



Discovery Worksheets

Propaganda in World War II

In World War II, both sides deliberately set out to control what people knew or learned about the real progress of the war. Propaganda's purpose was to influence the public's morale, thoughts and feelings by using truths, half-truths and lies. Successes were exaggerated while failures and troop losses were minimised or ignored. Propaganda worked best on an emotional level. Complex issues were simplified and glorious solutions were promised. All of the enemy was stereotyped. One side was just and virtuous while the other side was threatening and evil. During a total war, even to question this understanding was dangerous. You could be branded a traitor or seen to be working unconsciously to undermine and threaten the lives of your fellow citizens. This may seem quite strange when you consider Australia and its allies claimed to be fighting the war to protect personal freedoms.

1. Propaganda often uses powerful symbols for its messages. What symbols appear in the **Join the AIF** poster on the right and why were they chosen?
2. War posters had to use short messages that could be read quickly and remembered easily. What is the message of this poster?
3. What is the message of this second **Think Twice** war poster?



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4. It is not clearly stated, but what is the threat for Australians if a person 'talks'?
5. Why do you think comical cartoon characters were chosen to present this message?
6. Create your own propaganda poster. Go to the Australian War Memorial website at: www.awm.gov.au/database/art.asp

In the box Keyword/Phrase type in: Second World War propaganda. Then select Poster from the Classification drop-down menu. Finally, click on SEARCH. What you will find are examples of posters that were used during the war.

On a sheet of A4 paper create your own propaganda poster with a short, clear message. Try to use symbols in the design. When thinking of your message, consider events of the time and what the government wanted to achieve on the home front, e.g. raising money and morale, increasing production, stopping the black market in goods, getting women into industry, increasing efficiency and recycling resources etc.

