LOC TPS Comparing Propaganda of WWI
World History/APWH or US History
Grades 9-12

This activity is sponsored in part by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Eastern Region Program, coordinated by Waynesburg University.

1 class session of 45 – 60 minutes

Description of activity: Students should examine each source carefully by taking the link and noting the information provided by the Library of Congress.

Focus Question: Why would anyone willingly sign up to fight in WWI? How effective were governments in shaping the public sentiment through propaganda?

Context: This investigation belongs in a unit on World War One and the changing role of government. Students should understand the causes of the war and how the war began.

Objectives: Students will be able to analyze the rhetorical devices used by governments to persuade enlistment in the army during WWI.

Virginia SOLS

STANDARD WHII.1a, b, c, d, e, f
The student will improve skills in historical research and geographical analysis by
a) identifying, analyzing, and interpreting primary and secondary sources to make generalizations about events and life in world history since 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
b) using maps, globes, artifacts, and pictures to analyze the physical and cultural landscapes of the world and to interpret the past since 1500 A.D. (C.E.);
STANDARD WHII.10a

The student will demonstrate knowledge of the worldwide impact of World War I by
a) explaining economic causes, political causes, and major events and identifying major leaders of the
war, with emphasis on Woodrow Wilson and Kaiser Wilhelm II;

Assessment: Class discussion, written analysis

Activity Details and Primary Sources: provided below

Procedure: Students will work in pairs independently. Two pairs of students will analyze each
set of recruitment posters. Students should access the posters online and also read the
information that accompanies each on LOC.gov. They should do their best to answer the
analysis questions for each poster they have been assigned. Each group will present their
findings to the class. The teacher should show each poster to the class and facilitate the larger
discussion.

What you will need before implementing: Ideally, all students would have access to their own
device, the classroom would have a projector connected to a computer or iPad. If computer
access is a problem, the teacher should have a set of all documents and accompanying
information from the Library for each pair of students to share.
Group 1

Doc. A

Hungersnot bedeutet der Verlust der Ostprovinzen! ... Deutsche! Rettet den Osten!
Freiwillige vor!
C.H. Becker
Rehse Archiv für Zeitgeschichte und Publizistik
1917
https://www.loc.gov/item/2004665838/

Doc. B

Your king & country need you to maintain the honour and glory of the British Empire
Lawson Wood for the Parliament Recruiting Committee
1914
https://www.loc.gov/item/2003662918/
Group 2

Doc. C

Columbia calls--Enlist now for U.S. Army
Vincent Aderente
1916
https://www.loc.gov/item/95506508/

Doc. D

Hoot mon, the kilties are here! British recruiting week July 16-21
US
1917
https://www.loc.gov/item/00652401/
Group 3

Doc. E

Why not join the army
Chorley & Pickersgill Ltd for Parliamentary Recruiting Committee
1915
https://www.loc.gov/item/2003663152/

Doc. F

Is your home worth fighting for? It will be too late to fight when the enemy is at your door, so join to-day
Hely's Limited, Litho., Dublin.
1915
There is still a place in the line for you. Will you fill it?
The Haycock-Cadle Co., London S.E. for the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee
1915
https://www.loc.gov/item/2003662901/

Have you any women-folk worth defending? Remember the women of Belgium. Join to-day
Hely's Limited, Litho, Dublin
1915
https://www.loc.gov/item/2003668199/
Group 5

Doc. I

Young men of the Bahamas. ... Enlist to-day
The Gleaner Co., Ltd., Printers, Kingston, Jamaica for British recruitment in Jamaica 1915
https://www.loc.gov/item/2003675350/

Doc. J

It is nice in the surf but what about the men in the trenches. Go and help
D.H. Souter
1917
We will uphold the priceless gem of liberty ... shall we help to crush tyranny?
Gazette Printing Co., Limited, Montreal
Between 1914 - 1917
https://www.loc.gov/item/2005696912/

Doc. L

Alles fürs Vaterland! Alles für die Freiheit!
Kunstanhalt Römmler & Jonas
1918
Analysis questions for each document.

Document ________

1. Who was the intended audience?

2. What was the artist’s message?

3. What symbolism did the artist use? Why did they chose this imagery?

4. Describe the rhetorical device used by the artist.

5. How effective do you think it was with the public? Explain why you think that.

6. Note the timing/historical context of the publishing of the poster. How did that fit in with the events of (that country’s involvement) the war?
Follow Up:
Look at rates of enlistment in countries involved in World War One.

Which nations relied on conscription to fill the ranks of their armies?

Look at casualty rates. Which nations faced the highest casualty rates and therefore needed more men?