

PROPAGANDA LESSON

PURPOSE: To help students think critically and analyze media in the context of literary works, social sciences and current events.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (Grades 6 – 12)

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS for ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS & LITERACY

2010, pages 34, 60 (CCSSI_ELA STANDARDS.PDF from <http://www.corestandards.org>)

These standards are the same as in the MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY, 2011, pages 47, 73. (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/commoncore/>)

PART I – Understanding Propaganda

Begin with a definition of propaganda

Have students write individually and/or discuss in small groups:

How would you define propaganda?

Where do you find it?

Can you give a few examples?

Share with the class.

Definition:

Statements, ideas, allegations or facts that are often false, exaggerated or distorted. These rumors are spread and repeated in order to help or damage an institution, product, cause, person or group. Propaganda changes thinking and behavior.

Propaganda abounds in politics, advertising, sports, and nearly every aspect of our lives. Websites, twitter, facebook, blogs, emails, news reports, television commercials, books, pamphlets, movies, posters, slogans, and songs all convey messages with no geographical boundaries. Because propaganda changes thinking and behavior, it is imperative that we understand it and use this understanding to critically analyze the media we are bombarded with.

Assignment: Tools of Propaganda

Students are to search all types of media for the tools of propaganda in the list. They are to compile them into a booklet or Powerpoint. Each page would contain 1) the name of

the tool; 2) a one-sentence description of how the item found fits the type of propaganda; 3) the message that is being conveyed – what the item is trying to convince the reader of; 4) the source (citation). Suggestion: limit the internet citations to three or four.

Encourage students to use a variety of sources, (song lyrics, TV and newspaper/magazine ads, political cartoons, campaign slogans, books, etc.)

1. **Name Calling** – labeling or stereotyping (often used to instill a negative opinion of a group or a set of beliefs)
2. **Band Wagon** – join the crowd, everyone else is doing it (buying product X, voting for candidate Y)
3. **Transfer** – relating something or someone well-liked or respected to a product, group or idea (often using symbols)
4. **Big Lie** – untrue statements that can be oversimplifications or contain a grain of truth so as to be believable; often these are repeated until they seem to be true
5. **Card Stacking** – showing only one side of the product or situation (Cherry picking or being selective with the truth); showing only presenting a biased stand, burying or discrediting opposing evidence
6. **Glittering Generality** – using emotionally appealing words for a product or idea instead of giving a concrete representation, argument or analysis
7. **Plain Folks Appeal** – using everyday people to sell a product or idea
8. **Distortion of the Facts** – exaggerating, twisting or giving half-truths to persuade others to believe or behave in a certain way
9. **Testimonial** – Using well-known or respected people to sell a product or idea
10. **Prejudice Headline** – Using a title that only tells a part of the story or emphasizes the desired viewpoint
11. **Black-and-White Fallacy** – Only two choices are given, with the desired product or idea being the better or obvious choice

The above information was gleaned from a lesson taught by Mr. Bush at Longfellow Junior High School in Fairfax Virginia in 1962. This lesson had such a powerful effect on me that I look at news and ads through this lens even today. (I still have the booklet I did in his class.)

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Part II – Propaganda and Media as Related to History and Anti-Semitism

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum has developed an excellent educational resource on this topic:

<http://www.ushmm.org/confront-antisemitism/teaching-about-antisemitism/educational-modules-based-on-audio-podcasts/propaganda-and-media#Activities>