

Lesson Plan for Grade 6 -8

First Call: American Posters of World War I

MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History

ESSENTIAL QUESTION: Can the government's use of propaganda persuade and influence a person's sense of community, patriotism, and role in society?

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

STANDARD RELEVANCE: A propaganda poster is a cultural document – a primary source – that can be “read” and analyzed by students. Through analysis of World War I propaganda poster context, students garner a deeper understanding of the domestic and global historical significance of the war, as well as the impact war has on cultural and social trends.

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will analyze the relationship between wartime propaganda poster art and its influence on a citizen's sense of community, patriotism, and role in society.
- Students will be able to recognize a variety of U.S. government propaganda.
- Students will be able to evaluate the role of propaganda during World War I.
- Students will be able to compare propaganda art and analyze its development over time, commenting on the visual context used within the art.
- Students will be able to evaluate primary sources and develop persuasive arguments based on evaluations of the documents.
- Students will be able to evaluate if poster propaganda is an accurate depiction of World War I conditions and events.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

1. What is the definition of propaganda?
2. What are different forms of propaganda that have been used in history or still being used today?
3. What is a primary source?
4. How does the government use various forms of propaganda to influence people? What emotions does propaganda evoke?

KEY TERMS:

- Propaganda – a form of communication that is aimed at influencing the attitude or a community, a person, or a country toward some cause of position
- Persuade – to succeed in causing (a person) to act in a certain way; to argue into, bring around, to talk into, to cause another to believe or feel sure about something; to win someone over
- Primary source – a document or physical object that was written or created during the time under study
- Secondary source – information created by someone who did not experience first-hand or participate in the events
- Imagery – the use of vivid or evocative images or language to represent objects, ideas, or actions

LESSON OVERVIEW:

Students will learn how to recognize the various elements of propaganda art and how it has been used periodically throughout history to influence citizens' sense of community, morality, patriotism, etc. Students will review key terms and definitions important to the lesson. The students will also have had some introduction to World War I. During the lesson students will use World War I propaganda posters to analyze emotional responses that are evoked from the art developed during this time. Students will work in groups to analyze posters and determine their effectiveness as a means of communication. Students will be allowed to create their own versions of propaganda art. By the end of the lesson students will be able to evaluate the role of propaganda and its value to the government and its citizens.

TIME FRAME: 2 class periods (30-45 minutes)

MATERIALS:

- Digital images of original war posters from MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History
- Copies of additional war posters online – these are available through the Library of Congress and the MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History. (<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/wwipos> , www.arkmilitaryhistory.com click on the “Learn” link and then on “Lesson Plans”)
- Copy of First Call Poster Analysis Worksheet created by the MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History, available at www.arkmilitaryhistory.com click on the “Learn” link and then on “Lesson Plans.”

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Throughout U. S. history, our government, especially during times of upheaval and conflict (war, military action, etc) has used one tool to incite the community and its citizens to bond together – propaganda. The use of posters, movies, words, pictures, and songs are common tools used by our government to rally support for a specific cause or war. Especially during World War I, the use of colorful and dramatic wartime posters was one way to create patriotic support on the home front while soldiers waged a battle on the frontlines. The following videos provide an overview of the conflict: World War I in 6 Minutes <http://youtu.be/-3UjJ5kxiLI> and Causes of World War I http://youtu.be/qc8A_8gUc3Y.

OPENING:

- The teacher will introduce the topic of wartime propaganda. The teacher will let students know they will be using primary sources to accomplish the task of analyzing history with wartime propaganda posters.
- The teachers will ask students questions pertaining to what items or materials do they see today that would persuade them to buy, join something, or go somewhere. (Example, TV Ads, billboards, Web pages etc.).
- The teachers will ask students: What is a Primary Source? It is important students understand 1) what a primary source is and 2) know that a primary source is important to understanding the viewpoints of the people and citizens during the time events occurred. Have students give you examples of primary sources. List them on the board and compare them to secondary sources.

- The teachers will ask students how they define propaganda. Many of them might give examples of propaganda such as movies, posters, pamphlets, and speeches. Explain propaganda can come in any form and can be very influential.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Have the students break into groups of 3-4. During this time pass out the poster analysis worksheet to each group which will help them analyze the posters as well as help the students in the group discussion, and their assignment. After the students have their worksheets, assign each group one poster, ensuring that a poster from each of the following categories is represented in a group: fundraising, recruiting, the Red Cross, conservation, and war work campaign. Allow the students 10 minutes to finish the analysis worksheets. If time allows, allow each group to present its information.
2. As a class, discuss the following questions:
 - What are the similarities between the posters?
 - Who do you think is the intended audience for the posters?
 - Do these posters inspire any emotions within you? Do they evoke different emotions in other members in your group?
 - What symbols, if any do you see in the poster? What do they represent?
 - Would the poster be persuasive? Why or why not?
3. Each student could design his or her own propaganda poster to persuade people to be a part of a cause. Along with the poster the student will write a paragraph outlining the purpose of the poster. Students could present their information in the next class period.

CONCLUSION:

Before the conclusion of the day, review what exactly propaganda is and how it can influence a citizen to participate in the government process. Discuss how the students used the primary documents to learn about the different eras in history and how the propaganda posters can evoke emotional responses that would inspire people to become a part of the military, buy war bonds, or even give blood. Discuss how propaganda can influence people today. Finally, do these propaganda depictions mirror reality?

Each student could design his or her own propaganda poster to persuade people to be a part of a cause. Along with the poster the student will write a paragraph outlining the purpose of the poster. Students could present their information in the next class period.

REFERENCES:

- Doob, L. (1935) *Propaganda: Its Psychology and Technique*. New York: Henry and Holt Company.
- Hummel, W. Huntress, K. (1949) *The Analysis of Propaganda*. New York: William Sloane Associates.
- Lee, A. (1952) *How to Understand Propaganda*. New York: Rinehart and Company.
- Thum, G. (1972) *The Persuaders: Propaganda in War and Peace*. New York: Atheneum.

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