Propaganda Objectives and Tools

Common Objectives of Wartime Propaganda
1. Recruitment of soldiers or other wartime personnel, either through a draft or voluntary enlistment
2. Financing the war effort through the sale of war bonds—loans from citizens to the government—or new taxes
3. Eliminating dissent and unifying the country behind the war effort
4. Conservation of resources—such as food, oil, and steel—necessary to wage war
5. Increase factory production of war materials

Common Tools Used in Wartime Propaganda

Demonization This tool involves portraying the enemy as purely evil, menacing, murderous, and aggressive. The propagandist attempts to remove all confusion and ambiguity about whom the public should hate. The enemy may be portrayed as a hairy beast or the devil himself. This tool becomes more powerful when the enemy can be blamed for committing atrocities against women, children, or other noncombatants.

Emotional Appeals This tool involves playing on people’s emotions to promote the war effort. Since the strongest emotion is often fear, propagandists create their work based on the premise that the more frightened a person is by a communication, the more likely he or she is to take action. Thus, propagandists are careful to explain in detail the action that they want the consumer of the propaganda to carry out.

Name Calling This tool involves using loaded labels to encourage hatred of the enemy. Labels like “Commies,” “Japs,” and “Huns” reinforce negative stereotypes and assist propagandists in demonizing the enemy.

Patriotic Appeals This tool involves using patriotic language or symbols to appeal to people’s national pride.

Half-Truths or Lies This tool involves deception or twisting the truth. The propagandist may attempt to include some element of truth in the propaganda to make an argument more persuasive. For example, blaming the enemy for complete responsibility for the war and portraying one’s own country as a victim of aggression is a common propaganda tool.

Catchy Slogans This tool involves using memorable phrases to foster support for the war effort. For example, short phrases like “Remember the Maine!” and “Remember the Alamo!” have been very successful in motivating Americans to strongly support the use of arms against Spain and Mexico, respectively.

Evocative Visual Symbols This tool involves using symbols that appeal to people’s emotions—like flags, statues, mothers and children, and enemy uniforms—to promote the war effort.

Humor or Caricatures This tool involves capturing the viewer’s attention through the use of humor to promote the war effort. The enemy is almost always the butt of the jokes used by propagandists.
# Notes on WWII Propaganda Posters

**Directions**: Carefully examine each propaganda poster with your partner. Discuss and record which of the objectives listed on **Student Handout #1** the poster is designed to achieve. Finally, identify and record at least two propaganda tools evident in the poster.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poster</th>
<th>Objectives of Poster</th>
<th>Propaganda Tools Used in Poster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster</td>
<td>Objectives of Poster</td>
<td>Propaganda Tools Used in Poster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster</td>
<td>Objectives of Poster</td>
<td>Propaganda Tools Used in Poster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Poster #10" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Poster #11" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Poster #12" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Poster #13" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Poster #14" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster</td>
<td>Objectives of Poster</td>
<td>Propaganda Tools Used in Poster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is one of a series of posters created and distributed by the Florida Citrus Commission (based in Lakeland, FL) during WWII. The virtues of grapefruit juice are extolled in this poster, as well as the reason why it and other citrus juices were in short supply during the war.

1) For what two reasons were people called upon to drink Florida grapefruit juice “over here?”

2) Why was grapefruit juice so important for American soldiers?

3) What do you think was/were the objective(s) of this WWII poster? (Hint: why would grapefruit juice be important to fight “fatigue” and “absenteeism?”)
This is another in a series of WWII posters created and circulated by the Florida Citrus Commission (Lakeland, FL). Two American soldiers are depicted here disabling a German tank.

1) In explaining to civilians why they may be unable to purchase Florida grapefruit juice, what objective(s) do you think that the creators of this poster had in mind?

2) What visual tools are employed?
This is another WWII poster created by the Florida Citrus Commission in Lakeland, FL. In this poster, an American fighter pilot drinks from a can of Florida grapefruit juice before taking to the air again to face Japanese Zero fighter planes.

1) What is/are the objectives of this poster?

2) What are the tools that the creators utilize to show the importance of Florida grapefruit juice in the war effort?
This is a WWII poster created and distributed by the Florida Citrus Commission in Lakeland, FL. A Patrol Torpedo (PT) boat is shown in combat against the Japanese Navy. The PT Boat was an 80-foot-long wooden craft that carried more firepower per pound than any other boat in the US Navy. It could accelerate from 8 to 40 knots in about 11 seconds, and was capable of reaching a top speed of roughly 48 knots. Each boat carried a fourteen-man crew, and each crewmember specialized in one or two jobs, but had a working knowledge of all duties.

1) Why would it be important for all crewmembers of a PT boat to have knowledge of all needed duties?

2) What objective (s) did the creators of this poster have in mind?

3) What are the tools used?
Assessment

Display the following WWII propaganda posters and have students decide what the objectives are for each, and the tools used:

1. **Objective**: Recruitment of soldiers  
   **Tools**: catchy slogan, evocative visual symbols

   [Man the Guns](http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/powers_of_persuasion/man_the_guns/images_html/man_the_guns.html)

2. **Objective**: Conserve resources  
   **Tools**: emotional appeals, patriotic appeals, evocative visual symbols

   [Conserving resources](http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govpub/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-54.jpg)

3. **Objective**: Increased production  
   **Tools**: catchy slogan, evocative visual symbols

   [Increased production](http://americanhistory.si.edu/victory/9110320a.gif)

4. Which one of the following is **not** an example of objectives of wartime propaganda?  
   a. Recruitment of soldiers or other wartime personnel  
   b. Financing the war effort through the sale of war bonds  
   c. Emotional appeals  
   d. Eliminating dissent and unifying the country behind the war effort  
   e. Conservation of resources necessary to wage war  
   f. Increase factory production of war materials
5. Which one of the following is **not** a common tool used in wartime propaganda?
   a. Demonization
   b. Emotional appeals
   c. Name calling
   d. Patriotic appeals
   e. Half-truths or lies
   f. Evocative visual symbols
   g. Catchy slogans
   h. Celebrity endorsement
   i. Humor or caricatures

6. True or false. Wartime propaganda is most often based on factual information.

7. True or false. Advertising and wartime propaganda are very similar in that both attempt to get people to think, act, or feel a certain way, and both use many of the same tools to make their work effective.
Resources

**WWII Propaganda Poster Websites**

http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/powers_of_persuasion/four_freedoms/four_freedoms.html - The National Archives

“Power of Persuasion: Poster Art from World War II”

http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govpub/collections/wwii-posters/ - Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection

http://userpages.aug.com/captbarb/posters.html - World War II Women’s Recruiting Posters

http://www.wavethemes.org/~usa/posters.html - Patriotic Posters in American History

http://bss.sfsu.edu/tygiel/Hist427/1940sphotos/posters/WWIIPOSTERS.htm - World War II Propaganda Posters

http://americanhistory.si.edu/victory/ - Produce for Victory: Posters on the American Home Front (1941-45)

Special thanks to Bruce Graetz at the Florida Museum of History for providing all four posters from the Florida Citrus Commission.

The following are the URL’s for each specific poster in this lesson:

1) http://americanhistory.si.edu/victory/903773a.gif
2) http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govpub/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-03.jpg
5) http://bss.sfsu.edu/tygiel/Hist427/1940sphotos/posters/antijapanese.jpg
6) http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govpub/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-78.jpg
8) http://www.wavethemes.org/~usa/posters-a/uncle-sam-poster-2a2.jpg
10) http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govpub/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-76.jpg
13) http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govpub/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-75.jpg
14) http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/powers_of_persuasion/images/we_can_do_it.gif
15) http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govpub/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-63.jpg
16) http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govpub/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-30.jpg
17) http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govpub/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-50.jpg
18) http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govpub/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-84.jpg
19) http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govpub/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0870-08.jpg