

# Lesson Title: Power of Persuasion — Propaganda Then & Now

Author: The National Museum of Military Vehicles



## Mission:

This Lesson Plan has been developed by the National Museum of Military Vehicles (NMMV) to facilitate scholastic visits to our institution. This Lesson Plan provides instructors with the framework to develop a detailed lesson plan for a field trip to the NMMV, by providing references to Wyoming State educational standards. This Lesson Plan is intended to serve as a starting point, recognizing that every School District has different standards and formats for their Lesson Plans.

## Description:

During World War II, propaganda was used to convey a variety of messages to the American Homefront including a scarcity of goods and materials, recruit military and civilian workers, vilify the enemy, preserve morale and promote Patriotism. In this lesson, students will compare and contrast a variety of different examples of American and foreign propaganda. Students will also explore the morality of messaging and discuss a government's obligation to the truth and the consequences of negative propaganda.

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## Grade Level: 6-8

**Theme:** Analyzing historical propaganda and its influence on civic behavior, media literacy, and public opinion

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## Wyoming Social Studies Standards Alignment (Grades 6-8)

### Grade Standard Description

- |     |         |                                                                                  |
|-----|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6-8 | SS2.1.2 | Describe the role of government and citizens in a democracy.                     |
| 6-8 | SS2.4.2 | Analyze how media and communication influence public opinion.                    |
| 6-8 | SS2.5.1 | Use visual tools (e.g., posters, timelines, maps) to interpret information.      |
| 6-8 | SS5.1.1 | Identify how people, events, and ideas shape communities.                        |
| 6-8 | SS3.1.3 | Explain how conflict and cooperation among groups and nations influence history. |

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## Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze WWII propaganda posters for message, technique, and emotional impact
- Evaluate ethical implications of persuasive messaging
- Compare historical propaganda to modern media strategies
- Create and present a civic message using persuasive techniques
- Reflect on the role of citizens in shaping public discourse

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## Vocabulary

- Propaganda
- Bias
- Civic Responsibility

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- Media Literacy
- Symbolism
- Public Opinion

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## Procedure

### 1. Hook: Media Flashback

Show a WWII propaganda (can be found at <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers-of-persuasion>) poster alongside a modern PSA or social media ad. Ask:

- What do you notice?
- Who is the audience?
- What action is being encouraged?

### 2. Gallery Walk & Analysis

Students rotate through stations featuring WWII posters. At each station, they complete a worksheet analyzing:

- Message and target audience
- Emotional appeal and technique
- Ethical considerations

### 3. Mini-Seminar Discussion

In small groups, students discuss:

- What makes a message persuasive?
- When does persuasion become manipulation?
- How should governments balance truth and influence?

### 4. Interactive Piece: Civic Media Lab

Students work in teams to design a modern civic message campaign. Each team chooses a topic (e.g., voting, conservation, kindness, digital safety) and creates:

- A persuasive poster
- A short script for a video or audio PSA
- A reflection on their messaging choices and ethical considerations

### 5. Gallery & Showcase

Teams present their campaigns in a classroom “Civic Media Gallery.” Peers use a feedback sheet to evaluate clarity, impact, and ethical responsibility.

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## Assessment

- Completed poster analysis worksheet
  - Participation in seminar discussion
  - Civic Media Lab project (poster, script, reflection)
  - Peer feedback and self-assessment
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## Civic Media Lab Handout #1: Campaign Planning Guide

**Team Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_

(e.g., Voting, Conservation, Kindness, Digital Safety, Community Service)

### Step 1: Define Your Message

- What civic issue are you addressing?
- What change or action do you want your audience to take?
- Who is your target audience?

**Our message in one sentence:**

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### Step 2: Persuasive Techniques

Circle the techniques you plan to use:

- ☐ Emotional appeal
- ☐ Symbolism
- ☐ Humor
- ☐ Fear
- ☐ Patriotism
- ☐ Testimonials
- ☐ Repetition
- ☐ Bandwagon
- ☐ Plain folks appeal
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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Explain how you'll use these techniques:

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## Step 3: Poster Design

Sketch your poster layout below. Include visuals, slogans, and design elements.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for students to sketch their poster layout. It occupies the central portion of the page below the instructions.

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## Step 4: PSA Script

Write a short script (30–60 seconds) for a video or audio PSA that supports your campaign.

### Opening Hook:

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### Main Message:

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### Call to Action:

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## Step 5: Ethical Reflection

- Is your message truthful and respectful?
- Could it be misunderstood or cause harm?
- How do you balance persuasion with responsibility?

### Our ethical choices:

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## Civic Media Lab Handout #2: Peer Feedback Form

Team Evaluated: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Message Clarity

- ☐ Very clear and compelling
- ☐ Mostly clear
- ☐ Somewhat unclear
- ☐ Confusing or off-topic

### Persuasive Techniques

- ☐ Strong and effective
- ☐ Good use
- ☐ Limited or inconsistent
- ☐ Not evident

### Ethical Responsibility

- ☐ Thoughtful and respectful
- ☐ Some ethical consideration
- ☐ Minimal reflection
- ☐ No ethical awareness

### Comments & Suggestions

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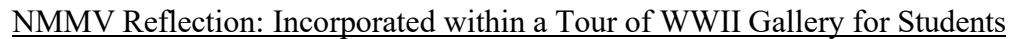
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## Civic Media Lab Rubric

| Criteria                     | 4 – Excellent                                            | 3 – Good                        | 2 – Developing                | 1 – Needs Support            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Message Clarity              | Clear, compelling, and age-appropriate                   | Mostly clear and relevant       | Somewhat unclear or off-topic | Unclear or missing           |
| Use of Persuasive Techniques | Strong use of symbolism, emotion, and audience targeting | Good use of persuasive elements | Limited or inconsistent use   | No clear persuasive strategy |
| Ethical Reflection           | Thoughtful reflection on impact and responsibility       | Some reflection on ethics       | Minimal ethical consideration | No reflection provided       |
| Poster Design                | Visually engaging, well-organized, and supports message  | Clear and relevant visuals      | Basic visuals, limited impact | Unclear or missing visuals   |
| PSA Script                   | Creative, well-paced, and persuasive                     | Clear and relevant              | Basic or incomplete           | Missing or unclear           |
| Team Collaboration           | All members contributed meaningfully                     | Most members participated       | Uneven participation          | Minimal collaboration        |

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1. What was your favorite propaganda poster in the museum?
2. What story does the poster tell you about the past?
3. What groups of people would this propaganda poster be most strongly connected to and why?
4. What new information does this give you about soldiers' lives, especially during WWII?
5. What significant event from WWII plays a role in the present?