

Where
the past
is present

DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TEACHER RESOURCE LESSON PLAN

WORLD WAR II POSTERS, 1940-1945



CREATED BY

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INTRODUCTION

This lesson uses posters and prints archived in the Detroit Historical Museum's digital collection to show high school students the importance that printed materials played in the total war effort and the significance of using primary sources in the classroom. The educator will use LOC analysis sheets, reasons for using primary sources, and the "gallery walk" teaching strategy.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Recognize a primary source
- Learn by observing posters, pictures, and text

- Develop and expand cooperative learning skills
- Develop critical thinking and inquiry questions

EDUCATION STANDARDS

U.S. History and Geography: USHG Era 7 – The Great Depression and World War II (1920-1945)

- **7.2 World War II** - Examine the causes and course of World War II, and the effect of the war on United States society's and culture, including the consequences of the United States in world affairs.
- **7.2.3 Impact of WWII on American Life** – Analyze the changes in American life brought about by U.S. participation in WWII including:
 - mobilization of economics, military, and social resources
 - role of women and minorities in the war effort
 - role of home front in supporting the war effort (e.g., rationing, work hours, taxes)

The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3)

- **History Dimension 2, Change, Continuity and Content - 9-12** evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
- **The Inquiry Arc of C3 Dimensions 1, 2, 3, and 4**

National Standards for United States History

- **Era 8 - The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)**
 - **Standard 3C:** Demonstrate understanding of the effects of World War II at home.
 - **Standards in Historical Thinking 3 and 5:** Historical Analysis and Interpretation and

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Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-making.

National Standards for Civics and Government.

- **Standard V. E. 1:** Evaluate, take, and defend positions on the relationship between politics and the attainment of individual and public goals.

TIME REQUIRED

One or two class periods (a class period being of approximately 55 minutes)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During World War I, the impact of the poster as a means of communication was greater than at any other time during history. The ability of posters to inspire, inform, and persuade, combined with vibrant design trends in many of the participating countries, produced thousands of interesting visual works.

This strategy was again used during World War II to promote the two ocean war effort (America's jingoism) for the preservation of democracy. Federal government agencies used the assets of Walt Disney, Madison Avenue marketing, and the nation's artists as an important part of the nation's Arsenal of Democracy. The poster became a major tool for broad dissemination of information during the war. Countries on both sides of the conflict distributed posters widely to garner support, urge action, and boost morale. During World War II, a large quantity of posters were printed, but they were no longer the primary source of information. By WWII posters shared their audience with radio and film, but still played a major role in the war effort.

Guns, tanks, and bombs were the principal weapons of World War II, but there were other, more subtle forms of warfare as well. Words, posters, and films waged a constant battle for the hearts and minds of the American citizenry just as surely as military weapons engaged the enemy. Persuading the American public became a wartime industry, almost as important as the manufacturing of bullets and planes. The Government launched an aggressive propaganda campaign to galvanize public support, and some of the nation's foremost intellectuals,

artists, and film makers became warriors on that front.

MATERIALS USED

- Classroom chalk board or a smart board
- News print paper
- Lined paper
- Pencils
- Tables
- Books, media center, or access to computers/ internet.
- Posters and pictures from the Detroit Historical Museum: <http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com> and search for "Arsenal of Democracy"

LESSON SEQUENCE

Day One Activity

1. Teacher reviews the United States industrial efforts and production during WWII. The instructor explains or reviews the difference between primary sources and secondary sources. Students should be able to present examples.
2. Next, the instructor explains the teaching strategy that will be used – "the gallery walk around." (Extensive notes on how to use this strategy are found at the end of the lesson).
3. The teacher introduces the analysis sheets for pictures and photos. The teacher may want to display an example and have the class analyze and discuss the picture/poster.
4. The teacher will display the posters and pictures around the room. Each picture/poster should have a numbered location for identification.
5. The class is divided up into small groups (2 to 3 students). Each group assigns itself a name – a team or person's name – from the World War II vocabulary. The teams will assign a recorder to write down all the information as the group travels from station to station.
6. Give each group three posters to analyze and the poster analysis worksheet. Note: The instructor

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can have the posters/pictures selected by random. Each group draws numbers out of a hat for their assigned stations.

- LOC Teacher's Guides and Analysis Tool <http://loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html>
- Note: Teacher may want to use national Archives analysis sheets found at the end of the lesson – depending on the strengths of the students.

7. Allow student groups 15 to 20 minutes to read and analyze their posters/pictures. Ask them to complete the poster analysis worksheet and then determine whether their poster sought to motivate the viewer by instilling patriotism, confidence, and a positive outlook, or whether it sought to ward off complacency with grim, unromantic visions of war.
8. The teacher ends the walk around and brings the class back to order. Each group should stay formed together. The instructor asks for a volunteer(s) from each group to describe the content of the group's poster for the class and identify the issues mentioned or implied within.

Alternative method using technology: The teacher uses a media center or computer lab and has the students view the posters and pictures using computers. This can be done with small groups or as individuals with the same instructions above.

EVALUATION

Students are presented with either a group assessment or an individual assessment to the following: Lead a discussion using the analysis worksheet and the following questions as a guide:

- What are the similarities and differences between the posters?
- Where do you think these posters were hung?
- What emotions do these posters prompt?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Encourage students to create their own World War II poster intended to galvanize public support for the war effort.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Facing History: <http://www.facinghistory.org/about/voices/five-graphic-novels-engage-read>

Gallery Walk Teaching Strategy: <http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/strategies/gallery-walk-teaching-strateg>

Library of Congress home page (LOC): <http://www.loc.gov/index.html>

American Memory browse more options: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/browse/index.html>

LOC Teacher page: <http://loc.gov/teachers/>

LOC Teacher's Guides and Analysis Tool: <http://loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html>

Detroit Historical Society: <http://detroithistorical.org/>

Detroit Historical Society Digital Collection of posters and pictures: <http://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/arsenal-democracy>

Note: Click on the link under the picture Arsenal of Democracy called "view all items related to Arsenal of Democracy" and it takes you to the posters and pictures necessary for the lesson.

**For more information about the
Detroit Historical Society,
or to schedule a field trip to the
Detroit Historical Museum or
Dossin Great Lakes Museum,
visit detroithistorical.org**

GALLERY WALK TEACHING STRATEGY

RATIONALE

During a Gallery Walk, students explore multiple texts or images that are placed around the room. Teachers often use this strategy as a way to have students share their work with peers, examine multiple historical documents, or respond to a collection of quotations. Because this strategy requires students to physically move around the room, it can be especially engaging to kinesthetic learners.

PROCEDURE

Step one: Select texts

Select the texts (e.g. quotations, images, documents, and/or student work) you will be using for the gallery walk. You could also have students, individually or in small groups, select the text for the gallery walk.

Step two: Organize texts around the classroom

Texts should be displayed “gallery-style” - in a way that allows students to disperse themselves around the room, with several students clustering around a particular text. Texts can be hung on walls or placed on tables. The most important factor is that the texts are spread far enough apart to reduce significant crowding.

Step three: Instruct students on how to walk through the gallery

Viewing instructions will depend on your goals for the activity. If the purpose of the gallery walk is to introduce students to new material, you might want them to take informal notes as they walk around the room. If the purpose of the gallery walk is for students to take away particular information, you can create a graphic organizer for students to complete as they view the “exhibit,” or compile a list of questions for them to answer based on the texts on display. Sometimes teachers ask students to identify similarities and differences among a collection of texts. Or, teachers give students a few minutes to tour the room and then, once seated, ask them to record impressions about what they saw. Students can take a gallery walk on their own or with a partner. You can also have them travel in small groups, announcing when groups should move to the next piece in the exhibit. One direction that should be emphasized is that students are supposed to disperse themselves around the room. When too many students cluster around one text, it not only makes it difficult for students to view the text, but it also increases the likelihood of off-task behavior.

POSTER ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

What are the main colors used in the poster?

What symbols (if any) are used in the poster?

If a symbol is used, is it

- clear (easy to interpret)? _____
- memorable? _____
- dramatic? _____

Are the messages in the poster primarily visual, verbal, or both?

Who do you think is the intended audience for the poster?

What does the Government hope the audience will do?

What Government purpose(s) is served by the poster?

The most effective posters use symbols that are unusual, simple, and direct. Is this an effective poster?

PHOTO ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Step 1. Observation

Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

People	Objects	Activities

Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

Step 3. Questions

What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

Where could you find answers to them?