

## World War II Propaganda

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b48820/>

### Overview/Prior Knowledge

In this lesson, we will examine some of the propaganda posters used during WWII aimed at gaining American support for the war efforts. The students have already extensively studied WWII – the causes, major battles and leaders, and the effects. The students have also been exposed to several of these posters during their visit the WWII Museum in New Orleans. In this lesson, we will examine propaganda posters and discuss the meaning of them, as well as the propaganda techniques that were used to gain support for war efforts.

### Objectives

- TSW explain the propaganda techniques used in several WWII posters.
- TSW identify the various ways that the government promoted certain behaviors on the home front to support the war effort.

### Time Required

2 class periods (1 hour each)

### Recommended Grade Range

5<sup>th</sup> grade (gifted students)

### Subject/Sub-Subject

History/Language Arts

### Standards

#### *Social Studies*

- **US History: 1877-present - 7:** WWII at home: Examine the nation's role in World War II and the impacts on domestic affairs. (Strands: Civics, Civil Rights, Geography, History, Economics)

- 6. Describe the mobilization of various industries to meet war needs.
- 8. Trace the way in which the US government took control of the economy through rationing, price controls, limitations on labor unions, the sale of bonds and wage controls.
- 9. Identify ways in which the roles of women and minorities changed during the war.

### **English Language Arts – CCSS**

- RI.6.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.
- RI.6.6 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

### **Library of Congress - Teaching with Primary Sources Skills:**

- Identify details when observing a primary source
- Ask questions related to observations and the topic of a primary source
- Speculate about who created a primary source, when, and for what purpose
- Articulate ideas or beliefs formed by observing primary sources

### **Highlighted Strategies:**

- The Explanation Game – Making Thinking Visible

### **Credits**

Carrie McMillen, Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District

### **Materials**

- Primary Sources – See Resource Guide at the end of this document.
- Recording Handout – See handout at the end of this document.
- Tablets
- Pencils
- Paper
- Colored pencils, markers, crayons

### **Procedures**

*Context – This lesson was taught after the class visited the WWII Museum in New Orleans*

### **Introduction**

- The teacher will begin by asking the students, “Did everyone in the USA want to go to war when we declared war on Japan?” The class will discuss some of the exhibits that they saw in the museum that showed a poll of how many Americans wanted to go to war at different points during the early 1940’s.
- The class will also discuss reasons that people may have wanted to or not wanted to go to war.

- Then, the students will look at a picture of the Uncle Sam poster that states “I want you for the US Army.”
- While looking at that poster, the teacher will introduce and explain the Explanation Game strategy.
  - The students will first “Name It” by saying what they observe in the picture/poster. To do this, the teacher will list different things the students see on the poster as an observation – not an inference. If the students do not list things like the patriotic colors, bold writing, etc., the teacher will draw their attention to those things.
  - After the class has “Named It,” they “Explain It” by asking questions such as “Why do you think that feature is there?” “What purpose could it serve?” The teacher will encourage the students to come up with as many various explanations as possible. In this step, the students will be making inferences rather than observations.
  - Then, the students will “Give Reasons.” The teacher will encourage the students to draw on their prior knowledge for this step. This will answer the questions, “Why do you say that?” “Why do you think it is this way?” or “What is the purpose or goal?”
  - Finally, the teacher will encourage the students to “Generate Alternatives.” In this step, the teacher will ask the students to think about other possibilities of what the image could be or what it could represent.
  - Then, the class will discuss this Uncle Sam poster together and the reasons that this poster was created.

### **During**

- After the students have gone through the Explanation Game process with the Uncle Sam poster, the teacher will tell the students that they are going to go through this process with several other posters that were used during WWII. The teacher will remind the students to first name things they see, explain what those features may mean, give reasons why they think this, and then finally think of any alternatives.
- The teacher will have the other posters pulled up on tablets placed around the room. The students will work in partner groups as they look at each poster. The students will have about 12 minutes at each station to examine each poster, completing the Explanation Game at each station. Instead of the teacher writing down things the students say, the students must be responsible for keeping track of their observations, inferences, reasons, and alternatives.
- The teacher will use a timer to keep the students focused as they look at each poster, reminding students of the amount of time they have left.
- (2<sup>nd</sup> day) After the students are done examining all of the posters, they will work with their partners to determine what they think the main idea or purpose of each poster was.
- Then the class will discuss their ideas together. The class will go through each poster, discussing the features they named and the explanations they gave for each. After students have shared their ideas for a particular poster, the teacher will explain the actual background of the poster.
- The class will discuss which aspects of the posters seemed like they would be the most effective and explain their reasoning. The class will also discuss the idea that these posters were types of propaganda aimed at getting people to support war efforts. The class will explain some of the

propaganda techniques used in the posters, such as appealing to emotions (such as fear or guilt).

## Assessment

**Formative:** The teacher will monitor what the students are writing on their recording sheet as they go from station to station. The teacher will make sure the students are naming (making observations), explaining (making inferences), and giving reasons.

**Summative:** The students will have a choice to either to create their own WWII poster promoting a behavior desired by the government to support war efforts using some of the techniques that we discussed or write an essay about 3 of the posters explaining the propaganda techniques used and the effectiveness of that poster.

## Differentiation

- The students will be purposefully placed in partner groups that will ensure success.
- The students will also have a choice of whether to write an essay or draw a poster for the final assessment.

## Supplementary Materials

- The National World War II Museum: <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/>
- The Digital Collections of The National WWII Museum: <https://www.ww2online.org/>

## Teaching with Primary Sources Resource Guide

**Title:** World War II Propaganda

### Historical Background:

Many posters were created during war time urging people to join the war effort in many different ways. Some posters encouraged people to actually join the military to fight the war, and some posters were more focused on the home front and how people at home could help. Ways people could help from home included conserving materials, helping in factories to produce items for the war, and rationing food at home. Our students have a good amount of background knowledge of things that happened within the war, but this will be the first time we have really focused on how the war affected the people who were at home in the U.S. The students visited the National WWII museum and were greatly impacted by the exhibit “War Affects Every Home” where they saw some things like a ration cookbook. That knowledge will be helpful as they look at these posters.

### Primary Source 1:

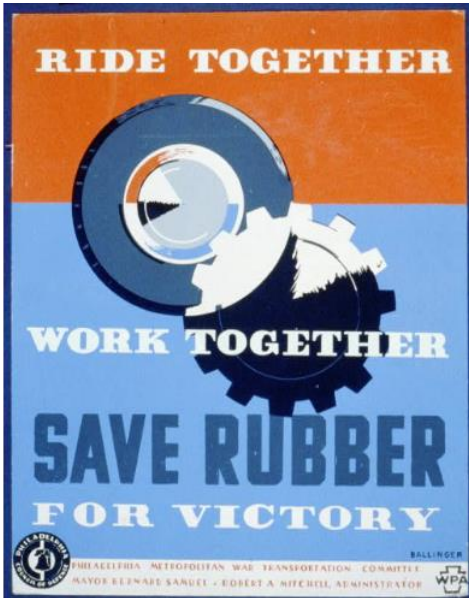


Title: “I Want You” Poster

Link: <https://amhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/collection/object.asp?ID=548>

Purpose: This poster will be used to model the Explanation Game Strategy. It will also be used to discuss the purposes of propaganda.

**Primary Source 2:**



Title: Ride together, Work together, Save Rubber for Victory - poster

Link: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b48820/>

Purpose: This poster will allow us to talk about the importance of carpooling during the war to save resources.

**Primary Source 3:**



Title: Lick the Platter Clean; Don't Waste Food

Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2002699813/>

Purpose: This poster will lead us into a discussion about how citizens were encouraged not to waste food because we need food/resources for the soldiers. We will also discuss rationing at this point.



**Primary Source 4:**



Title: United We Win

Link: [https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/united\\_we\\_win/images\\_html/united\\_we\\_win.html](https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/united_we_win/images_html/united_we_win.html)

Purpose: This poster will lead us into a discussion about comradery and working together. We will also discuss the American Flag and different emotions the students feels while studying the poster.

**Primary Source 5:**

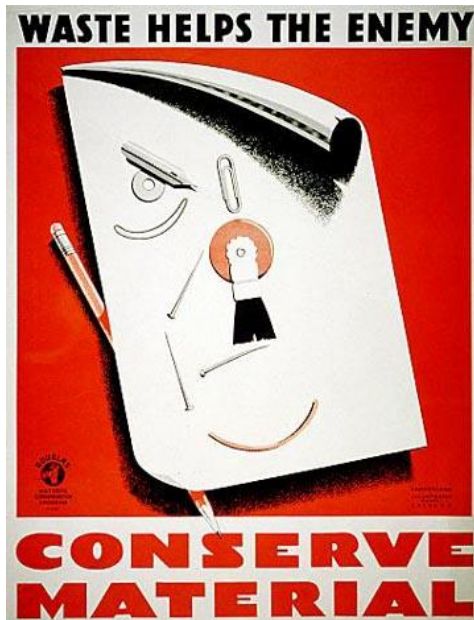


Title: Victory Waits on Your Fingers

Link: [https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/its\\_a\\_womans\\_war\\_too/images\\_html/victory\\_waits.html](https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/its_a_womans_war_too/images_html/victory_waits.html)

Purpose: This poster will allow us to discuss the impact that women had on the war efforts. The students will discuss the different jobs and expectations women had during wartime.

Primary Source 6:



Title: Waste Helps the Enemy, Conserve Material

Link: [https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/use\\_it\\_up/images\\_html/images/waste.jpg](https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/use_it_up/images_html/images/waste.jpg)

Purpose: The purpose of this poster is to show students a different perspective of propaganda. Students will explain what they think the images on the poster are depicting.

Primary Source 7:



Title: We Can Do It!

Link: [https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/its\\_a\\_womans\\_war\\_too/images\\_html/we\\_can\\_do\\_it.html](https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/its_a_womans_war_too/images_html/we_can_do_it.html)

Purpose: This poster will lead students into a discussion about women working on the war effort. It shows the strength that women have and their contributions to filling wartime positions.

*Content created and featured in partnership with the TPS program does not indicate an endorsement by the Library of Congress.*