

Politics and Film: Propaganda and Its Influence During the Cold War

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INTRODUCTION

During the seminar Great Films and How They Shaped American Politics, I have focused on the connection and influence of films and literature. Films and literature have always been great representatives of what is going on in society. War, religion, education, civil rights, and the economy are a few of the important topics that concern people. Their opinions on these subjects form the bases of how they vote, which paves the way of America's future. Whenever I speak to my students about these subjects, they tend to regurgitate what their parents, friends, or the media feel. It is difficult to get them to form their own opinion. One way that I hope to help them with this is through the analysis of propaganda.

My students are freshmen at Carnegie Vanguard. The Vanguard program is a magnet program for gifted and talented (GT) students. It centers on offering students of all backgrounds a chance to control and shape their own education. Teachers are encouraged to have student-centered classes and instruction. These students are unique because they need the freedom to explore topics as deeply as they wish. Differentiated instruction is fully embraced and employed at Carnegie. GT students often have outstanding abilities and are capable of accomplishing more than an average student. Because of this, one of the main problems teachers face with GT students is keeping them engaged in the lesson. If GT students lose interest in the lesson or topic, it is very difficult to get them to do any of the work. In my experience, most of my GT students can be very lazy, so I have to spend a lot of time trying to present my lessons in a creative way. Film is always popular, but I cannot simply show them a movie – I must make them relate it to a piece of literature and their lives. I must make them care about it and show them how that can be applied to their own lives.

My curriculum unit is for high school English classes, but specifically for 9th graders because of the material presented. However, the lessons are applicable to any level with just a few modifications. I will use the novel *Brave New World* and the films *Mission to Moscow* and *Dr. Strangelove*. Through the novel and the films, the students will analyze and evaluate the use of propaganda and its influence in society.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the term “propaganda” is “the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person; ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause; *also* : a public action having such an effect.” More specifically, a propaganda novel is one that deals with these issues, but tends to eclipse all other elements of a novel like plot and character (Holman and Harmon 398). Students must understand the various levels of propaganda in the media: commercial, political, *etc.* Is a commercial for shampoo propaganda? It could be suggested that on a minor level it is because it is spreading information to make money for a business. However, the impact a shampoo commercial has on society is far smaller than a politically charged film or novel. Students will come to understand both the scope and the scale of propaganda. Additionally, students should understand that propaganda is used to

manipulate an audience in order to believe a certain idea, whether that idea is fact or not does not matter.

My students respond best when they can personally relate to the lesson I am teaching. My vanguard students will take it a step further and apply the lesson to their own lives and evaluate the objective for themselves. By reading novels and watching films that show propaganda on both sides of the same issue, in this case communism and the Cold War, my students will be able to fully understand this concept and be able to create their own forms of propaganda.

OBJECTIVES: TEKS -- §110.42. English I

- 1.B. Student will write in a voice and style appropriate to audience and purpose.
- 4.F. Student will compile written ideas and representations into reports, or other formats and draw conclusions.
- 5.B. Student will respond productively to peer review of his/her own work.
- 7.H. Student will draw inferences such as conclusions, generalizations and predictions.
- 9.A. Student will recognize distinctive and shared characteristics of cultures through reading.
- 9.B. Student will compare text events with his/her own and others' experiences.
- 10.C. Student will compare reviews of literature, film, etc. with his/her own responses.
- 11.B. Student will analyze the relevance of setting and time frame to text's meaning.
- 12.B. Student will evaluate the credibility of information sources and determine the writer's motives.
- 13.B. Student will locate appropriate print and non-print information using texts and technical sources.
- 14.C. Student will monitor speaker's message for clarity and understanding, such as asking relevant questions to clarify understanding.
- 19.B. Student will analyze relationships, ideas, and cultures as represented in various media.
- 21.A. Student will examine the effect of media on constructing his/her own perception of reality.

RATIONALE

To give students a true understanding of the impact that propaganda can have, they must conduct a comparison study of film and literature. In addition, the students must be able to differentiate between the two media of communication and infer their overall effectiveness. However, students must first be able to grasp the sheer scope of propaganda. They must understand and differentiate between persuasion and propaganda. They must be able to accurately define and appreciate the specific intent behind each application.

“To the truism that modern wars are fought with words as well as weapons must be added ‘images,’ especially moving picture images” (Startt). There are few media outlets with the same capacity for exposure and captivity as film and television. Ever since the silent films became “talkies,” our culture has been fascinated by the visual media. Few literature writers could ever hope to reach the same size audience or create the same gut-reaction as the film and television writers do. It is no surprise that in our country as soon as infants are able to sit on their own, they are propped up in front of the television because it instantly captivates them, calming them into a trance-like stupor.

This goes to show that the power of propaganda on film is both extensive and far-reaching. In fact, I believe that the power of film is so suggestive that by merely exposing my students to the films I have chosen, they will become intrinsically aware of the propaganda elements that are used (albeit diluted) in everyday newspaper print and television. I believe that the cumulative effect of this curriculum unit will be the awareness of the students long after they have left my classroom. I want them to understand how much the world has changed since my childhood, and

how much it will change again by the time that they are my age. I believe that it is crucial for our students not just to know the definition of “propaganda,” but also to have had an opportunity to live it so that they will never forget.

UNIT BACKGROUND

The main purpose for writing this unit is to help my students find their own connections to the many manifestations of propaganda that are being used today. I want them to go out into the world with a complete awareness of their surroundings. This unit specifically provides an opportunity for the students to take a closer look at the messages that are inundating them everyday. I believe that the films and literature that highlight the Cold War era are ideal for not only allowing a cross-curricular connection between social studies and literature, but also for understanding the motives behind the messages. With a close examination into the Cold War, the students will be able to achieve a dynamic understanding of the emotions and perspectives held by the Russians and the Americans. In addition, they will be able to find and create their own examples of propaganda which will reveal just how subtle and prevalent it is in our daily lives.

Whether it is the patriotism we feel when we watch a movie like *Rocky IV* or *The Patriot*, there is a feeling of camaraderie and pride in the “us versus them” mentality. In the portrayal of conflicts, films use the clear distinction of “good guys versus bad guys” so that the audience never has to doubt which side they are cheering for. In fact, in classic Westerns, the directors made it even easier by putting the hero in a white hat and the villain in a black hat.

In 1985, *Rocky IV* captivated audiences as the fight between the United States of America and the Soviet Union was metaphorically portrayed through the clash of boxers. We feel our hearts break when Rocky Balboa’s friend, Apollo Creed, is killed in the boxing ring by a Russian named Ivan Drago (Dolph Lundgren). And we cheer Rocky (Sylvester Stallone) on as he trains to defeat the Russian boxer in honor of Creed (Carl Weathers). We travel to the formerly known U.S.S.R. with Rocky and hold our breath as he fights for everything our country stands for while wearing our American colors on his boxing shorts. This film is the quintessential expression of the “good guys” versus the “bad guys.” With the residual feelings of the Cold War, this film reduces the clash of our global super powers to two boxers in a ring. And, when Rocky finally defeats Ivan Drago, we, as Americans, share in his victory as balance has finally been restored to our world.

In 2000, Mel Gibson’s *The Patriot* was the ultimate combination of action, romance, and, of course, patriotism. In this depiction of the American Revolution, the patriotism we feel as an audience is in the personal sacrifices and struggles that are made by our very likeable character, Benjamin Martin (Mel Gibson). He is a man of honor who walks the fine line between patriotic soldier and protective father. In fact, it is when his son Gabriel (Heath Ledger) enlists in the army that Benjamin becomes involved in the fight against British tyranny. The audience learns quickly to despise the “red coats” just as quickly as we despised the Russian communists in *Rocky IV*. It is with this inherent need for acceptance and patriotism that the unit for understanding the power and impact of film and literature becomes so pivotal.

Providing Context: Giving Meaning to Motive

Today the distinction between the good and the bad is not always so obvious. In order to make this unit accessible to all students, I will provide some examples of modern propaganda (and the potential effects) to provide a context for the students to keep in mind. I will discuss the example of popular websites that are sometimes intentionally misused by students for personal gain. Whether these Internet postings are used to win a student government election, start a rumor, or share homework answers, it is crucial for them to make the connection to the motives behind certain rhetorical manipulations. In addition, they will begin to see the bigger picture of the impact that these actions can have on a large group, or an individual’s life.

Students can easily relate to the power of technology by considering the many uses of the Internet. Some contemporary versions of advertisements that occasionally cross the line into becoming forms of propaganda are: blogs, and websites like *Myspace* and *Facebook*. Students can readily acknowledge the power that these applications can have. Websites that began as innocent venues for cyber-socialization have transgressed into the realm of domination. In fact, it is becoming more and more common for instances of “cyber-bullying” to occur. In earlier generations, bullies had to make the physical effort and take the personal risk of bullying their victims in person. However, with the advent of technology, bullies can now sit comfortably in their homes while inflicting damage upon the character of a classmate. This trend is becoming so prevalent that there is even a website specifically designed for children to learn what it is and how they can stop it (www.stopcyberbullying.org).

Cyber-bullying can begin harmlessly enough with one teenager sending another teenager excessive or unwanted emails and can then progress into full-on frontal assaults. With the ease of creating free websites, many teenagers have found themselves the unlucky victim of a fraudulent and damaging website with defames their personal character. In addition, with camera cell phones and the infinite nature of cyberspace, once a website, video, posting, or picture is created on the Internet, it is never truly eradicated – not to mention the sheer volume of spectators that have the potential to come across the unsavory attack. Long gone are the days of simple graffiti on a bathroom wall. In fact, nowadays, students are able to shred the integrity of a peer, or a faculty member, simply by creating their own extreme propaganda on the Internet.

In order to understand the seriousness of social trends like cyber-bullying, students must be able to associate this act of tyranny with the same motivations that propelled the propaganda promoting social extremes in the United States and in Russia during the Cold War. By using the example of cyber-bullying, students will be able to immediately empathize with the victims of the biased propaganda in this Cold War era study.

Propaganda

To begin a genuine understanding of the social impact that can occur through the use of propaganda, I believe that the term must be credited with both its neutral and negative connotations. Unlike the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition for the term “propaganda,” which merely identifies it as “the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person; ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause; *also*: a public action having such an effect,” it is commonly considered to be a far more nefarious manipulation technique. Jacques Ellul, widely known for his fervent criticism of propaganda and its deliberate manipulation of the specified target audience, describes propaganda as “rhetorical action” (Kliver 2). He criticizes both the media and the government for using propaganda “to override rational discourse and critical thinking” (Kliver 5). In the application mentioned by Ellul, the use of propaganda transforms the information into an action deliberately meant to replace our own better judgment.

In fact, Jacques Ellul further defines propaganda by its most common methodology. Ellul states that it is “a set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulations and incorporated in an organization” (Kliver 5). Ellul makes the clear distinction that the use of propaganda is not only deliberate, but also founded in psychological manipulations of a group of individuals. It is the social sciences, like psychology, that are founded and devoted to the actual science behind the understanding and influencing of the behaviors of individuals. It is with this understanding of how to de-code and influence an individual that the power of propaganda rests. “When this powerful understanding of human

motivation is merged with the totalizing nature of the mass media, the individual finds it very difficult to make independent judgment” (Kluver 7). The impact of this methodology can be seen most clearly in one of the most common versions of propaganda, political.

Political propaganda was clearly used during times of social and political agitation, such as the Holocaust of WWII, the Cold War, and even in the current struggle our country faces against the elusive “terrorism” we are battling abroad and in Iraq. Political propaganda is commonly based upon hatred and “consists of attributing one’s misfortune to ‘another,’ who must be killed in order to assure the disappearance of those misfortunes and sins” (Kluver 10). It is this universal theme of “us versus them” that has pervaded every form of mass communication, including films and literature.

The Cold War

At the end of World War II, the United States of America was one of the major players in a stand-off that pitted the East with the West. In this time period, a rivalry developed between the United States and the Soviet Union (then known as the U.S.S.R.). The rivalry was most notably between the ideals of Democracy and Capitalism versus both the economic theory and government policies of Communism. And, looming over the conflict between the two global powerhouses, was the continual threat of nuclear war.

During the years 1945 – 1991, the tension and competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was markedly prevalent until the collapse of the U.S.S.R. The phrase “cold war” was coined by Bernard Baruch in 1947 and signified the ideological, economic, and diplomatic aggression between the U.S. and the Soviet Union (“General Cold War History”). It was not just the economic principals that were at stake during the period of the Cold War. The United States was concerned about the military-based expansion of communism. During WWII, “the Soviet Union had annexed three formerly independent countries – Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia – and after the war it set up puppet regimes in the eastern European countries occupied by its troops” (“General Cold War History”). It became the foreign policy of the United States to attempt to contain the military expansion of Communism through forced containment. Because the Soviet Union and the United States were global superpowers, many countries made the decision to align themselves with either the East (Soviet Union) or the West (United States). And, although the two countries were never forced into a face-to-face battle, they were frequently drawn into smaller “brushfire battles,” such as the Korean and Vietnamese Wars, as participants in the Communist versus non-Communist struggle (“General Cold War History”).

Countries that did not immediately choose to join forces with the East or West were courted through heavily biased and persuasive propaganda. Each side of the conflict would portray its way of life as superior to the opposition while depicting the other side as flawed, evil, or inefficient. For instance, the Soviet Union was known for portraying itself as a peace-loving utopia that enabled the simultaneous shared prosperity of every citizen. However, the United States (through the eyes of a communist) would appear to be imperialistic and warmongering through the oppression of the less affluent citizens of their country (“General Cold War History”). In sharp contrast, the Western countries would publicize the tales of personal achievement and the availability of unlimited prosperity for hard-working citizens in a democracy while describing the oppression, domination, and government control that communism exerted over its citizens (“General Cold War History”). To further the cause of the Western countries, they argued that “the Soviet Union and China traditionally tried to dominate their smaller neighbors, whereas the colonial empires of the West had been broken up and the colonies given independence” (“General Cold War History”).

Through both military and space exploration advancements, the growing concern that the “other” global superpower was more equipped or advanced than they were was a very real and

all-consuming concern for both the United States and the Soviet Union. In fact, when it became common knowledge that each country was equipped with a nuclear weapon, anxiety increased and became a very somber threat to each country, as well as the rest of the globe. As a child of the 1980s, I can still remember how the “Land of Confusion” music video, from the pop band Genesis, depicted a parody of a caricatured President Reagan accidentally hitting the “Nuke” button next to his bed as he fumbles for the “Nurse” button. The music video cuts to the scene of a mushroom cloud from a nuclear bomb. Throughout the video, while several other world leaders (such as Mussolini, Mikhail Gorbachev, Muammar al-Gaddafi) are caricatured as a Sinatra “rat pack,” and while President Reagan is portrayed as both physically and intellectually inept, the message is clear – the threat of nuclear warfare is looming and is only a button’s push away from happening. I remember as a child finding the caricatured characters in the video amusing while my parents found the video less humorous because their generation had lived with the very real threat of the Cold War all of their lives. And, as our students were born after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the imminent threat of nuclear war has ended, if you have the time to show this music video to your classes (accompanied with a printout of the song lyrics), I believe it will further enhance the students’ understanding of both how close we were to nuclear war, and also the toll that the ever-impending doom of the Cold War had on an entire generation of adults. Additionally, if you have a parent, friend, or co-worker that can come and speak to your students, they will get an additional viewpoint on the impact that the Cold War had on the Americans that were raised during this period of global tension.

Another aspect of the Cold War that our students need to be introduced to is the terminology specifically associated with this period of tension and conflict. Terms like “checkpoint Charlie,” “DEFCON,” “arms race,” and “missile gap” are some of the most notable terms to result directly from the historical period of the Cold War. “Checkpoint Charlie” was a term used before the fall of the Berlin wall to refer to a specific crossing point between East and West Berlin (Rosenberg). “DEFCON” was an acronym used to represent the military phrase “defense readiness condition.” When a DEFCON alert was used, it was accompanied by a number, 1-5, to indicate the state of readiness that the U.S. military was advised to maintain. For example, DEFCON 5 was an indication of normal, peace-time conditions, while DEFCON 1 alerted the U.S. military to prepare its maximum capacity for force readiness, or war (Rosenberg). The term “arms race” was a reference to the “massive military build-up, especially of nuclear weapons, by both the Soviet Union and the United States in an effort to gain military superiority” (Rosenberg). And, as a result of the arms race, the term “missile gap” describes the insecurity within the United States that the Soviet Union had “greatly surpassed the U.S. in its stockpile of nuclear missiles” (Rosenberg). These terms are just a few examples you can use with your students to convey the emotion and the power that the threat of nuclear war had on our country during the Cold War.

One of the most fascinating resources of our time is the book titled *A Study of Communism* written by J. Edgar Hoover. This book is a timeless example of the American propaganda view of the sentiment held by the United States during the Cold War. The credentials of J. Edgar Hoover as a communism expert are captured on the inside cover of the book. Listed with the publisher information, the author is declared to be “eminently qualified as an authority on communism,” because as the Director of the F.B.I. he has conducted “numerous investigations and extensive research regarding all phases of Communist activity” (Hoover). And beginning on page 195, Hoover details a side-by-side comparison of “Communism vs. Freedom.” Hoover directly compares the philosophies and policies of the Soviet Union to those held by patriotic Americans who support Democracy. The side-by-side comparison is organized by smaller sub-groups for quick and easy reference. The categories provided in Hoover’s comparison are: aims, criticism, economy, elections, education, employment, government, human rights, law, political parties, property, “religion and morality,” trade unions and travel (Hoover 195-203). I think that this book is an excellent supplemental resource to use as a manipulative with your students if you

can get a copy of the book for them to see for themselves. If you are not able to procure a copy of the book for your lesson, you can still provide the resource to them by referring to excerpts that you are able to access through your library or the Internet. For instance, Hoover describes one of the Communism economic policies as “the economy is totally planned, directed and controlled by the state,” while the policy of Freedom (i.e. the United States) is stated as “our free-enterprise economy is based on competition” (Hoover 196). Additionally, the book contains many charts, graphs and images to illustrate the Hoover’s position on Communism. One such example lists the chief methods used to disseminate the communist propaganda into the United States with examples such as: newspapers and magazines, books and pamphlets, entertainment, radio, and front organizations (Hoover). This background on the Cold War should more than adequately prepare your students for their exploration into the identification and understanding of propaganda, as well as the examples of military tension from the Cold War.

Films and Literature

Although you can add to these lesson plans additional films or pieces of literature, I have created a curriculum unit using the films: *Mission to Moscow* (1943) and *Dr. Strangelove, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), as well as the novel *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley. For the sake of time, I have chosen these pieces and will achieve depth through the lessons I have provided. However, the propaganda lessons I have provided are infinitely customizable. It would be fairly easy to expand on the lessons I have provided in the event that a survey lesson with multiple pieces of literature, or films, is preferable to a more limited and detailed lesson plan. For instance, the novel *Men Like Gods* by H.G. Wells, published in 1921, would make an excellent addition to this lesson as it depicts the utopian ideal that is often credited as being Huxley’s inspiration for writing *Brave New World*.

The 1943 film *Mission to Moscow* presents Joseph Stalin's era of the Soviet Union in a favorable light. It was adapted by the book by Joseph E. Davies, the former U.S. Ambassador to Russia (Bruyey). The film was originally made at the request of Franklin Delano Roosevelt during WWII in order to increase the American perception and support of the Soviet Union because we shared a common enemy in the Nazi regime of Germany (Bruyey). This film was essentially used as American propaganda to soften our image of the Soviet Union.

In contrast, the 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove* depicts a U.S. Air Force General as he succumbs to his paranoia that “the communists are conspiring to pollute the ‘precious bodily fluids’ of the American people” and deploys a bomber to drop a nuclear missile on Communist Russia (Tinto). The Soviet Ambassador who is present in the War Room during deliberations informs the U.S. President Merkin Muffley that if a nuclear bomb is deployed within the U.S.S.R. it will activate a “doomsday” machine that will eradicate all of the plant and animal life on the planet (Tinto). As the President attempts to weigh his options, the military advisor to the President laments that the U.S. did not think of the “doomsday” machine before Russia and the former-Nazi Dr. Strangelove comments that the machine would not be an effective deterrent in response to a nuclear attack (Tinto). It is the over-the-top characters that provide a humorous depiction of the looming threat of the chain-reaction that could result from a single person deciding to begin a nuclear war. In this film, the United States politicians and military represent an exaggerated example of the Russian fears in the Cold War.

In Aldous Huxley’s 1932 novel *Brave New World*, the utopian society idealized by the communist philosophy is captured in vivid detail. This novel can be used as the catalyst for class discussions on propaganda as the students look at it from the perspective of a “Russian” and an “American.” The society depicted in Huxley’s novel is the result of exaggerated expectations for advancements in reproductive technology, biological engineering, and the advent of sleep learning. In the year A.D. 2540, the civilization is “an unsettling, loveless and even sinister

place” (Pearce). For American audiences, the emotionless vacuum that is life in the sterile utopian society is to be pitied. However, in the Russian perspective, the very same society has achieved the pinnacle of homogeneity and equality. “In *Brave New World*, Huxley contrives to exploit the anxieties of his bourgeois audience about *both* Soviet Communism and Fordist American capitalism” (Pearce). Therefore, this novel will provide the essential catalyst for classroom discussions of propaganda, film, literature, and the clash of cultures during the Cold War.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson plans are designed to span approximately two 90 minute periods or four 45 minute periods *as a minimum*

Lesson Plan One: Introduction to Propaganda

Objectives: 4.A., 4.F., 5.B., 9.A., 12.B., 19.B., 21.A.

Materials: Student Journals, Dictionaries, Magazines, Sample Posters (printed examples of Propaganda War Posters), Scissors, Tape or Glue, Markers, and Poster Boards

Resources:

1. American Propaganda Posters During WWII
<http://www.firstworldwar.com/posters/usa.htm>
2. Russian Propaganda Posters During WWII
<http://www.firstworldwar.com/posters/russia.htm>
3. Cold War Propaganda Posters
<http://shs.westport.k12.ct.us/jwb/collab/ColdWar/Propaganda/Propaganda.htm>
4. Background: Museum Website for the Cold War
http://www.coldwar.org/museum/museum_features.html

Warm-UP/Do Now: Write the following question on the board and direct students to answer the question in their journal: *What is the definition of “Propaganda”?* (And ask them to cite as many examples as they can come up with.)

On the board, write the K-W-L chart with 3 columns enclosed in a box. Next, you will direct the students to share their answers with the class. For everything that the class answers for the warm-up, write the answers in the “K” column (K = What they already KNOW). After everyone in the class has contributed, ask the class as a whole to provide the questions that they would like to have answered regarding any information they did not already know about propaganda under the “W” column (W = What they WANT to know). After this is complete, instruct the students to copy the chart into their journals. Explain that over the course of this unit, they will be able to fill in the “L” column (L = What they have LEARNED).

Procedures/Activities:

Begin by providing students with a brief background lecture to outline the history of propaganda and describing the most common applications of it. Be sure to emphasize some of the most notorious examples of propaganda and explain the motive to the class.

Begin the activity by asking the students to assemble into smaller groups. You will provide each group with a dictionary, a poster board, scissors, tape/glue, and a marker. Designate one student to be the “materials manager” and make sure that they are responsible for returning the supplies at the end of each class period.

Each group will begin by getting the dictionary definition of “propaganda.” They will write the definition at the top of their poster board with the marker. Next, they will begin to search through the magazine you have provided to begin pulling out images, words, and phrases that they think will combine to make a powerful message. You will provide each student group with a printed copy of a propaganda war poster (any pre-war/during war/post-war poster).

As a group, they will scan the magazine and cut out the phrases and images that they think will be most effective to create a powerful and suggestive propaganda poster (on any school appropriate topic). They will tape or glue the magazine images onto the provided poster board. They must make sure that all of the words and images clearly contribute to one primary message.

Finally, each group will write a brief explanation on the back of the poster board to explain what their poster is promoting and why they think it qualifies as propaganda.

Evaluation/Assessment:

Each student group will present their poster board to the rest of the class. They will silently hold up their poster as their classmates guess what the message is. And, after all guesses have been made, the group will reveal the focus of their propaganda. Once the assignment has been completed, you will hang them on the classroom wall for continuous reference and comparison for their final product at the end of the unit.

Lesson Plan Two: Introduction to American Propaganda

Objectives: 1.B., 9.A., 10.C., 11.B.

Materials: “Mission to Moscow”

Resources:

1. Comprehensive list of War Movies
<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/Warfilm.html>
2. American Propaganda Poster Images
<http://images.google.com/images?um=1&hl=en&q=american+propaganda>

Warm-UP/Do Now: Ask the students to create a journal page for the movie. On each page have them write the following questions:

- 1) Who is the propaganda against?
- 2) What is the other group/culture afraid of?
- 3) Why was this film made?
- 4) What tactics are they using? (fear, exaggeration, humor, etc)
- 5) If this film were to be re-made today, how would it be different?

Procedures/Activities:

As students watch the movie – ask them to complete their journal response questions. In addition, ask the students to consider what makes American Propaganda “American”? Is it the use of specific images or sentiments?

After the film, have the students share their responses voluntarily with the class.

Evaluation/Assessment:

Create a discussion circle where the students are able to discuss why the movie was powerful & describe how it was effective? Was it the skill/talent of the filmmaker or actors? Was it the message? And, ask them to consider if they believe the film might have been influential at the time of its original release.

Lesson Plan Three: Introduction to Russian Propaganda

Objectives: 1.B., 7.H., 9.A., 9.B., 10.C., 11.B., 12.B., 21.A.

Materials: Novel: *Brave New World*, Film: *Dr. Strangelove*

Resources:

Russian Propaganda Poster Images

<http://images.google.com/images?hl=en&q=russian+propaganda&um=1&ie=UTF-8>

Warm-UP/Do Now: Ask your students to respond to the question: *What issues do you think Russian Propaganda would portray? How?* Ask them to consider how Russian posters and literature might vary compared to the U.S. versions.

Procedures/Activities:

Divide your class (ahead of time) into two different student groups. Assign one group to read *Brave New World* from the perspective of the Russians, and one group to read from the perspective of Americans. Remind the Russian group that they are in favor of the Utopia that the communist government control affords them, and then, remind the American group that they are against excessive government involvement in their daily lives.

Daily Homework: Have each group write down their daily responses to the novel as they read.

With most of the reading being completed outside of the classroom, show the class *Dr. Strangelove* during class time. Ask them to consider how the film could be classified as Propaganda. As the students watch the film, ask them to answer the same five questions they answered for the other film.

For *Dr. Strangelove* ask your students if/how humor was effective to make a point. Ask them to describe their perception of the “effectiveness” of the message based upon the director’s decision to use exaggerated humor.

Group Work: After both groups have completed the novel, instruct the “Russian” group to compare their film with the idealized utopia of communism, and ask the “American” group to examine the events in the novel to identify extreme conditions of government control from the American perspective.

Ask both groups to discuss the effectiveness of the exaggerated humor in the film *Dr. Strangelove*.

After the groups have been able to collaborate among themselves, instruct them to prepare a “teaching lesson” for the other group to teach them about the novel they read from the perspective of their assigned group.

Evaluation/Assessment:

Student Groups will present their information to the other class group. They will have prepared their lesson with the use of technology to provide supplemental research sources for their instructional material. Each group will create a 10-minute PowerPoint slide show to convey their information to the other group.

Lesson Plan Four: Comprehensive Application of Propaganda

Objectives: 1.B., 5.B., 7.H., 9.A., 9.B., 10.C., 11.B., 12.B., 13.B., 14.C., 19.B., 21.A.

Materials: Student Journals, Dictionaries, Magazines, Sample Posters (printed examples of Propaganda War Posters), Scissors, Tape or Glue, Markers & Poster Boards

Resources:

Miscellaneous Images of Propaganda Posters

<http://images.google.com/images?hl=en&q=propaganda+posters&um=1&ie=UTF-8>

Warm-UP/Do Now:

Instruct your students to complete the “L” column in their student journal. In this column they will synthesize the knowledge they have acquired and be able to summarize it into a concise description of propaganda. Remind them to refer to the questions the class listed in the “W” column as a guide for what information they should be able to provide on their own now. Once everyone has completed, have the students share their answers orally, or by calling them to the board one at a time.

Procedures/Activities:

Refer the students to the groups they had in Lesson One. Instruct the “materials manager” to collect the supplies. Based upon their new-found knowledge and understanding about the depth and complexity of propaganda, ask the students to make new propaganda posters. Instruct them to follow the same assembly procedure as the previous poster. Make it clear that they are to create an original propaganda poster, not duplicate a poster that they have already seen.

In addition, have them define the term “propaganda” in their own words on the back of the poster board.

Upon completion, instruct each group to present their poster to the class.

Evaluation/Assessment:

Hang the newest propaganda poster underneath or over the previous poster to allow a side-by-side comparison. Ask each group to offer a peer review of another group’s posters. Ask them to describe the difference between the two posters: paying attention to the clarity, aesthetics, and power of the message they created.

CONCLUSION

With this unit, I hope that I am able to give students a true understanding of the impact that propaganda can have on an individual, society, and culture. It is my desire that they must be able to differentiate between the two media (film and literature) of mass-market communication and infer their overall effectiveness in society. However, students will not only understand the sheer scope of propaganda, they will easily be able to differentiate between mere persuasion and propaganda. And, with their ability to accurately identify and appreciate the intent hidden behind each application of persuasive communication and propaganda, students will be more cognizant of the world that surrounds them.

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