

Propaganda: The Art of Deception

WebQuest Description: Welcome! After reading Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury, students will explore and explain how technology was used in the text to promote propaganda, how propaganda has been used in American history, and how propaganda is used in pop culture. Students will conclude the quest by creating their own group essay that answers the essential question: How and why does the media use misinformation/propaganda to sway public opinion?

Grade Level: 9-12

Curriculum: English / Language Arts

Keywords: Fahrenheit 451, technology, persuasive writing, argumentative writing, Ray Bradbury, propaganda

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Introduction

Have you ever been tricked into believing something that wasn't true? Maybe it was partially true, a half-truth, or an embellished story? Most of us have been victims of a good lie at one time or another. After reading Ray Bradbury's novel Fahrenheit 451, we learn that as members of a democratic society, we must be discerning consumers of information. Not all sources of information are good and trustworthy. Just as Montag from Fahrenheit 451 learns that he cannot believe everything that he is taught and, in fact, he must learn to think for himself, so must we. The word "propaganda" is a technical term for ideas or information used to deceive or persuade even the most perceptive and intelligent of people. In this information quest you will learn to spot misleading and one-sided arguments and to think independently so that you don't fall victim to a good lie in the future.

Tasks

Your task is to work with a small group to discover the tools that the media uses through technology to spread misinformation (sometimes called propaganda) to alter public opinion. To get started, you will first read information that explains what propaganda is, how and why people use it, and what it looks like in print and video. Eventually, you and your group will formulate a written response. Your written response will answer the essential question: How and why does the media use misinformation/propaganda to sway public opinion?

Process

Procedures:

Phase #1

- You will be divided into groups of three to four, no larger than four.
- Together, all group members will view the three resources listed below and complete one propaganda analysis worksheet. See resources to access links:
 - Whose Voice Guides Your Choice?
 - Tools of Propaganda used in Fahrenheit 451.
 - Propaganda Techniques video
- Discuss the three sources you have read or watched and make sure that each group member understands the tools used in propaganda. Then choose a commercial from an online video and complete the Propaganda Analysis Worksheet – see resources for link to worksheet, print and complete, and turn in to your classroom teacher.

Phase #2

- Group members each choose one topic/role listed below and conduct research independently. Links are available under resource tab.
 - Role 1: Read or view each site listed below and compose a written response explaining how propaganda is used in Fahrenheit 451.
 - CliffsNotes– Control of Society in Fahrenheit 451
 - TeenInk – Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury
 - Enotes– Laws or Norms in Fahrenheit 451
- Read and view each site listed below and compose a written response explaining how propaganda was used in America during WWII.
 - World War II Propaganda Posters: part 1 and part 2
- Read or view each site listed below and compose a written response explaining how propaganda is used in political campaigns past and present.

The Living Room
 Candidate
 Political Campaign: I Like
 Political Campaign: George W. Bush
 Role 4: Read or view each site listed below and compose a written response explaining how propaganda is used in pop culture/commercials today.
 Pampers Pooface
 Kaku Pure Milk Ice Cream
 Michael Jackson: Pepsi Generation 2
 Now that you have individually studied propaganda and its various uses, meet back together as a group and share what you learned.
Phase #3: To complete this webquest, compile your information and compose a group essay that answers the essential question: How and why does the media use misinformation/propaganda to sway public opinion? Be sure that you meet the requirements described in the rubric and label each person's contribution to the essay. Also remember that your classroom teacher has given you specific instructions on how to format and compose your group's essay.

Evaluation

See rubric below for grading criteria.

Category and Score	Needs Improvement	Adequate	Good	Exceptional	Score
Phase #1: Terms and Techniques of Propaganda	Demonstrates a lack of understanding propaganda techniques; fails to complete or incorrectly completes propaganda analysis worksheet. (0-10 points)	Demonstrates an adequate understanding of propaganda techniques; completes some of propaganda analysis worksheet. (15 points)	Demonstrates a good understanding of propaganda techniques; correctly completes most of propaganda analysis worksheet. (20 points)	Demonstrates an exceptional understanding of propaganda techniques; correctly completes propaganda analysis worksheet. (25 points)	25
Phase #2: Independent Research (Roles 1-4)	Needs improvement to knowledge from independent research; contributed little or nothing to group essay. (0-10 points)	Shows adequate knowledge from independent research; partially contributed to group essay. (15 points)	Shows good knowledge from independent research through reasonable contributions to group essay. (20 points)	Shows exceptional knowledge from independent research through insightful contributions to group essay. (25 points)	25
Phase #3: Elements of Composition - Argumentation	Demonstrates a lack of understanding of the elements of effective composition - argumentative essay: thesis statement, supporting evidence, counterclaims; does not meet the 500-word minimum; distracting grammatical errors. (0-10 points)	Demonstrates an adequate understanding of the elements of effective composition - argumentative essay: thesis statement, supporting evidence, counterclaims; may be under the 500-word minimum; some mechanical errors. (15 points)	Demonstrates good understanding of the elements of effective composition - argumentative essay: thesis statement, supporting evidence, counterclaims; 500-word minimum; few mechanical errors. (20 points)	Demonstrates exceptional understanding of the elements of effective composition - argumentative essay: thesis statement, supporting evidence, counterclaims; 500-word minimum; no mechanical errors. (25 points)	25
Phase #4: Essential Question	Group essay inadequately explains how and why the media uses propaganda to sway public opinion; unconvincing or incomplete. (0-10 points)	Group essay gives an adequate explanation of how and why the media uses propaganda to sway public opinion; partially convincing (15 points)	Group essay gives a good explanation of how and why the media uses propaganda to sway public opinion; still convincing. (20 points)	Group essay gives an exceptional explanation of how and why the media uses propaganda to sway public opinion; very convincing (25 points)	25
				Total Score	100

Conclusion

Hopefully, you have now learned several techniques used to create propaganda and have better understanding of how people use it and technology to promote their ideas; more than likely, you have also realized just how much propaganda was used to control human behavior in Fahrenheit 451. Lucky for Montag, he realized the truth about his situation and started thinking for himself. Additionally, you have also looked at how propaganda has been used in literature, in history, in politics, and in pop culture. Now you are a more aware citizen and consumer like Montag who won't be fooled by the latest scheme! To conclude this project, complete an individual reflection by briefly responding to the following questions: What did I learn about Fahrenheit 451 and society by completing this Webquest? How well did my group work together to complete the webquest? How much did I contribute to the group? If I had the chance to sway public opinion using media, what issue would I address and how would I go about it? Extra Credit: Create your own colorfully appealing print ad using some of the techniques you have learned in the webquest "Propaganda: The Art of Deception." Talk with your classroom teacher for more detailed information. Additional Sources: <http://www.socialbrite.org/2010/05/27/create-distribute-media-for-a-campaign/> <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/23/magazine/how-disney-turned-frozen-into-a-cash-cow.html?action=click&contentCollection=Magazine&module=RelatedCoverage&ion=Marginalia&pgtype=article>

Teacher Page

Rationale: Since today's 21st century learners now acquire information from numerous digital devices such as computers, smart phones, TV, radio and even smart watches, they need to be discerning citizens. It is entirely too easy to be swayed into believing the latest political rhetoric or into buying the latest gadget based on a flawed marketing campaign or the manipulation of digital images. Spotting the use of propaganda techniques within media is a skill that these students can no longer go without. Students need to be able to recognize devices used to manipulate public opinion such as bandwagon, testimonial, plain folks, fear, transfer, logical fallacy, glittering generalities, name-calling, and others. So it only makes sense that students learn about media by using media in the classroom or the library media center. Callison (2006) states that "the library media center is the best place for students to raise questions (p. 261). Hopefully, after completing this webquest, students will always question the images, ads, and campaigns that they see and become intelligent and judicious citizens of the information age. Prerequisite Learning: Students should be finished with Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury and have a good understanding of the text. Also, the classroom teacher and/or librarian needs to review summary and synthesis skills so that students can summarize resources and then determine how they apply to real-world context. Finally, students and teachers should discuss guidelines for working as a team to compile the group essay. Materials Needed: computer and Internet access, printer, printer paper, notebook paper, and writing utensils. Time Length: This lesson will take 2-3 fifty-minute periods to complete plus group time to compose the essay. Professional Literature: Barack, L. (2005). WebQuest blossoms. School Library Journal, 51(9), 26. Bush, G. (2006). Differentiated

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Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (PASS):

Comprehension Standard 2.4. Analysis and Evaluation

a. Discriminate between fact and opinion and fiction and nonfiction.

b. Recognize deceptive and/or faulty arguments in persuasive text;

Writing/Grammar/Usage/Mechanics Standard 2.3. Compose persuasive/argumentative compositions that:

a. include a well-defined thesis that makes a clear and knowledgeable appeal in a sustained and effective fashion.

b. use exposition, narration, and description to support the main argument.

c. clarify and defend positions with precise and relevant evidence, including facts, expert opinions, quotations, expressions of commonly accepted beliefs, and logical reasoning.

d. effectively address reader's concerns, counterclaims, biases, and expectations.

AASL Standards for the 21st Century Learner

- 1.1.1 Follow an inquiry based process in seeking knowledge in curricular subjects, and make the real world connection for using this process in own life.
- 1.3.4 Contribute to the exchange of ideas within the learning community.
- 2.1.2 Organize knowledge so that it is useful.
- 3.1.4 Use technology and other information tools to organize and display knowledge and understanding in ways that others can view, use, and assess.
- 4.1.5 Connect ideas to own interests and previous knowledge and experience.

<http://ok.gov/sde/language-arts>

Credits

Thank you to wpclipart for providing public domain images:

Sherman, P. (2015). Public Domain clip art at WPClipart, top thumbnail browsing page. Retrieved from

<http://www.wpclipart.com/browse.html>

Other

Reflection:

After creating this webquest, I realize how important it is to incorporate digital tools to reach 21st century learners. It is also important to develop digital lessons that require complex and critical thinking for students so that the tool is not just a digitized worksheet in disguise. This site, www.zunal.com, made the process easier because of the pre-made templates. I would recommend it to others. However, I also learned that creating something like this also takes a tremendous amount of time to do it right. It is not something that can be quickly and correctly completed at the last minute.