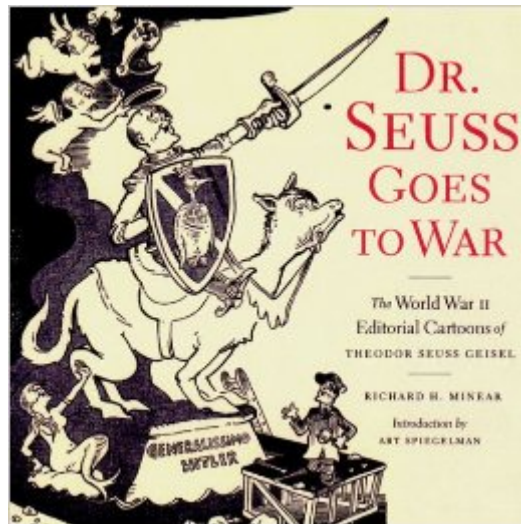


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Dr. Seuss Goes To War: The World War II Editorial Cartoons Of Theodor Seuss Geisel



Synopsis

A treasure trove of World War II-era political cartoons by the creator of The Cat in the Hat. For decades, readers throughout the world have enjoyed the wonderful stories and illustrations of Theodor Seuss Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss. But few know Geisel's work as a political cartoonist for the New York daily newspaper PM during World War II. In these trenchant cartoons, Geisel captured the Zeitgeist--especially the attitudes of the New Deal liberals who read PM--with signature Seussian flair. Dr. Seuss Goes to War features handsome, large-format reproductions of almost 200 of the best of Geisel's cartoons from this time. The cartoons savage Hitler, Japan, Stalin, Mussolini, and "isolationist" leaders such as Charles Lindbergh. They exhort readers to give full support to the war effort, put up with shortages, buy U. S. savings bonds, and help control inflation. They are sharply critical of anti-Semitism and anti-black racism--and, shockingly, undeniably racist in their portrayal of Japanese Americans. An introduction and commentary by Richard H. Minear, historian of the era and author of Victors' Justice, place them in context and illuminate the national climate they reflect. Lovers of Dr. Seuss will take renewed delight in his whimsical and imaginative illustrations even as they may be disturbed by the attitudes reflected in some of his work. Those for whom World War II is an abiding passion will find a brand-new look at the war and American involvement. And those concerned with American attitudes--particularly in the press--will find that Dr. Seuss's cartoons of 1941 and 1942 bring back to life the mood and the issues of the day.

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Customer Reviews

I was quite surprised when I discovered this book of over 200 (out of 400 he drew) political cartoons by Dr. Seuss (who became a Doctor only by honorary degree years later, even though he called himself Dr. Seuss at this time). I did not realize that he had been a major producer of propaganda in favor of intervention in World War II and later in favor of winning the war. What is even more surprising is to look at the cartoons and see familiar-looking fish, cats and turtles who show up in all of the most beloved children's stories by Dr. Seuss. Clearly, World War II was essential training for the pro-community, pro-progressiveness stories that three generations have now grown up with. Dr. Seuss was so enraged by Italian pro-fascist propaganda that he sought a role in political cartooning with P.M., a New Deal liberal daily newspaper in New York. The newspaper did not carry advertising, and cost much more than other papers. As a result, it had a daily circulation of only 150,000. After two years, he volunteered for the service at age 38 and took a job in the Army signal corps creating propaganda movies (some of which won him Oscars). Most of these cartoons would be ones that anyone would be proud to have drawn, for both their humor and the targeting of those who favored dictatorships and complacency about fascism. On the other hand, Dr. Seuss did a few that are certainly racist (although generally he was antiracist, opposing the ill treatment of blacks and Jews). The focus of his racism were Japanese (lots of slanted-eyes drawings of evil plotting) and Japanese-Americans (one cartoon shows Japanese-Americans picking up explosives after Pearl Harbor). The book is also interesting for capturing the debates of those years in a fresh and visual way.

Dr. Seuss Goes to War is a fascinating look at the political cartoons of Theodor Geisel, (Dr. Seuss). Seuss was hired to draw political cartoons for the New York newspaper PM in 1941 and remained through 1943. Seuss had already published his first children's book, *To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* in 1937 but his other children's works were not created until after WWII. Two hundred of those roughly four hundred cartoons have found their way into *Dr. Seuss Goes to War*. Because these cartoons were drawn on a daily basis and reflected contemporary events they provide the reader with a fascinating window through which one can view life in America and the World during the war years. The book begins with a brief introduction by Art Spiegelman, the Pulitzer Prize winning author/illustrator of *Maus*. Spiegelman notes the eerie resemblance between the figures and animals drawn by Seuss and his later creations such as the Cat in the Hat, Myrtle the Turtle, and Horton. The cartoons themselves are divided into sections by topic, (the Home Front, Hitler & Nazi Germany, the Rest of the World, etc.). Each section contains a very well written and thoughtful preface by historian Richard Minear. These explanatory sections are quite helpful in

putting the cartoons into the context of the day and providing critical information about some of the then well known figures of the day (Father Coughlin, Pierre Laval and others) that may be unfamiliar to contemporary readers. Minear's commentary is particularly useful because it contains links between the information he provides by reference to the specific page number of a cartoon. The reader's enjoyment and understanding of the cartoon is enhanced by this treatment.

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