

LESSON 5

Propaganda Today

Lesson Overview: Students apply the critical thinking skills they learned in their examination of Nazi propaganda to further their understanding of how social, political, economic, and historical factors may contribute to the propaganda messages they encounter today.

Learning Rationale: Entering into a discussion through the lens of history contextualizes the topic of propaganda and raises questions about the use and potential impact of new media and technologies. Students will discern the intent behind propaganda, think critically about the message, and discuss the potential consequences propaganda can bring about. The class will culminate with dialogue and debate about the best ways to respond when problematic propaganda threatens.

Time: One class period

Materials:

5.1 Homework Assignment

5.2 Blank Diagram Worksheet (Word Document)

Crime does not begin when you murder people The moment propaganda turns against another nation or against any human being, evil starts.

-- Hans Fritzsche, Nuremberg defendant, in an interview with an American psychiatrist with the International Military Tribunal, April 6, 1946

Procedure:

Pre-Class Homework:

Assignment: Students will identify an example of propaganda which they encounter inside or outside of school and email their example to the teacher for review and discussion in class the next day.

1) Distribute 5.2 Homework Activity and go over it with the class.

- **Requirements:**

- **Examples may be digital** (e.g., from Facebook feeds, websites, etc.) or students may use their phones to photograph examples from elsewhere in their environment (posters, graffiti, advertisements, t-shirts, billboards, etc.) Prompt students to look for propaganda in expected and unexpected places.
- **Examples can be positive or negative examples of propaganda.**

- **Examples must meet the Museum’s definition: *Propaganda is biased information spread to shape public opinion and behavior.***
- In order to complete the 5.2 Homework Assignment students will have to explain how their example meets the Museum’s definition of propaganda as ***biased information spread to shape public opinion and behavior.***
- Students should come to class the next day prepared to discuss where and when they encountered the example, and why it meets the Museum’s definition.

Before Class:

- 1) Identify examples for discussion the next day.** Select images which best illustrate diverse messages, contexts, creators, and audiences. Consider propaganda that falls into categories such as: political, policy/issue, positive/PSAs, American, international, propaganda targeting specific groups, government-sponsored propaganda, positive/negative, etc.
 - Plan on dividing your students up into small groups for discussion, and select propaganda examples to distribute to each group.
 - Assemble selected students’ propaganda examples into a slideshow presentation (e.g., PowerPoint, Keynote, Google Presentation, Prezi, SlideShare, etc.) to display as students report out from each group the next day. Embed (copy and paste) the propaganda images in the 5.3 Blank Diagram Worksheet to print and pass out to students.

In Class

Activity:

- 1) Divide students into small groups.**
- 2) In small groups, using the Analyzing Propaganda Worksheet, students will discuss their assigned propaganda example.** They will diagram the image and identify the message, contemplate the impact of context, consider the audience, creator, and potential consequences of the propaganda examples.
- 3) Prompt each group to list possible consequences that could result from the propaganda message they examine.**
 - Are these consequences problematic?
- 4) Have each group report back to the class about their example and findings.** Have a spokesperson from each group highlight visual cues that reveal the propaganda message, the contextual factors that might give the message power, the intended audience, and the creator’s intent.
- 5) After analysis of each propaganda example is shared, the group presents their list of possible consequences and asks the class to react, add consequences, or debate their list.**

Discussion:

- 1) After all groups have presented their propaganda examples, engage the class in discussion about the process of evaluating these examples and what types of propaganda they feel could be most problematic.**

Consider these question prompts:

- Which propaganda example do you think is most problematic and why?
 - Are certain categories of propaganda more problematic than others?
 - Do certain contexts yield potential for negative consequences?
 - Is propaganda truly deceptive, or could the audience seek more information with some effort to consider the propaganda message more thoughtfully?
 - How can different audiences interpret messages differently?
 - Why are debate, dialogue, and opportunities to access or voice alternative points of view important?
 - What happens when debate is eliminated? (Refer to the Nazi dictatorship to highlight the possible consequences of propaganda unchecked).
- 2) End with a conversation about ways to address problematic propaganda when it threatens** (e.g., ignore it, limit/ban it & punish/prosecute propagandists, expose and/or counter it with positive messages, etc.).
 - What can be accomplished through these actions?
 - What are the consequences of inaction?
 - 3) In the following class, students will examine case studies of young people who confronted hate speech or propaganda and how they did it.**

State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda

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DIRECTIONS:

Find a contemporary example of propaganda and email it to your teacher. Answer the following questions about your example.

Your example may be a positive or a negative example of propaganda. It may be benign or dangerous. But not everything is propaganda; your example must meet the Museum's definition:

Remember: Propaganda is biased information spread to shape public opinion and behavior.

1) BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- What is the medium of communication used (e.g., Web, Paper, Poster, TV, etc.)?
- Who created it? Is it associated with a particular individual or organization?
- Where & when did you encounter it / Where and when was it produced or disseminated?

2) CIRCLE THE PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUE(S) THAT IS BEST EXEMPLIFIED BY YOUR EXAMPLE?

- Advertises a cause
- Attacks opponents
- Plays on emotions
- Targets desired audience
- Uses truths, half-truths, or lies
- Omits information selectively
- Simplifies complex issues or ideas

3) WHY IS THIS PROPAGANDA?

- How your example illustrates the technique you've identified?
- What is its message?
- Who is the audience?
- How is it biased?
- How is it trying to influence public opinion or behavior?