



**STATE OF
DECEPTION**
**THE POWER OF
NAZI PROPAGANDA**

Redefining How We Teach Propaganda



LESSON 5

UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM ushmm.org

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.

LESSON 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 propaganda's potential consequences. The class will culminate with dialogue and debate about the best ways to respond to the threat of problematic propaganda.

TIME

One class period

MATERIALS

- 5.1 Homework Assignment
- 5.2 Diagram Worksheet

PROCEDURE

Pre-Class Homework:

Familiarize yourself with the Mind Over Media: Analyzing Contemporary Propaganda website, hosted by the Media Education Lab in the Department of Communication Studies at University of Rhode Island's Harrington School of Communication and Media (www.mindovermedia.tv). This is an educational website where people can share, discuss, and analyze examples of contemporary propaganda. Use the site to create a private, custom online gallery where students can share and analyze propaganda with you and their classmates. Distribute the custom URL to your students to upload their examples of propaganda and to rate and comment on other uploads in the classroom gallery.

Assignment: Students will identify an example of propaganda they encounter inside or outside of school and upload it to their teacher's classroom gallery in the Mind Over Media: Analyzing Contemporary Propaganda website for review and discussion in class the next day. [Alternately, if you are not using the Mind Over Media website, instruct students to e-mail their examples to the teacher.]

1. Distribute **5.1 Homework Assignment** 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 designed to shape public opinion and behavior.
- In order to complete **5.1 Homework Assignment**, students will have to explain how their example meets the Museum's definition* of propaganda as *biased designed information to shape public opinion and behavior*. Students should reference their homework when uploading examples to the website. They must explain the context in which the propaganda appeared, the technique being used, its purpose, and whether it is beneficial or harmful.
- Students should come to class the next day prepared to discuss where and when they encountered the example, and why it does or does not meet the Museum's definition.

* If using the Mind Over Media: Analyzing Contemporary Propaganda website, you may encourage students to consider definitions of propaganda other than that proposed by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. If so, students should explain why their example could still be considered propaganda if it does not conform with the Museum's definition.

*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

LESSON 5: Propaganda Today

Before Class:

- 1. Identify examples for discussion the next day.** Select images that 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 assign to each group.
 - If you are not using the Mind Over Media: Analyzing Contemporary Propaganda website, 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 [5.2 Diagram Worksheet](#) to print and pass out to students.

In Class:

Activity

- 1. Divide students into small groups.**
- 2. In small groups, using the Mind Over Media: Analyzing Contemporary Propaganda website and 5.2 Diagram 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.**
- 4. Are these consequences problematic?**
- 5. Do they agree or disagree with the conclusions drawn by the student who uploaded this image to the website?**
- 6. Have a spokesperson from each group report back to the class about their example and findings.** The spokesperson should 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.
- 7. 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 and 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.**

Follow-up Homework:

Each student should rate and comment upon one or more images uploaded to the Mind Over Media classroom gallery, sharing their opinions about whether the example is potentially harmful or beneficial and why.