

## Decoding World War II Propaganda

### Overview

In this lesson, students will define propaganda and study the various types of propaganda techniques. After viewing an assortment of World War II propaganda across different mediums (posters and videos), students will create a piece of World War II propaganda. There is also an optional viewing guide for the Nazi propaganda film, “Triumph of the Will.” (**Teacher Note:** *The length of this lesson’s procedure is only 4 pages long; the additional pages are various propaganda posters and handouts that can be provided to students. Thus, teachers should review the handouts to determine which pages to print.*)

### NC Essential Standards for World History

- WH.7.3- Analyze economic and political rivalries, ethnic and regional conflicts, and nationalism and imperialism as underlying causes of war

### Materials

- “Types of Propaganda” definitions (attached)
- “Types of Propaganda” Worksheet (attached)
- *Der Fuehrer’s Face* – A day in the life of Donald Duck if he lived in Nazi Germany. (Running time is 7:56)
  - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LYD0Fzf1LU>
- *Education for Death* - Based on an anti-Nazi propaganda book, this cartoon portrays the life of child in Nazi Germany. (Running time is 10:00)
  - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQqCeEG5hs0&skipcontrinter=1>
- Post-it notes
- “You’re a Propaganda Minister” handout (attached)
- “You’re a Propaganda Minister” image handouts (attached)
- Various World War II Propaganda Posters (attached)
- “Triumph of the Will” Viewing Guide (attached) (optional)

### Essential Questions:

- What are the basic propaganda techniques and why is it important to be able to identify such techniques?
- How was propaganda used during World War II?
- In what ways does propaganda influence people’s opinions?

### Duration

90 minutes

### Teacher Preparation

Preview the YouTube propaganda videos provided. Teacher’s should use their discretion regarding which videos to use in class, since the racial overtones may be inappropriate for students who are not prepared to respectfully handle and discuss controversial issues. Also, since many school districts block

YouTube, it is recommended teachers download the video clips they plan to use in class. This will also ensure students are not privy to the comments below the videos, which can often be inappropriate.

## Student Preparation

Students should have a basic understanding of the causes, leaders, and events of World War II.

## Procedure

### Warm Up: Defining Propaganda

1. As a warm up, write the word **propaganda** on the board and as a class ask students to brainstorm what this word means. Encourage students to think about the definition, examples, situations in which it is used, etc. After the discussion, students should understand that propaganda refers to a type of message aimed at influencing opinions and/or behavior of people. Many governments, especially the Nazis, used propaganda effectively during WWII. Propaganda may provide only partial information or be deliberately misleading. Propaganda techniques are often found on television and radio, as well as magazines and newspapers. Pose the following questions to the class:
  - Why do you think governments would use propaganda, especially during wartime?
  - How strongly do you think propaganda influences people's opinions?
  - Do you think that people can recognize propaganda as soon as they see it?
  - Can you think of any propaganda you have seen recently? Summarize what you saw and where you saw it.
2. Ask students to if they can identify the different types of propaganda techniques. Write them down on the board as they are called out. Once all students have exhausted the possibilities, project the attached "Types of Propaganda Techniques" handout and pass out the attached "Types of Propaganda Worksheet." Allow students a few minutes to silently copy the definitions. Once students have finished copying the definitions, choose students to read each definition aloud. While going through each definition, ask students if they can think of examples they have witnessed of each technique.

### Disney and World War II Propaganda

3. As students are copying the definitions, cue up one of the following videos:
  - *Der Fuehrer's Face* – A day in the life of Donald Duck if he lived in Nazi Germany. (Running time is 7:56)
    - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LYD0Fzf1LU>
  - *Education for Death* - Based on an anti-Nazi propaganda book, this cartoon portrays the life of a child in Nazi Germany. (Running time is 10:00)
    - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQqCeEG5hs0>
4. Explain to students that these videos were shown before movies at the movie theatre (remember TV's weren't widely available during the 1940's) during World War II. Some of the short films were instructional (teaching people how to conserve, for example), while others were intended to inform American citizens about their enemies. As they are viewing the videos, tell them to note which types of propaganda techniques are being used.
5. Once the video has concluded, pose the following questions to the class:

- Why do you think the US Government commissioned the creation of this video? What were they trying to get across to the American people?
- What types of propaganda techniques did you notice while you were viewing the video?
- Describe your feelings while watching the video.
- What aspects of the video do you think are accurate? What aspects are exaggerated? What aspects are fabricated?
- Besides cartoons, what other ways do you think the US Government disseminated propaganda?

### **Interpreting World War II Propaganda**

6. Tell students that they are going to analyze various pieces of World War II propaganda. Explain that one of the most popular and widespread forms of propaganda during World War II were posters. Divide the students into groups of two to four students and distribute the attached propaganda posters.
7. Allow students a few minutes to view the posters with their group mates and to record their initial impressions of the posters. After the allotted time, project the following questions and have the group discuss/answer:
  - What propaganda techniques are being utilized in your poster?
  - What evidence from the poster do you have to justify your answer?
  - What country is your propaganda poster from?
  - Who are the major figures in your poster?
  - What message do you think your poster is trying to convey?
  - Is the message subtle or overt?
  - Do you think this is an effective piece of propaganda? Why or why not?
8. While groups are inspecting their posters, pass out one piece of tape per group and one post-it note per student. After groups have analyzed their poster, instruct them to hang their poster at the front of the room. Tell the class to take a few minutes to get up and closely view the posters. Once they have had time to view all the posters, they should put their post-it note on the poster that they think is the most effective piece of propaganda.
9. After tallying the votes, discuss the results and have students elaborate on why they voted for a poster. Then pose the following questions for further discussion:
  - What are some commonalities between the posters hanging at the front of the room?
  - If a nation's leader is depicted in the poster, what do you notice about how they're drawn?
  - If a nation's enemy is in the poster, how are they drawn or portrayed?
  - What do you notice about the way many of the Japanese figures are portrayed?
  - Which propaganda technique is most common among the posters at the front of the room?

### **You're a Propaganda Minister**

10. Pass out the attached "You're a Propaganda Minister" handout and review the instructions before allowing students to work for the remainder of the class. For Part I of the assignment, students will create two different captions for the same image. Randomly pass out the attached photo handouts for this part of the assignment. In Part II, students will create their own propaganda poster. If students do not finish their posters in class, instruct them to finish them for homework.

11. As a warm up the next day, choose a few students to present their posters and have the class interpret what propaganda techniques are being used. Alternatively, teachers can have students hand all of their posters around the room and instruct student to freely rotate among the posters, examining them for effective propaganda techniques.

### Additional Activities

- View the Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will*. (A free copy can be found on YouTube.) Use the attached viewing guide so that students can note their thoughts while viewing; ensure class time is provided to discuss and debrief the film in depth.

**Teacher's note:** Some of the YouTube user comments are inflammatory and promote Nazi ideology. It is best to preview the videos before showing them. Since many districts block access to YouTube from schools, and to ensure the comments are not visible to students, teachers should also consider downloading the material to their computer.

- Full Film
  - [http://www.youtube.com/view\\_play\\_list?p=8C37DA9DB19DB294&search\\_query=triumph+of+the+will+english+subtitles](http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=8C37DA9DB19DB294&search_query=triumph+of+the+will+english+subtitles)
- Part I (Hitler's Arrival)
  - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsTBkrrl5Gg&feature=PlayList&p=8C37DA9DB19DB294&index=0>
- Part 5 (Hitler Youth Rally)
  - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJtd37HzpbQ&feature=PlayList&p=8C37DA9DB19DB294&index=4>
- Part 9 (Hitler's Concluding Speech)
  - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHVwgWzz5dQ&feature=PlayList&p=8C37DA9DB19DB294&index=8>
- Part 10 (Hitler's Concluding Speech)
  - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gwK9\\_ElGn8&feature=PlayList&p=8C37DA9DB19DB294&index=9](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gwK9_ElGn8&feature=PlayList&p=8C37DA9DB19DB294&index=9)
- Have students follow the film using the attached "Triumph of the Will Viewing Guide"

## Types of Propaganda Techniques

**Emotional appeal** (e.g. fear): Appealing to the emotions of your audience. For example, when a propagandist warns members of her audience that disaster will result if they do not follow a particular course of action, she is using fear appeal.

**Glittering generalities:** A glittering generality device seeks to make us approve and accept without examining the evidence; Glittering generalities include phrases such as “We believe in”, “fight for”, and “live by virtue”. They also include words about which we have deep-set ideas, such as civilization, Christianity, good, proper, right, democracy, patriotism, motherhood, fatherhood, science, medicine, health, and love.

**Testimonials:** Famous people or figures who will appear trustworthy speak to the audience.

**Bandwagon:** The basic theme of the band wagon appeal is that “everyone else is doing it, and so should you.”

**Plain-folks:** By using the plain-folks technique, speakers attempt to convince their audience that they, and their ideas, are “of the people.”

**Scientific approach:** Using scientific jargon (e.g. numbers, statistics, data, etc.) to convince your audience.

**Snob appeal:** Giving the impression that people of wealth and prestige are on board.

**Card stacking:** Only presenting one side of the issue/situation.

**Transfer:** Transfer is a device by which the propagandist carries over the authority, sanction, and prestige of something we respect and revere to something he would have us accept.

**Name-calling:** The name-calling technique links a person, or idea, to a negative symbol. The propagandist who uses this technique hopes that the audience will reject the person or the idea on the basis of the negative symbol, instead of looking at the available evidence.

**Euphemisms:** The propagandist attempts to pacify the audience in order to make an unpleasant reality more palatable. This is accomplished by using words that are bland and euphemistic. An example is during war time, since war is particularly unpleasant, military discourse is full of euphemisms. In the 1940's, America changed the name of the War Department to the Department of Defense.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Types of Propaganda Techniques Worksheet**

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Name \_\_\_\_\_



**You're a Propaganda Minister**

**Directions:** You have been appointed the propaganda minister for one of the following countries during World War II: the United States, Germany, Japan, Russia, or England. It is your job to complete both parts of the assignment:

### Part 1

You have been assigned two identical images and you must create two different captions/slogans for each image: One for the Axis perspective and one for the Allied perspective. Use the example below and the posters you viewed in your group as guides. Be sure to use at least one of the propaganda techniques.



**Axis Perspective**

**Perspective**



**Allied**

**"Our Beloved Fuehrer Demonstrates German Superiority by Capturing France"**

**"Hitler Captures France: We Could Be Next! Support the War Effort"**

### Part 2

Create your own propaganda poster for one of the following nations: Germany, Japan, the United States, England, or Russia. Choose a theme that you want to present: support the war effort, vilifying enemies, etc. Your poster should be colorful and easy to understand; remember you want it to capture people's attention. Be sure to use at least one of the propaganda techniques



Source: <http://www.afterimagegallery.com/>

Axis Perspective:

Allied Perspective:



Source: [http://farm2.static.flickr.com/1304/1356231392\\_94d31c47e9.jpg](http://farm2.static.flickr.com/1304/1356231392_94d31c47e9.jpg)

**Axis Perspective:**

**Allied Perspective:**



Source: [http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\\_utj\\_WiTT3tU/SRbET-iLeI/AAAAAAAAA-s/SPiukoIb1wU/s400/churchill-winston+machine+gun.jpg](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_utj_WiTT3tU/SRbET-iLeI/AAAAAAAAA-s/SPiukoIb1wU/s400/churchill-winston+machine+gun.jpg)

**Axis Perspective:**

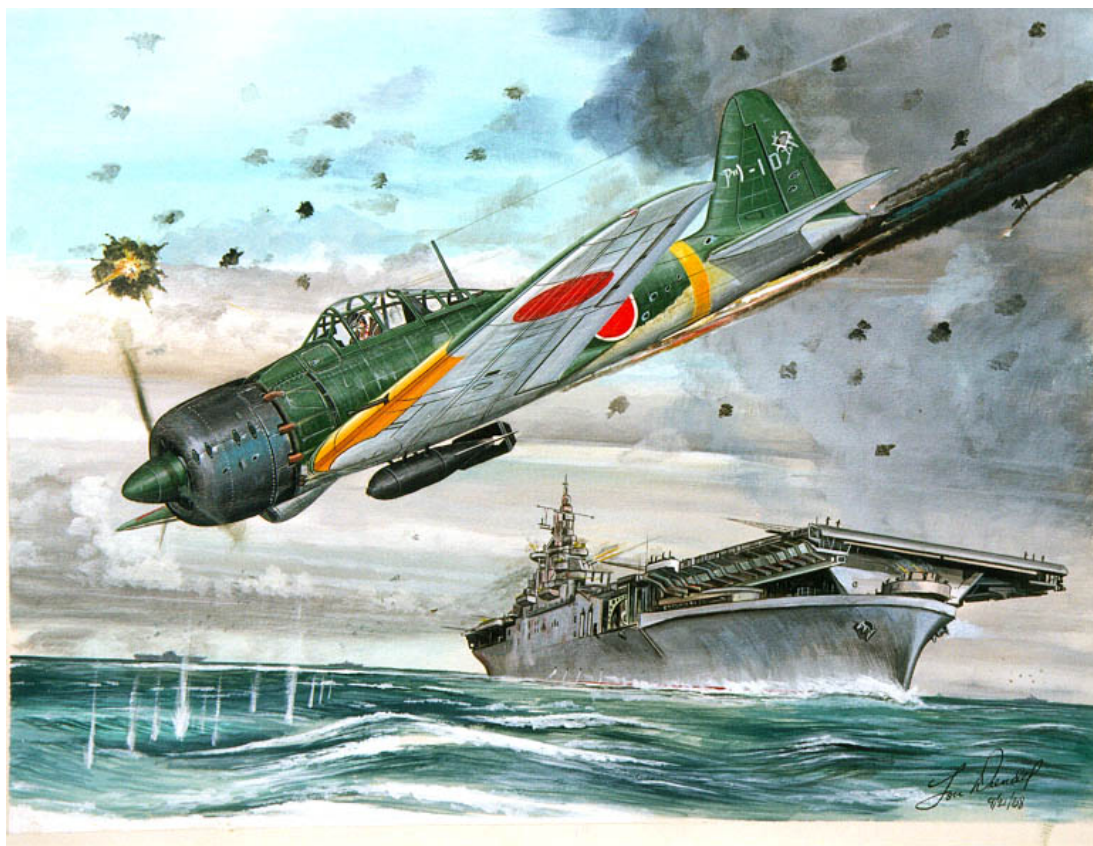
**Allied Perspective:**



Source: <http://scrapetv.com/News/News%20Pages/Everyone%20Else/images-4/Hitler-Mussolini.jpg>

**Axis Perspective:**

**Allied Perspective:**



Source: <http://www.limalima.com/art/Japanese%20Zero.jpg>

**Axis Perspective:**

**Allied Perspective:**



Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/propaganda/assets/images/500x/poster-behind-enemy-powers.jpg>



Source: [http://lh4.ggpht.com/\\_fps7jxvrEbw/SVjZHsmNP0I/AAAAAAAAADyE/Y0J75YxzlP8/s160/Poster%20-%20Nordmen%20Kjemp%20For%20Norge.jpg](http://lh4.ggpht.com/_fps7jxvrEbw/SVjZHsmNP0I/AAAAAAAAADyE/Y0J75YxzlP8/s160/Poster%20-%20Nordmen%20Kjemp%20For%20Norge.jpg)



Source: <http://cache4.asset-cache.net/xc/84358222.jpg?v=1&c=IWSAsset&k=2&d=77BFBA49EF8789215ABF3343C02EA548351B83F84FD64430C94478DDAC646CB84AB9F254822EB3B4>



Source: [http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_bjqmGmHDb1w/SUPpTI-5aKI/AAAAAAAAABvs/UltgDaBXSEA/s320/anti-japanese-propaganda-poste-+hate.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_bjqmGmHDb1w/SUPpTI-5aKI/AAAAAAAAABvs/UltgDaBXSEA/s320/anti-japanese-propaganda-poste-+hate.jpg)



Source: <http://www.huge-entity.com/blogger/anti-japanese-propaganda-wwii.jpg>



Source: [http://www.wreckamovie.com/system/task\\_references/0000/0019/Attack\\_\\_Buy\\_War\\_Bonds.jpg](http://www.wreckamovie.com/system/task_references/0000/0019/Attack__Buy_War_Bonds.jpg)



Source: <http://www.ilord.com/images/bits-of-careless-talk-1000.jpg>



Source: <http://www.josephstalin.info/poster.jpg>



Source: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d2/AntiJapanesePropagandaTakeDayOff.gif>



Source:

[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/warning/images\\_html/images/our\\_homes\\_in\\_danger.jpg](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/warning/images_html/images/our_homes_in_danger.jpg)



Source: <http://z.about.com/d/history1900s/1/0/e/Q/wwiip117.jpg>



Source: <http://gentlyused.files.wordpress.com/2007/04/liberators-kultur-terror-anti-americanism-1944-nazi-propaganda-poster.jpg>



Source: <http://web.utk.edu/~glenn/EuropasSieg.jpg>



Source: <http://static.rnw.nl/migratie/www.ranesi.nl/images/assets/13525855-redirected>



Source: [http://digilander.libero.it/romanoarchives/page2/files/page2\\_42.jpg](http://digilander.libero.it/romanoarchives/page2/files/page2_42.jpg)



Source: <http://www.cynical-c.com/archives/bloggraphics/tokiokid.jpg>



Source: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c3/PropagandaNaziStabsBible.gif>



Source: <http://www.we-make-money-not-art.com/yyy/rat%5B1%5D.jpg>



Source: <http://www.usingutensils.com/wp-content/gallery/wwii-posters/usa08.png>

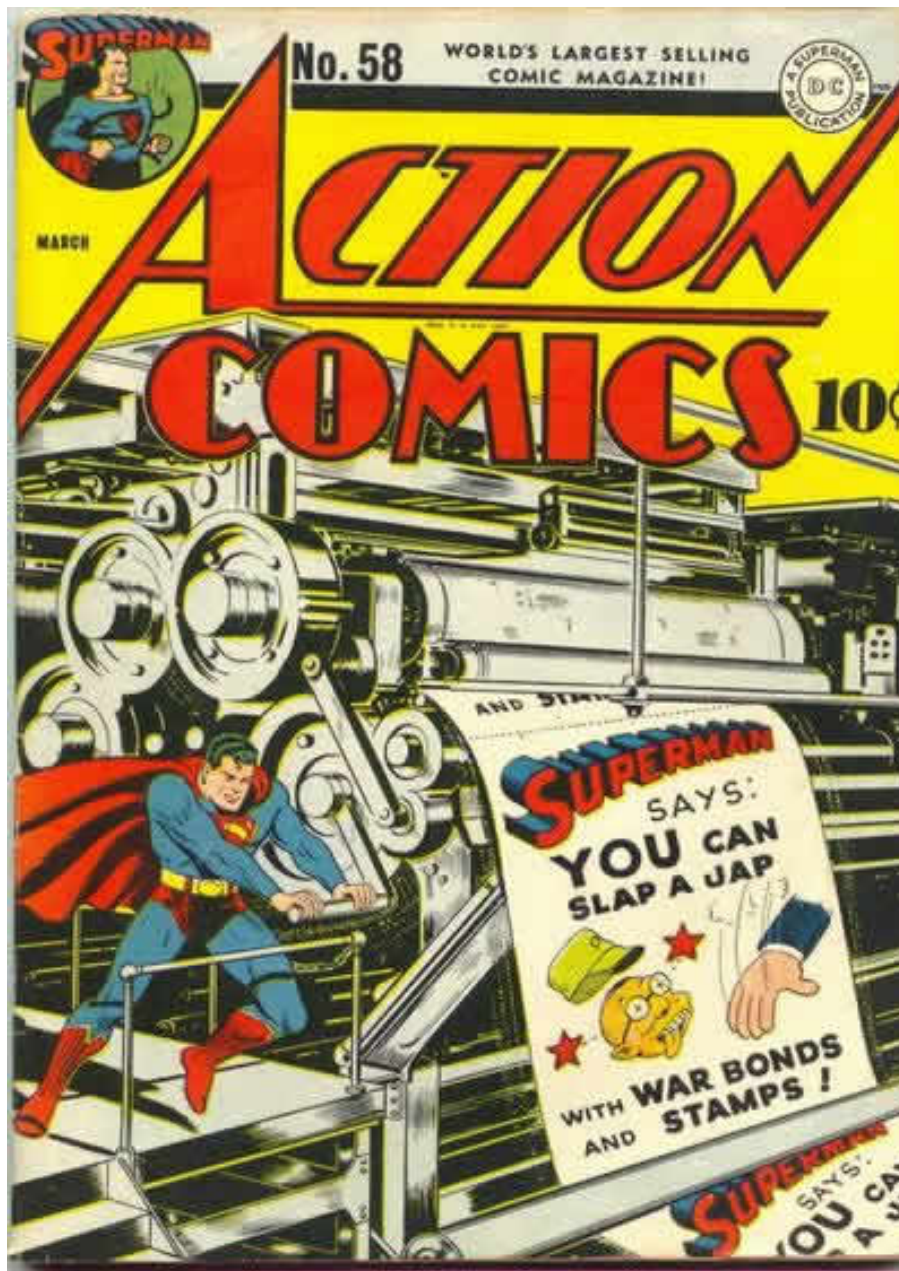


Source: <http://w00.middlebury.edu/ID085A/gallery/film/roosevelt.jpg>



Source:

<http://tennesseebillsotr.com/otr/Otr%20Art%20ii/WW%20II%20Posters%20&%20Pics/Don%27t%20Let%20The%20Shadow.jpg>



Source: <http://badcomics.files.wordpress.com/2009/08/slapajap.jpg>

**Do with less—  
so they'll have  
enough!**



**RATIONING GIVES YOU YOUR FAIR SHARE**

Source: <http://www.legion.org/documents/legion/posters/912.jpg>

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
**Triumph of Will Viewing Guide**



**Section 1: Hitler's Arrival**

What do you think the scene of Hitler's plane descending from the sky trying to represent?

Why do you think the filmmaker wanted to show Hitler's drive from the airport to the hotel?

What do you think the work camp scenes are supposed to symbolize?

**Section 2: Hitler Youth Rally**

Why do you think Hitler organized the "Hitler Youth" movement?

What are some of the ideals taught to the "Hitler Youth?"

**Section 3: Closing Ceremonies**

During Hitler's final speech (the one in the large hall), Hitler states that all upstanding Germans must  
"\_\_\_\_\_."

Hitler believed that the Third Reich would last \_\_\_\_\_ years.

What two elements will carry the German state on their shoulders?

1.

2.

What does the scene with the Horst Wessel song intend to portray?

Do you think the responses of the crowd during Hitler's speech are forced or genuine?

If you were unaware of Hitler's actions and had just watched this film, would you think Hitler was a good leader? Would you follow him?