

High School ELA - Propaganda

Compelling Question	
What makes effective propaganda?	
Standard	English 1.IB.3.2 Examine historical, social, cultural, or political context to broaden inquiry and create questions English 1.IB: 3.4 Organize and categorize important information; synthesize relevant ideas to build a deeper understanding; communicate new learning; identify implications for future inquiry. English 1.IB.5.1 Acknowledge and consider individual and collective thinking English 1.RI. 11: Analyze and critique how the author uses structures in print and multimedia texts to craft informational and argument writing.
Disciplinary Practice	Analyzing images
Staging the Question	Guided practice of an image. Students have previous practice analyzing art and WWII propaganda by looking at color symbolism, symbolism of objects, and word choice. Students will use this knowledge to analyze the front covers of <i>The Beaumont E</i> .

Supporting Question
What is more impactful, words or images?
Formative Performance Task
Station Activity Students will engage in a group activity that requires print outs of the selected <i>Beaumont E</i> covers, large pieces of paper, writing utensils, and the station activity PPT. Students will be put in groups and will move with their group from table to table to view and analyze the selected covers. At each table, students will have to complete the analysis activity stated on the PPT slide during the time allowed. At the end of the time, students will move to the next table and the next image and perform a different analysis activity. This activity will enable students to view multiple covers, analyze multiple covers, consider other students' analysis, and end with a whole class discussion where they analyze and support which cover was the most effective piece of propaganda.
Featured Sources

Beaumont E (covers only)

- Jan. 1943
- Feb. 15, 1943
- Nov. 1943
- May 1944
- Sept. 1944
- Nov. 1944
- Apr. 1945
- June 1945
- July 1945
- Nov. 1945

**Summative
Performance
Task**

ARGUMENT

What makes effective propaganda? Construct a one page argument using specific example(s) and relevant evidence from sources.

EXTENSION

Create a piece of effective propaganda utilizing what you deemed necessary (impactful words or impactful images or both) for a local business or club. On the back of the original piece, write a short analysis explaining how your work is an effective type of propaganda. Make sure to reference word choice, image symbolism, color symbolism, and type of propaganda used.

What makes effective propaganda?

Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry focuses students on analyzing propaganda and addresses the South Carolina English Standards for English II of:

- Inquiry-Based Literacy Standard 3.3 to “Gather information from a variety of primary...sources and evaluate for perspective, validity, and bias”;
- Reading- Informational Text Standard 7.1 to “Explain how the use of different mediums...impacts the reader’s understanding of events, topics...”;
- Reading-Informational Text Standard 11.2 to “Analyze and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.”

This inquiry will use the front pages of the *Beaumont E*, a business newspaper that was printed for, and by, the Beaumont Manufacturing Company in Spartanburg, SC, as its primary resource. By analyzing the words and images, students will consider what makes effective propaganda. Through this inquiry, students will consider the ways rhetorical devices, diction, and symbolism create effective propaganda. This inquiry would fall after discussion of types of propaganda that students have had in relation to the required English II Honors text *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. This prior knowledge of what makes effective propaganda is important in order for students to practice analyzing the images. This inquiry focuses on the disciplinary practice of analyzing images. This inquiry can be completed in one to two class periods.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “What makes effective propaganda?” students work through supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources to construct an argument supported by evidence. The formative performance tasks enables students to analyze a variety of primary source images that allows the students opportunities to interact with images and with how others perceive the images in order to consider others’ thinking when determining their own argument. Prior to this activity, students should have a working definition of the various types of propaganda.

Staging the Compelling Question

To introduce the inquiry, teachers may guide students in analyzing an image. Teachers may choose a current or past advertisement and ask students to “read the image.” Possible options include: [Ben Franklin and Apple computers](#); [Michelin baby ad](#); [vintage Lego ad](#); [Coke ad](#); [Santa Coke ad](#); [Sally Henson nail ad](#). Teachers will tell the students that first

they are going to merely list what is seen before they begin analyzing it.

- What do you notice:
 - What image(s) is/are shown?
 - What is the dominant image (what draws the eye first)?
 - Note: If students try to make judgments/opinions on the picture, remind them that they are only to state what is seen, not make judgements yet.
 - What is the primary color used?
 - What are other colors used?
 - What words, if any, are used?
- What conclusion can you draw from what was used?
 - Is there a reason for the primary color used? (symbolism)
 - Is there a reason for other colors used? (symbolism)
 - Is there a reason for the dominant image? (inference)
 - Is there a symbolic meaning attached to that image?
 - Are there any connotations with the words used?
 - Are there any types of propaganda used?
 - What impact does that type of propaganda have? (analysis)

Supporting Question

The supporting question “What is more impactful, words or images?” directs students’ attention to specific options students may choose when answering the compelling question. Focusing students on the words in the cover separate from the images in the cover forces students to look at each piece individually and to evaluate whether the words or images or both show bias.

Students examine different *Beaumont E* covers from WWII. These sources cover the span of WWII and allow students to consider different types of propaganda used when considering answering the compelling question. These covers are primary sources that blend the use of words and images, with some images containing photos and some containing illustrations. Some covers have more impactful words while other covers have more impactful images. The formative performance task helps students to recognize their thinking and other students’ thinking through the station activity. The formative performance task has students view multiple *Beaumont E* covers, but focus on only one part of the cover at a time. The activity requires students to focus specifically on words at one point; the activity also requires students to focus specifically on images at one point. Because students will be rotating, students will see what other students think through their writing on the paper, and students will be able to see how their analysis is similar or different from other students’ analysis.

Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined the front pages of the *Beaumont E*, a business newspaper that was printed for, and by, the Beaumont Manufacturing Company in Spartanburg, SC. By analyzing the words and images, students will consider what makes effective propaganda. Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understanding and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this task, students construct an evidence-based argument using sources to answer the compelling question “What makes

propaganda?”

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- *Effective propaganda only requires impactful word choice because ...*
- *Effective propaganda only requires impactful images ...*
- *Effective propaganda requires both impactful word choice and impactful images ...*

As an extension task, students may be asked to further practice identifying effective propaganda by creating an original piece of effective propaganda for a local business or club using techniques from their argument of what makes effective propaganda. Students will have to organize and categorize information in order to synthesize the information and apply their knowledge from the station activity to create something new.

Featured Sources

Source A: *Beaumont E* Nov. 1941 Cover

Source B: *Beaumont E* Jan. 1943 Cover

Source C: *Beaumont E* Feb. 15, 1943 Cover

Source D: *Beaumont E* Nov. 1943 Cover

Source E: *Beaumont E* May 1944 Cover

Source F: *Beaumont E* Sept. 1944 Cover

Source G: *Beaumont E* Apr. 1945 Cover

Source H: *Beaumont E* June 1945 Cover

Source I: *Beaumont E* July 1945 Cover

Source J: *Beaumont E* Nov. 1945 Cover

(All sources are [linked here](#) - click “View Homepage”)