

Analyzing Propaganda Posters Lesson Plan

Description: In this lesson, students learn to analyze some basic propaganda techniques. Students will look at the way images and words are combined to create effective propaganda messages. Students will demonstrate their understanding of this by creating their own First World War propaganda poster.

Recommended Grade Range

All provinces and territories except Quebec: Grades 7-9

Quebec: Secondary 1 to 3

Prerequisites: This lesson should follow previous discussions and lessons on the First World War.

Objectives:

Students will:

- develop an understanding of basic propaganda techniques;
- learn how propaganda was used in Canada during the First World War;
- learn to use visual and textual techniques to convey messages by creating their own First World War propaganda poster.

Estimated Time: 3-4 class periods

Materials Required:

- Overhead transparency of two Canadian posters from the resources section (if you have access to the required technology, project the image directly from the web site), or copies of the posters to hand out to students (preferably in colour), downloaded from the resources section;
- Projector (if not using copies);
- Plain sheets of paper;
- Pencil crayons, coloured markers, paint – anything that will help students design a great poster.

Lesson:

Write the word “propaganda” on the board. Ask students to define the word for you. Either combine student suggestions into a working definition, or provide them with a pre-existing definition.

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Propaganda is the organized dissemination of information to influence thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and actions.

Show students one of the posters you have selected from the Web site. Briefly describe the poster by telling the class

- the overall message of the poster (what it wants the public to do);
- any emotions the poster plays upon;
- the effect that the poster would likely have on people at the time.

Ask students to help you with a more detailed analysis of the poster, providing guidance if necessary, by asking them to describe how the overall message is conveyed by the

- symbols and images;
- words;
- arrangement of the images and words;
- colours of the poster.

Repeat this process again on the second poster you have chosen, this time encouraging students to explain all aspects of the poster, including the overall message, the emotions played upon, etc. Again, provide guidance if necessary.

Once you feel that students are comfortable with the concepts, explain that they will be making their own First World War posters. You may wish to provide them with a list of potential topics (recruitment, victory bonds, food rationing, etc.), or have them select their own. Remind students that their poster should have a clear message, and that all aspects of the poster should contribute to that message. You may wish to have students conduct a bit of research on their topic so that they understand it in some detail, and can make their poster as historically accurate as possible.

Once students have completed their posters, display them around the classroom. Have students vote on which posters they find the most effective and why.

Assessment:

Assess the posters based on how well the students have incorporated the concepts discussed in class. Images, colours and words should all work together to clearly convey a message. Posters should be as historically accurate as possible.

Extension Activities:

- Have students make propaganda posters about contemporary issues such as drinking



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- and driving, smoking, or environmental concerns.
- Ask students to consider where they see material that they would consider propaganda in their daily lives. Ask students to bring examples to class for discussion and analysis.