

Lesson Plan: United States Home Front and Propaganda during World War I

*This lesson was developed by Maine Historical Society for the Seashore Trolley Museum as a companion curriculum for *Teddy Roosevelt, Millie, and the Elegant Ride* by Jean. M. Flahive (2019). The lesson corresponds with themes and topics covered in Chapters 13-21.*

Objectives:

- Students will practice the skills involved in analyzing primary sources.
- Students will be able to describe the lives, work, and contributions of Americans on the home front during World War I using primary sources.
- Students will be able to explain what propaganda is and how it was used by the U.S. government during World War I.

Essential Questions:

1. What was life on the American home front like during World War I?
2. How did the U.S. government use propaganda during the war to encourage U.S. citizens to support the war?

Materials:

- copies of **World War I Poster Questions** worksheet (see below)
- computers with internet access for teacher and student use – teachers and students will need to access Maine Memory Network (www.mainememory.net) to examine the documents and posters used in this lesson and may want to access **Additional Recommended Resources** (see below)
- pen/pencil
- copy (or copies) of *Teddy Roosevelt, Millie, and the Elegant Ride* by Jean Flahive – might be useful for students to have copies on hand, but not imperative for the completion of the activities in this lesson

Timeframe:

Will vary depending on length of class period, class size, etc.; 1-2 days/class periods recommended.

Procedure:

1. Begin with a brief **Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)** exercise with [Maine Memory Network item #9486](#). The photo, “Fourth of July on Squirrel Island, 1918”, was contributed to Maine Memory Network by Stanley Museum. Without reading the title or caption show the photo to the class and ask:
 - i. What is happening in this image?
 - ii. What do you see that makes you say that?
 - iii. What more can we find?

Teachers can find more information on VTS at <https://vtshome.org/>.

2. **Repeat the VTS questions to generate some ideas.** You can choose whether or not to reveal the caption after a few minutes of discussion and discovery. Ask students to consider the following questions and to brainstorm some answers; this can be done by students working as individuals, working with partners/small groups, or as a class.
 - a. **Who is affected when a country goes to war? Is it only the people who are fighting in the war, or is it everyone?**
 - b. **When men joined the armed forces in WWI and left to fight, how did that impact the people they left behind? How were Millie and her family impacted when her brother Nathan joins the army?**
 - c. **How do you think people who did not join the armed services responded to the war? What do you think children like Millie did?**

Ask students to share their answers; record and/or discuss their ideas as a class.

3. As needed, give your students some **brief and general background on World War I**. The war was fought between **1914-1918** and involved nearly all the most powerful countries of the world. The **conflict was between Germany, Austria-Hungary and their allies (usually collectively referred to as the Central Powers) and Great Britain, France, Russia, the United States, and their allies (usually referred to collectively as the Allies)**. There were many causes behind the war, including complicated, entangling **alliances** between countries, **nationalism** (support for your country and its interests), **imperialism** (extending a country’s power by force), and **militarism** (belief in a strong military to be used aggressively to protect or promote a country’s interests). Countries across the world had made alliances with each other and had agreed that if one of them was attacked, the others would go to war in support of that country. Many European countries had also been building large powerful militaries for many years and were anxious to outdo each other and expand their powers, territories, and resources. On **June 28, 1914**, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, **Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was shot and killed** by a Serbian man who thought Serbia should control Bosnia instead of Austria. This caused Austria-Hungary to declare war on Serbia. Allies of Serbia (like Russia) and allies of Austria-Hungary (like Germany) became involved one by one. **The United States entered the war in 1917**.
 - a. Suggested images to help illustrate WWI from Maine Memory Network:
 - i. [WWI postcard from Clifford Rowe to Lloyd Herrick, Augusta, 1917](#)
 - ii. [World War I soldiers standing at attention, Portland, 1917](#)
 - iii. [Fort Levett military training drills, Cushing Island, ca. 1917](#)
 - iv. [Francis Wilbert Bisbee's cadet training tunic, Orono, ca. 1918](#)
 - v. [Red Cross Volunteers, Portland, ca. 1918](#)

4. Explain that today students are going to take a closer look at some primary sources from World War I to try and answer the questions: ***What was life on the American home front like during World War I?*** and ***How did the U.S. government use propaganda during the war to encourage U.S. citizens to support the war?***
5. Explain to students that they are going to **look closely at a propaganda poster from WWI**. Explain that **propaganda is a form of communication that gives information and is meant to be spread around, but the information is always biased and it can be hard to know if the information is true or false**. Propaganda tries to make the person looking at or reading it feel a certain way. Propaganda is often used in wars to keep people's spirits up by telling them their country is doing a good job and fighting for a good cause. Sometimes propaganda tries to make people hate the enemy by making the enemy seem evil or inhuman. Today **propaganda posters can be helpful when studying WWI** by helping us to understand the ways in which the U.S. government asked citizens to help the war effort and how it wanted people feel about the war.
6. Students can work to analyze the posters in several ways:
 - a. Each student analyzes a poster individually.
 - b. Students analyze a poster working with a partner or small group.
 - c. Randomly assign students to each analyze one of the posters and then instruct students to form jigsaw groups and share information on their assigned poster.
7. Assign posters 1-5 to each student, one per student/student group.
 1. [Children and war stamps World War I poster, 1917](#)
 2. [Help him win by saving and serving, World War 1 poster, c. 1918](#)
 3. [My daddy bought me a government bond of the Third Liberty Loan, World War 1 poster, 1917](#)
 4. [War food conservation poster, 1917](#)
 5. [Have you a Red Cross service flag? World War 1 poster, 1918](#)
8. Distribute a copy of a **World War I Poster Questions** worksheet to students (see below). Ask students to examine their poster carefully and to answer the 3 questions on the worksheet.
9. After students have had a chance to examine their poster and complete the worksheet, ask students/student groups to **share their thoughts and answers to the questions**. You can also ask students if they have additional questions prompted by the posters.
10. **Conclusion/Exit ticket:** Ask students to, ***Share one thing you learned by looking at the documents from this lesson about what life was like on the American home front like during World War I and how the U.S. government used propaganda during the war to encourage U.S. citizens to support the war.***

Extension Activities:

1. Have students to create a classroom exhibit about WWI propaganda posters using images from Maine Memory Network.

Additional Recommended Resources:

Maine Memory Network exhibits and slideshows:

[World War I and the Maine Experience](#)

[The Great War and Armistice Day](#)

[Women, War, and the Homefront](#)

Smithsonian:

[World War I](#)

Library of Congress:

[Primary Source Set - World War I](#)

[World War I: What Are We Fighting For Over There?](#)

The National World War I Museum and Memorial

[Educators & Students](#)

BBC

[World War One](#)

Maine Learning Results for Social Studies (2019):

Social Studies, Grades 6-8 – History: Students draw on concepts and processes using primary and secondary sources from history to develop historical perspective and understand issues of continuity and change in the community, Maine, the United States, and world.

- **History 1:** Students understand major eras, major enduring themes, and historic influences in the history of Maine, the United States, and various regions of the world by:
(F1) Explaining that history includes the study of past human experience based on available evidence from a variety of primary and secondary sources; and explaining how history can help one better understand and make informed decisions about the present and future. **(F2)** Identifying major historical eras, major enduring themes, turning points, events, consequences, and people in the history of Maine, the United States, and various regions of the world. **(D2)** Analyzing major historical eras, major enduring themes, turning points, events, consequences, and people in the history of Maine, the United States, and various regions of the world..

Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts Standards » History/Social Studies » Grade 6-8:

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8

Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.10

By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.