



## INTRODUCTION

During World War II, government agencies, the military, and even private businesses used propaganda posters to encourage or discourage certain behaviors, and to regulate attitudes toward the war effort. Some of these posters are very straightforward, using bold text to convey a clear message. Others are more subtle, using carefully crafted imagery to suggest the meaning the creators wanted to express. In both cases, these posters are a unique way to help students understand the issues that were important to the creators during the war. By analyzing these visual sources, students can begin to discern prevalent attitudes about race, gender, loyalty, and personal responsibility from the WWII era. In this lesson, we amplify the importance of the imagery by introducing students to versions of the posters with their text removed.

## GRADE LEVEL

7-12

## TIME REQUIREMENT

1-2 class periods

## MATERIALS

+ Copies of the **Student Worksheet**

+ Copies of the ten **Propaganda Posters**, one copy with words and one copy without the words (included as inserts in the published guide or available on [ww2classroom.org](http://ww2classroom.org)).

## OBJECTIVES

Students will analyze propaganda posters to make informed inferences about prevalent attitudes regarding issues of race, gender, loyalty, and personal responsibility in the United States during World War II. Students will also evaluate the posters as primary sources, articulating how the information from these images complements the information found in textual sources like letters, books, newspaper articles, etc.

## COMMON CORE STANDARDS

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g. in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

[ww2classroom.org](http://ww2classroom.org)



The Home Front Overview Video

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7**

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g. visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

**NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HISTORY****HISTORICAL CONTENT ERA 8, STANDARD 3B**

The student understands World War II and how the Allies prevailed.

**HISTORICAL CONTENT ERA 8, STANDARD 3C**

The student understands the effects of World War II at home.

**HISTORICAL THINKING STANDARD 2**

The student is able to draw upon visual, literary, and musical sources to clarify, illustrate, or elaborate upon information presented in the historical narrative.

**PROCEDURES**

1. Begin by introducing students to a popular WWII propaganda poster, such as the one featuring Rosie the Riveter or the iconic “I Want You” poster featuring the image of Uncle Sam. Ask students to briefly write down a few notes based on their own observations:
  - a) The elements of the image that seem important or notable
  - b) The message the poster is trying to convey
  - c) The poster’s intended audience, and its likely creator
2. Ask students to share some of their observations about the poster, and use this to segue into a brief discussion about the role of propaganda posters in helping us understand the history of World War II. Ask the students the following question: What can propaganda posters tell us about the time period in which they were created?
3. Explain that students will now have the opportunity to use more propaganda posters to explore the history of the US Home Front during World War II. Divide students into groups of three or four. Provide each student with a copy of the **Student Worksheet**.
4. Provide each group with one copy of a **Propaganda Poster** with its text removed. If you are using the double-sided poster inserts included with the published curriculum kit, each card will have both a poster without text and a different poster with text, the latter of which will be used in Step 6.
5. Instruct the groups to analyze their respective posters and complete Part I of the **Student Worksheet**.
6. Once the groups have analyzed their posters and completed Part I of the **Student Worksheet**, give each group a copy of their poster with the text included. If you are using the double-sided poster inserts included with the published curriculum kit, the text-included version of each poster will be on the back of one of the other poster inserts.
7. Instruct students to analyze the text-included version of their poster and complete Part II of the **Student Worksheet**.

8. Return to the whole class and ask students to present their posters and the historical inferences they made by analyzing its imagery. The following are some helpful discussion questions to ask:
  - a) What was the intended message of your poster? What imagery or symbols did the creator use to convey this message?
  - b) How did your interpretation of the poster change when you saw the text that the creator intended to include with the imagery?
  - c) Based on the imagery in your poster and the message the creator was trying to convey, what inferences can you make about the WWII era? (e.g. regarding race, gender, loyalty, patriotism, personal responsibility, etc.)
  - d) What do you think you learned from this poster that might be different from what you would learn if you consulted a textual source on the same topic—like a book, a newspaper article, a diary entry, or a letter?

## ASSESSMENT

You will be able to assess students' ability to analyze visual sources and make inferences about World War II based on the responses they write on the **Student Worksheet** and the answers they give to discussion questions at the end of the activity.

## EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT

1. Have students create their own propaganda posters with a specific persuasive objective. Instruct students to explain the symbolism or imagery they use to convey their message.
2. Have students find a modern-day example of visual propaganda and analyze it, taking particular note of similarities between the persuasive methods of propaganda creators during World War II and now.

NAME:

DATE:

## PART I: MORE THAN WORDS CAN SAY

**Directions:** Your group has been assigned a WWII propaganda poster with its words removed. Look carefully at the poster and answer the following questions. Use the back of this sheet if necessary.

1. What does this poster show? Write down all elements of the poster that seem important—people, objects, actions, emotions, etc.
2. What message do you think this poster’s creator is trying to convey? How can you tell?
3. Who do you think created this poster (or had it created), and why?

## PART II: VISUAL MATERIALS AS PRIMARY SOURCES

**Directions:** Once your group has been given a version of your poster from Part I with the words added back in, take another look at the poster and answer the following questions. Use the back of this sheet if necessary.

1. Does this version of the poster with its original text included change your interpretation of the poster? If it does not, explain how the text confirms your interpretation of the poster’s intent. If it does change your interpretation, explain why.
2. Based on your analysis of this poster and its message, what inferences can you make about the WWII era—for example, attitudes toward race, the relative roles of men and women in the war effort, patriotism, loyalty to country, or personal responsibility?
3. What, if anything, do you think you learned from this poster that you might not have been able to learn from a book, newspaper article, letter, diary entry, or other textual source?