

Home Front Involvement During War: WWII vs. War on Terror

Abstract

This lesson will allow students to experience campaign ads and posters used to encourage people in America to ‘support the war effort at home’ during World War Two. Students will analyze three primary sources and discuss issues such as how people were being influenced, what tactics were being used to motivate people (tapping people’s feelings of pride, entitlement, and inclusion), and the variety of possible reasons for such a strong push for people in America to be directly involved in the war efforts (need for resources, need for public support of the war). Students will then compare and contrast the effects of WWII on people ‘at home’ versus the effects of the War on Terror on people ‘at home’, primarily the push for people to become personally involved.

Essential Questions

- In what ways were people in America asked to support the war efforts during WWII?
- What tactics were used to influence and motivate people to help in America during WWII?
- Why was there a large campaign for personal involvement ‘at home’ during WWII?
- How was the ‘war effort on the home front’ for WWII similar and different from that of the current War on Terror?
- What are some major societal differences between the time periods of WWII and the War on Terror that would lead to different levels of the government’s call for help within America during war?

Assessment

- Students will provide written analysis of three primary documents from WWII.
- Students will provide a written and oral analysis of tactics used to motivate people to help during WWII.
- Students will write a reflective paper about how the government has given them a specific feeling in regards to the War on Terror.

Setting the Purpose

Before going into lesson, display ad against drinking and driving on transparency or LCD projector. Ask students: ‘what is the purpose of the ad?’, ‘what does the creator of the ad want the reader to feel when reading it?’, ‘why is the ad so effective in accomplishing the goal?’

Discuss other methods advertisers may use to convince people to act in a certain way or perform a certain task. (lead students toward thinking about what feelings are being tapped – guilt, obligation, pride, strength, fear...)

Lesson

1. After ‘setting the purpose’ display Document A for students (you may also wish to hand out copies). Ask the students the questions from the poster analysis worksheet. Lead a discussion so that students may learn how to critically analyze posters.
2. Put students into pairs or groups of three. Display and hand out Document B and the poster analysis worksheet (you may wish to have the worksheet double sided, as students will complete one more). Allow groups enough time to discuss the poster and complete their analysis worksheet. Briefly review students’ responses as a class.

3. Hand out Document C and have students complete the analysis worksheet independently. Encourage them to provide many details about their thoughts and to even take notes about further comments they may have. Again, briefly discuss students' responses as a class.
4. When students have completed their independent analysis of the final document, ask the students: "What do all three of today's documents have in common?" Discuss the purpose of the three posters. What were people being asked to do?
5. Next ask the students to discuss #6 from their analysis worksheets. Write all the feelings from each poster on the board. Engage the students by encouraging them to discuss why certain feelings are being targeted and why those feelings are most effective in motivating people.
6. Ask students, "Why did the American Government push so hard for people 'at home' to become so personally involved?" (Possible discussion points: there was a real need for resources and people's support at home was the only way to provide those resources / it was a way to allow people to feel involved and continue to support the war).
7. Put students into pairs or small groups. They should do the following:
 - a. Refer to the list of emotions on the board
 - b. Brainstorm how the government might be making people have those feelings today during the War on Terror.
 - c. Answer the question: Is the government trying to encourage people to 'help on the home front' as strongly as they were during WWII?
 - d. Explain what may be different in our society today that causes the needs on the 'home front' to be different.
8. Return as a whole class and discuss students' responses. Take a close look at their brainstorm of how the government is making people feel during the War on Terror. Ask the students: "why would the government want us to have each of these feelings?" "Are the motivations today similar to or different from the motivations during WWII?" "What seems to be different about society during the War on Terror and WWII?"
9. ASSIGNMENT: Hand out directions for final independent assignment as in-class or homework.
10. POSSIBLE EXTENSION: Students can go online to find official advertisements pertaining to the War on Terror. This can be an ad for helping the soldiers abroad, information about preparing for disasters, explanations about airport security, etc. Students can analyze that source using the poster analysis worksheet and describe how this source relates to society today and could not be used during WWII.

Documents

(Provided by the Illinois State Archives – *Illinois At War, 1941 – 1945: A Selection of Documents from the Illinois State Archives*)

A – *You Too Are on The Firing Line*, Waste Elimination, 1943

B – *This is a V-Home Placard*, September 30, 1942

C – *Car Pooling Promotion*, 1943

Other Resources

- Poster Analysis Worksheet: the National Archives and Records Administration - <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/>
- Ad against Drinking and Driving - <http://www.freewebs.com/stjoessadd/>