

Activity: Wartime propaganda

Key Stage 3

History:

Chronological understanding

Change and continuity

Cause and consequences

Interpretation

Key Stage 3

Art and Design:

Creativity

Competence

Cultural understanding

Critical understanding

Overview of the activities

These sessions can be used simply for creative work or to highlight the messages that were so important in wartime Britain.

These sessions look at wartime posters that can be seen in many of the venues. The posters were aimed at the civilian population and have enduring qualities that suggest they were very effective means of communication.

- Campaign
- Commission
- Then and now

Preparation

PowerPoint: Wartime posters

Sketch book or digital cameras (arrange with teachers for young people to bring sketch books or digital cameras)

Pencils

Paper

Magazines

Paint

Paintbrushes

Jars of water

Palettes

Collage materials

Newspaper

Display area, blu tac

Venue

Cranwell Aviation Heritage Centre

Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre

Metheringham Airfield Visitor Centre

Thorpe Camp Visitor Centre.

Roles for young people

Ministry of Information designers

Activity 1: Campaign

Starter activity

Tell young people about the different ways the government communicated with the public, via posters and radio broadcasts. Why was this?

Was this type of communication impartial or was it designed to influence people?

Talk about propaganda:

- how it is used today?
- how might it have been used during the Second World War?
- who might use propaganda?

Display the posters provided on the PowerPoint on the white board.

This activity will work well with a visit to the venues where they can see the original posters.

Look at the posters in detail. You can look at all of the posters or choose to look at two posters on a similar theme: for example: Dig on for Victory and We could do with thousands more like you.

- What do the images suggest?
- What sorts of illustrations are used?
- How effective are the posters?
- What are the main messages?

Now look at the posters about evacuation and transport. Ask the same questions. Are they similar to the posters about the Land Army and Dig on for Victory? If not, why not?

Activity

Choose a particular wartime message and ask young people to create an idea for a wartime communication campaign. What colours would they use? What sort of language would they use? What sort of images would they use?

Exhibition

Ask young people to display their work and tell the group about the colours, feelings and messages.

Plenary

Ask other students to provide feedback on the campaign ideas.

Extension activity

Ask young people to find examples of present day propaganda and explain:

- What it is and what message it is trying to portray.
- Who is the author of the material?
- Who are they trying to influence and why?

Activity 2: Commission

Starter activity

Commission young people to create a poster for wartime Britain.

The brief could be any of the following:

- Create a poster on the theme of the blackout
- Create a poster on managing with what people have instead of buying new things
- Create a poster about growing your own vegetables
- Create a recruitment poster for the Land Army, Air Raid Wardens, etc.

If this activity is combined with a museum tour give young people time to make sketches or take photographs to help them fulfil their brief. Direct the tour to artwork, photographs, posters or graphic art that may inspire the young people. Objects at the venues may also inspire young people.

Plenary

Discuss some of the posters, images or works of art that young people remember as a starting point.

- What is the main message of the poster?
- Who produced it? Could it have been produced by either side in the War?
- Who is the target audience for the poster?
- What sort of feeling does it convey?
- How does it achieve this – colour, subject, style of drawing/painting?
- How do the colours affect their mood?
- Why are these colours used in this particular poster?
- What font is used? Why?
- Does it portray a particular sentiment?
- How was it created? In what media?

Activity

Now ask students to create their own wartime posters. Choose a theme and a way of communicating this theme to a specific wartime target audience.

Extension activity

Put on an exhibition for other young people to view. Create a display. Create an online gallery for the school website.

Activity 3: Then and Now

Starter activity

Take a theme from wartime Britain and ask young people to reinterpret this message for modern context:

'Make do and mend' could be about recycling.

'Dig for victory' could be about growing your own food and being more sustainable.

'Use Shanks' Pony' could be about walking an extra mile each day for fitness, to save fuel and precious resources. It could even try to encourage young people to walk to school.

Activity

Ask young people to create a poster to convey one of these messages to their colleagues in school. They can use whatever media they choose. Encourage them to plan their poster first and to think about:

- The aim
- The target audience
- The message
- The media.

Plenary

Ask young people to display their work and tell the group about the original campaign and their chosen modern theme.

Ask for positive feedback from the group.

Create an exhibition in school showing the inspiration for the campaign and how young people arrived at their modern advertising campaign.

Background information

Most of the venues have British wartime posters. The posters present an excellent starting point to explore what was happening in Britain during the Second World War. They also provide the opportunity to examine the principles of good design. Some posters carried such strong images that they are being sold today. Keep Calm and Carry On is now to be found on mugs, cushions, bags, keyrings.

The Second World War was a total war involving most of the British population. It affected people fighting in the armed forces and people at home, on the Home Front. Conscription was in place so recruitment to the armed forces wasn't a major issue. The posters were aimed at the civilian population. The messages focused on themes such as recruitment to specialist services, the protection of women and children, the enemy within and the hardship brought about by the war.

Many of the posters have themes that are still relevant today but for very different reasons.

- Make do and mend was about a shortage of resources during the War, but now we are encouraged to recycle because of the enormous waste in our communities.
- Dig for victory was about becoming self sufficient in a time of rationing. Now many people are interested in growing their own food because of the nutritional value and because of the distances food is transported and the threat that poses to the environment.
- Keep Calm and Carry On is now used in an ironic way to encourage people to stay positive in a time of recession.

There are a number of posters encouraging mothers to evacuate their children and others about the black out and homeland security.

The posters were commissioned by the Ministry of Information and produced by a number of different artists. Most tried to create a sense of community and portray an idea of Britain united in the War Effort against the enemy.

There are six posters in this section which focus on the Home Front. They can be used to introduce topics and to look at how the Government conveyed its messages to the general public. They can also be examined as tools of communication and examples of good design.

There are many sources of further information on the Internet including the Imperial War Museum and the National Archives.

<http://london.iwm.org.uk>

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>