

Lesson Plan:

Propaganda in Canada during the First World War

Description:

In this lesson, students discuss and develop an understanding of the social and political impact of effective wartime propaganda. Using knowledge learned from short online documentaries, students work in groups of three or four to analyze propaganda posters from the First World War. At the conclusion of the exercise, groups present their findings to the class.

Recommended Grade Range:

In all provinces and territories except Quebec, this lesson is recommended for grades 10 to 12. In Quebec, it is recommended for secondary 4 and 5.

Prerequisites:

Although not mandatory, this lesson should ideally follow previous discussions and lessons on the First World War.

Objectives:

- Students will develop an understanding of the techniques and goals of propaganda;
- Students will learn how propaganda was used in Canada during the First World War;
- Students will learn how propaganda was used to target specific audiences;
- Students will learn to analyze propaganda.

Estimated Time: 2-3 class periods

Materials Required:

- Computer(s) with internet access;
- Computer screen(s) and/or projector(s) to show documentaries;
- Speakers
- Copies of the Poster Analysis Worksheet.

Lesson:

Begin the lesson by discussing the meaning of the word ‘propaganda’ with students. Record the students’ suggested definitions on chart paper or the blackboard/whiteboard. After the suggestions have been recorded, provide students with a pre-existing definition of ‘propaganda’. Compare and contrast the student suggestions with the pre-existing definition, and attempt to clarify any misunderstanding.

Pre-existing definition: Propaganda is the organized dissemination of information to influence thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and actions.

Display a propaganda poster and discuss its meaning/message with the class. Ask students to describe the poster. To prompt students for responses, use questions such as the following:

- Who do you think created this poster?
- Who is the target audience?
- What is the message of this poster?
- What propaganda techniques are used?
- How does the poster convey its message?
- What purpose did the poster serve for the Canadian war effort during the First World War?
- Is the poster effective, in your opinion?

If need, repeat this analysis process with another poster to ensure that students understand the basic concepts being discussed.

Next, organize students into groups of three or four and circulate copies of the Poster Analysis Worksheet. Inform the students that they are about to watch a short documentary on wartime propaganda in Canada during the First World War. Their task is to watch the documentary, analyze the propaganda process, and complete the worksheet.

Either show to the entire class using a projector or direct groups at individual computers to the short documentary, which is available online through YouTube.

Title: “Decoding Canadian First World War Posters”

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntd3YPKMNCM>

Keep the class definition of propaganda on display for students to refer to as they work. Once groups have completed the worksheet, they should present their findings to the class.

Assessment:

Ask groups to turn in their worksheets. Base marks on the group work, presentation and the worksheet. Look for their:

- understanding of the concept of propaganda;
- understanding of the social and/or political implications of propaganda;
- ability to understand propaganda within the context of the First World War in Canada.

Also check for the:

- ability of the group to cite specific examples to support their analysis;
- active participation of all group members.

Extension Activities:

- Have students make propaganda posters about contemporary issues such as drinking and driving, smoking, or environmental concerns. Put the posters on display and have students vote on which poster is most effective.

- Ask students to consider where they see materials that they would consider propaganda in their daily lives. Perhaps students may benefit from bringing examples to class for discussion and analysis.

Additional Resources:

Additional teaching resources and lessons plans can be found through the Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS) website.

URL: <http://canadianmilitaryhistory.ca/resources/>