Document Background The posters used in this lesson can be found in the World War Two Records Collection, Box 353872, Record Group 1325.95.

Background Information Use of propaganda to amass participation or direct "right thinking" is not unique to the 20th century or to this country. This strategy is used with everything from purchasing specific products and brands to selecting a certain long distance service to joining in the camaraderie of fighting large-scale wars. The United States has employed this means of involving its citizenry in political events since its inception, by means of broadsides to evoke anti-monarchy and anti-British sentiments during the Revolution, use of broadsides and print to engender support of Presidential candidates and/or political causes, and through posters and other media for recruitment of volunteers to serve in the military during peace time and during the World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam. Propaganda art also plays a more subtle role in creating desired mind sets for overall involvement in endeavors or as in the case of World War I and II, in clearly defining the enemy and shaping public sentiment against particular ethnic groups. This was especially obvious
during World War I when the United States launched a strong anti-German campaign. The use of propaganda as an art form was taken to a higher level during World War II, employing not only posters and print media but also film, radio, theater, and music.

As the United States moved towards involvement in World War II, its citizens were reeling from several distinct events that shaped their attitudes toward daily life as an American citizen. First, the country was in the throes of protracted depression; economic trials affected every family and, even with President Roosevelt's frontal attacks, the end seemed far out of reach. Second, the United States had survived the end of its policy of isolation and entered World War I, with success but with loss of life and innocence. Third, labor disputes and conflict between owners, management, and labor often turned violent as activists moved to improve working conditions, safety, and salaries for factory and rail workers. Americans had, indeed, been through a great deal over the previous three decades; deep divisions existed within the country, and wounds would be slow

healing. President Roosevelt knew that the success of any government action for the economy or impending war effort needed to be tied intimately to united support of the entire country. As a response to his belief that the American public and anyone else involved in the war against the "Axis aggressors" had the right to correct information concerning the war effort, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9182 on June 13, 1942 and formed the Office of War Information. This agency assumed the functions of four active governmental departments: the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF) created Oct. 1941 under Archibald MacLeish, the Division of Information of the Office for Emergency Management (OEM) created Feb. 1941 under Robert Horton, the Office of Government Reports (OGR) under Lowell Mellett, and the Foreign Information Service under Robert Donovan. The President tapped famed New York Times reporter and CBS newscaster Elmer Davis to head the new agency. Davis's first regulation, issued in July, 1942, outlined his perception of the mission of the OWI: a "continuation of the open door policy that has always prevailed in the dealings of the government with the press, radio, and other news media, an end to the conflicting statements which confuse the public mind and the promise to tell the truth about the nation's war effort. This is a people's war and to win it the people should know as much about it as they can."[i] All forms of media became tools helping to produce a sense of unity within the country and fostering the growth of a strong sense of patriotism and commitment. Radio, movies, posters, and the press presented "the message" in ways tailored to address the unique capabilities of each format. A burgeoning industry was created that answered the needs identified by the Office of War Information. Propaganda messages were inserted in every form of media from the late 1930s through the end of the War. In the early 1940s over "90% of Americans had at least one radio in their homes and listened to an *average of three to four hours of broadcasting a day.*" With this in mind, using the power of radio to reach captive audiences was, logically, an essential component of the onslaught of the propaganda campaign. Delivery was often through the use of popular characters as foils, bringing concerns of the average listener forward in a staged setting. Another character would present answers to the concerns as

well as deliver a pointed message, often using humor or suspenseful dramas as the mechanism to get the message across. A prime example of this is found in exchanges between Fibber McGee and Molly, one of the most popular radio shows of the 1940s. The broadcasts "provided a steady, well-monitored stream of official reminders and

patriotic appeals for sacrifice and unity."[iii] Motion pictures joined the effort through films delivering messages and through the involvement of stars in the military, in entertaining the troops, and in assisting in the bond campaign. President Roosevelt believed strongly that no industry should be censored; that America was the home of free exchange of ideas and that should continue. However, when officials in the Office of War Information reviewed films produced early in the war, they decided that the movies presented incorrect portrayals of allies, musical depictions of military camp life, and an abundance of spy dramas. To counteract this trend, the Bureau of Motion Pictures, a department within the OWI, prepared "The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture." The manual presented ideas and messages to be included in some way in films, asking producers to ask themselves the question: "Will this picture help win the war"? During its existence, the Bureau reviewed scripts to ensure that information, messages, and military actions were positively portrayed.[iii] Posters as governmental art form continued to convey ideas with the establishment of the WPA, Works Progress Administration, by President Roosevelt in 1935. Artists crafted paintings for murals and for posters, inspiring hope in the future and of the American way of life. This project, truly a form of propaganda, inspired the artists to use their art to "speak" to the hearts and minds of Americans. Art was more "utilitarian:" created for a specific purpose and also to afford artists with employment through a form of governmental patronage.[iv] One of the OWI's defined responsibilities was to "review and approve the design and content of government posters."[v] Within the scope of World War II and the Office of War Information, two schools of thought vied for dominance of the artistic process, those believing that the graphical images, posters, should convey messages in an artistic manner and the "ad-men" believing that the use of any media should be within a full spectrum campaign and should concentrate on changing opinions, sustaining support, and achieving desired results through the same techniques as mass marketing efforts. When the "winners" were those in advertising, a clear shift in technique, in quality, and in the artists engaged by the OWI occurred. "OWI's admen now ran 'information campaigns', using posters in concert with magazines, radio, and other kinds of paid advertising space."[vi]

> Two conflicting ideologies within the Office of War Information: Anti
> Fascists, such as Archibald MacLeish and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., believed
> in President Roosevelt's mission to engender patriotism by not straying far

from the truth of the moment during war time. Media types, adapting their
formats to the government's goal of creating support for the war, looked at
the American public as responding to gut level appeals and structured ad
campaigns that in fact did appeal to emotions, both positive and negative.[vii]

With the new focus of the campaign, Archibald MacLesh resigned as the director of
the graphics campaign; there was also an exodus of many artists connected with the
initial "movement" within the OWI.

Posters of varying sizes were the most visible resources of the propaganda effort and
were hung in public places to remind people of their duties to support the war effort
through conservation, production, and through the purchase of War Bonds. Additionally,
posters reminded citizens to monitor their conversations and assisted them in identifying
"the bad guys" on the war fronts. Artists such as Ben Shan, Thomas Hart Benton,
Rockwell Kent, Bernard Perlin, Norman Rockwell, N.C. Wyeth, and Al Capp contributed
their time and talents to the creation of propaganda art.[viii] Four types of posters were most
commonly used to achieve desired goals.

They [Posters] announced the call-to-arms for able-bodied young men, with
such messages as, "Join the Army-Navy-Marines-Coast Guard." They
recruited young women into the auxiliary forces, ...and told women of their
duty to join the nation's workforce, whether in heavy industry or civil
service. They encouraged factory workers to increase industrial production.
They promoted conservation of gasoline, meat, rubber, canned goods,
office supplies, waste fats, and more. They warned both soldiers and
civilians against accidentally divulging war information, with the message,
"Loose lips might sink ships." And, above all, posters asked people to "Buy
War Bonds."[ix]

Stacey Bredhoff, Curator of the National Archives, identified four basic messages
delivered through "poster art:" a sense of patriotism conveyed by patriotic images,
positive sentiment for those fighting for home, loved ones, and freedom, humorous
images to convey the essential message, and finally, the evilness of the enemy through
use of negative images.[x] Wording on the posters minced no words in revealing the strong,

blunt appeal of the campaigns: "A Careless Word, Another Cross;" "Save Waste Fats for Explosives; Take Them To Your Meat Dealer;" Ten Years Ago the Nazis Burned These Books but Free Americans can Still Read Them;" "A Careless Word, A Needless Loss;" "The More Women at Work, The Sooner We Win;" In addition to the four basic messages falling within the four basic types, historians have identified five frugality themes present in most of the posters: conserving, recycling, home food production, rationing, and saving through war bonds.

Posters were also instrumental in redefining the acceptable role of women in American society. Artists presented women as essential people in the war effort, still feminine and needed as workers to keep the home front running smoothly. Women were recruited to serve in the military, to become nurses, and to work in factories. Posters such as Rosie the Riveter showed strong resourceful women, doing a man's work, while still remaining feminine. Some of the text on posters underscored the importance of convincing women that it was not only acceptable for them to enter the work force, but needed: "Longing won't bring him back sooner. Get a War Job! See your US Employment Service."[xi] Over six million women, 60% of them over 35, took jobs in response to the identified need presented by the advertising campaign.[xii]

Asking people to sacrifice was the action part of the campaign to persuade Americans to change their habits. The rationale for sacrifice was presented in stark contrast, playing on emotions and fear of pending disaster and destruction. Pictures depicting women and children in harm's way or Nazi brutality or the death of soldiers were in darker tones and carried grim messages. "To guard against complacency, the Government promoted messages that reminded civilian America of the suffering and sacrifices that were being made by its Armed Forces overseas."[xiii] War propaganda was not then nor will it ever be the exclusive domain of the United States. Every country engages in it in an attempt to achieve their goals of total victory in war and total acceptance of ideas and needs presented. When employed within the creating country, its use is to generate support for causes, to reshape thinking. Within opposing countries, each side engages in propaganda efforts to disenchant, demoralize, and incite resistance on the parts of soldiers and civilians alike. Germany painted the Allies as assisting the Jewish people in hurting the German economy and people. Americans engaged in disinformation campaigns in

Germany and Italy. Japan's Tokyo Rose chided American soldiers that their battles were losing propositions and that their wives or sweethearts were unfaithful. The following excerpt from a 1934 speech by Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Propaganda Minister, clearly identifies the arsenal of tools used by all propagandists:

> The effective propagandist must be a master of the art of speech, of writing, of journalism, of the poster and of the leaflet. He must have the gift to use the major methods of influencing public opinion such as the press, film and radio to serve his ideas and goals, above all in an age of advancing technology. Radio is already an invention of the past, since television will probably soon arrive.[xiv]

[i] Office of War Information. [Online: http://history.acusd.edu/gen/WW2Timeline/OWI.html] May 23, 2003. [ii] Horten, Gerd. "Radio Days on America's Home Front," *History Today,* Sept 1, 1996. [Online: http://elibrary.bigchalk.com]May 23, 2003. [iii] World War II Guide: Wartime Hollywood. [Online: http://www.gliah.uh.edu/modules/ww2/wartimehollywood.html#top] May 23, 2003. [iv] "World War I and World War II Propaganda Posters," Special Collections, College of Charleston. [Online: http://www.cofc.edu/~specoll/warpost.html] May 22, 2003. [v] "War Aims Through Art," in *Produce for Victory: Posters on the American Homefront (1941-1945).* [Online: http://americanhistory.si.edu/victory/victory5.htm] May 23, 2003. [vi] "War Aims Through Art," in *Produce for Victory: Posters on the American Homefront (1941-1945).* [Online: http://americanhistory.si.edu/victory/victory5.htm] May 23, 2003. [vii] Tedlow, Richard S. "The Sponsor: Notes on a Modern Potentate / The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945;" in *Business History Review.* Boston; Spring 1979; Vol. 53, Iss.1; pg. 138. [Online: http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?RQT=307&Sid=3&StPt=21&Ret=10&INT=0&SelLanguage=0&TS=1053735589] May 23, 2003. [viii] World War II Posters in Government Publications and Maps, Northwestern University. [Online: http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govpub/collections/wwii-posters/moreadvsrch.html] May 23, 2003.

ix Mahaney, Darlene C. "Propaganda Posters," *Magazine of History*, Spring, 2002. [Online: http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?Did=000000125599471&Fmt=4&Deli=1&Mtd=1&Idx=33&Sid=1&RQT=309] May 23, 2003. x Bredhoff, Stacey. Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art from World War II

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http://womenshistory.about.com/library/pic/bl_p_wwii_war_job.htm]May 23, 2003. xii "Rosie the Riveter"

The Twentieth Century. CNN.com Snapshot. [Online: http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/century/time.capsule/snapshot/04/frameset.exclude.html] May 23, 2003. xiii Powers of Persuasion: Posters from World War II. Virtual Exhibition from the National Archives. [Online: http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/powers_of_persuasion/warning/warning.html] May 23,2003.

xiv Fritz, Mark. "War of Words, Part VIII," *The Secret History of World War II.* Boston Globe, December 3, 2001. [Online: http://www.boston.com/globe/nation/packages/secret_history/index8.shtml] May 23, 2003.