

Caricature

Definition of Caricature

Caricature is a device used in descriptive writing and visual arts, in which particular aspects of a subject are exaggerated, to create a silly or comic effect. In other words, it can be defined as a plastic illustration, derisive drawing, or a portrayal based on [exaggeration](#) of the natural features, which gives a humorous touch to the subject.

During the 16th century, numerous painters (Holbein, Bruegel, and Bosch, for example) used particular aspects of caricature in their work. However, it did not involve anything comic until the 17th century. Later, in the 18th century, Carracci introduced caricature in a witty way in his works. Caricatures started gaining popularity in England when artists like Hogarth, Rowlandson, and Gillray followed Carracci's footsteps. The [genre](#) slowly developed to accommodate social and political [satire](#) as well.

Examples of Caricature in Literature

Example #1: *Ethnic Distinctions, No Longer So Distinctive* (By Matt Bai, New York Times, June 29, 2010)

Several authors have written about how President Obama is unpredictable. A piece of writing was published in *The New York Times* that shed light on this particular subject by highlighting how people have exaggerated certain aspects of the President's personality. Following is an excerpt from the same paper by Matt Bai:

“Over the course of the last several weeks, commentators have taken to portraying Mr. Obama as clinical and insufficiently emotive, which is really just another way of saying the president is not really knowable. It is a caricature his opponents can exploit

in part because a lot of voters remain murky on his cultural identity.”

Caricature arises from the forcing and the embellishment of the basic rule of good description, that is, the principle of the dominant impression.

Example #2: *Bleak House* (By Charles Dickens)

One of the great examples of caricature from Charles Dickens has been given below:

“Mr. Chadband is a large yellow man, with a fat smile, and a general appearance of having a good deal of train oil in his system. Mrs. Chadband is a stern, severe-looking, silent woman. Mr. Chadband moves softly and cumbrously, not unlike a bear who has been taught to walk upright. He is very much embarrassed about the arms, as if they were inconvenient to him.”

It is beautiful example of caricaturing through words. The dominating impression is made by words like “oily” and “fat,” which sound quite literal initially. However, you realize shortly that the literal oiliness is a representation of the [character](#) Chadband. Chadband has a ‘fat’ smile, and on the whole he appears to be slightly unctuous, like a phony preacher.

Function of Caricature

The caricature examples above have underscored the functions and role of caricature, and how it has evolved in modern day literature. Coming up with novel ideas to explain oneself, and the nature of the human race in general, is not something new to the world. This sort of representation has been witnessed since the time when men lived in caves.

Caricature was introduced to the masses during the age of enlightenment, and it bestowed the age it belongs to, with its subtlety and critical [attitude](#). As a branch of modernism, it played a great role in expressing facts that were suppressed because of the conformists in the society at that point in

than the pen, and it started being used as a visual expression of conventional society.

Nowadays, caricature is a highly dignified form of art that is approved of and used worldwide. Newspaper editors show great respect for the artists who create caricatures for their papers, which oftentimes publish caricatures that might even represent a conflicting ideology. Where this distinctive form of art can be used to portray important and transforming social and political ideas, it can also be provocative to certain groups. Underdeveloped countries have had a hard time warming up to this form of expression because they believe it is a creation of evil by governments.