it was drawn, where it first appeared, who the author and the target group are) before you talk about what is being criticized. Sometimes, however, you won't always have all the information you need and may have to do further research.

b) Now answer the following questions in keywords or short sentences. The answers will help you to give structure to the writing work you do in Step 3.

1. Who is being shown? (For further information, see the information box below.)
2. What is he celebrating?
3. What kind of mood is the person in? Why?
4. Which elements does the cartoonist use to make the cartoon funny?
5. What is the cartoonist's intention?
6. Do you like the cartoon? Give reasons.

Step 3 – Write a cartoon analysis

With the help of the information in the Tip box on page 1, write a short analysis of the Prince Charles cartoon, in full sentences.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Prince Charles – his full name is Charles Philip Arthur George Mountbatten-Windsor – is the oldest son of Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
- He was born on 14 November 1948. In 1958, he became Prince of Wales, which is the official title of the heir to the British throne.
- Since then, he has been waiting to do the one thing he was born to do: become king. But his mother has stated several times that being monarch is a “job for life”; she will be queen until she dies. That could mean that Charles still has many more years to wait: His mother is in her 80s and in perfect health, and *her* mother lived to be 101! So Charles may not be able to do his ‘job’ until he is in his 70s or even 80s.



2 Internet task: More cartoons about the British royal family

The British ‘Royals’ have been the subject of countless cartoons.

Look for cartoons you think are funny on one of the following subjects:

- Queen Elizabeth II
- Charles's first wife
- Charles's second wife
- the royal family in general

TIP

Looking for cartoons

- There are many websites specializing in cartoons that you can search for by category.
- Also, major British newspapers and magazines can be a good source of cartoons.

Then, pick your favourite one, and analyze it in a short text as you did above.

Lösungen

1

Step 1

Lösungsvorschläge:

Prince Charles – celebrating sth (champagne, cake); half funny, half sad (is he laughing? is he crying?; he looks a bit silly (crown on his head)

Step 2 b)

1. Prince Charles
2. He is celebrating his mother's 80th birthday ('eight decades' – 'Happy Birthday' – 'Mummys')
3. *Lösungsvorschläge:*
 - It looks like a party atmosphere (cake, champagne) at first, but there's no real smile on Charles's face, and he's crying.
 - Every year his mother is on the throne, it's another year Charles *isn't* on the throne. And he isn't young himself; no wonder he isn't happy about celebrating his mum's 80th birthday.
4. *Lösungsvorschläge:*
 - cheap-looking (paper?) crown on head; not a real gold crown → makes Charles look silly
 - exaggerated facial features (huge ears, huge head)
 - the huge head on a little body makes Charles look like a (silly) child
5. It might have been the cartoonist's intention to make Charles look like a big baby / somebody who has never grown up (or had the chance to grow up) and has never been able to do the job he was born to do.
6. *Individuelle Antworten*

Step 3

Lösungsvorschlag:

The cartoon, created by Roy Peterson and published on the Internet, shows Prince Charles celebrating the 80th birthday of his mother, Queen Elisabeth II. Prince Charles, dressed in a black suit and tie, and a cheap-looking crown on his head, is holding a huge piece of cake in one hand and a glass of champagne and a fork (with some cake on it) in the other. At first glance the viewer might think the atmosphere is a happy, party atmosphere. But at second glance you see that Charles's smile is not a real smile, and that he is crying; it is clear that he is not happy. The cartoonist has given Charles extremely exaggerated facial features, which is in sharp contrast to a very small body. The result is that Charles looks like a big child/baby.

The message of the cartoon seems to be that Prince Charles cannot really be happy about his mother's 80th birthday because he knows that for every further year his mother is the British monarch, it is a further year that he himself is *not* monarch. It has been frustrating to wait for so many years, and Charles may have to wait many more years to be able to do the job he was born to do. For now, he continues to be 'king in waiting'.