

INTERPRETING POLITICAL CARTOONS



Activity 1

FRANKLIN'S ALBANY PLAN OF UNION AND THE FIRST POLITICAL CARTOON

Benjamin Franklin drew the cartoon below, and it is believed to be the first cartoon published in the United States. He published it in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* on May 9, 1754, just before delegates of the colonists met at the Albany Congress. Franklin hoped it would generate support for his Plan of Union. Franklin's cartoon was later used on flags and posters to support collaborations against British taxation of the colonies under the Stamp Act (1765) and to support revolution (1776).

DIRECTIONS: Study the cartoon below, and then answer the questions that follow.



Library of Congress

(continued)

ANALYZING THE CARTOON ACTIVITY 1 (continued)

1. Notice the letters next to each piece of the snake. What do these letters stand for?

2. Why does the snake have 8 pieces, and not 13?

3. Which of the following slogans best reflects the general theme of Franklin's cartoon? Circle your response.
 - a. In unity there is strength.
 - b. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
 - c. Too many cooks spoil the broth.
4. What message was Franklin's cartoon delivering to the delegates at the Albany Congress?

CRITICAL THINKING

5. **Drawing Conclusions** Is Franklin's message still relevant for political life today? Support your answer with specific references.

6. **Expressing Problems Clearly** When Franklin drew this cartoon, many people mistakenly believed that if a snake were cut into pieces, the pieces could weave themselves back together. Knowing that this is incorrect, write a new caption for the cartoon to replace "Join, or Die." Explain the meaning of your new caption.

7. **Synthesizing Information** If Franklin were alive today, what symbols would he use to send the same message of unity to Americans? Make a list of possible symbols. Compare your list with those of other students in your class. Which symbols appear most frequently? Take a class vote on which symbols best represent the message of American unity.

