

Anne Frank: Propaganda

Summary

Students will explore different techniques used in propoganda.

Background for Teachers

Propaganda is any organized, widespread attempt to influence people's thinking or behavior. It may be considered good or bad, depending on the intentions of its originator, the way it is used, or the way an audience receives it. Some of the same techniques may be used for selling cereal, promoting a political candidate, or creating a scapegoat. The most effective propaganda appeals to the emotions of its audience instead of logic or reason. Some of the more common techniques of propaganda include:

Name-calling - attaching derogatory labels.

Glittering Generalities - using vague words or ideas to make something acceptable.

Transfer - associating a person or idea with something everyone thinks is good.

Testimonial - getting a well-known person to endorse another person, product or idea.

Plain folks, common man - candidates going out of their way to appear to be 'just like us.'

Card-stacking- showing only the good side of anything.

Bandwagon - convincing people that everyone else is doing the same thing.

Half-truths - using a germ of easily perceived truth makes the validity of the entire package more acceptable.

Loaded words - using words whose connotation is generally accepted by the audience as positive (or negative) in order to create a subconscious association.

Picture-perfect - creating a photograph or drawing which either literally or inferentially presents the desired image.

Self-appeal - selling an idea based on human desires for such things as safety, comfort, acceptability, pleasure, security, religious or philosophical ideals, health, personal appearance or beauty, sex appeal, or social status.

Intended Learning Outcomes

To identify propaganda in its various forms. To understand the appeal of propaganda to emotion instead of reason. To understand the impact propaganda can have on action. To consider both positive and negative uses of propaganda.

Instructional Procedures

See preface material from 'Anne Frank in the World, 1929 - 1945 Teacher Workbook.'

Suggested activities to help students understand the idea of the power of propaganda:

Analysis of Commercials - Have students watch or videotape specific commercials to share by describing or viewing. Through class or small group discussion, try to discover the techniques being used.

Ad Campaign - Using a made-up product, have students create props, ad copy, and simple situations in order to make a 30-second to one-minute presentation for the class. These may be videotaped for playback and analysis of performances. For further challenge, students may create a campaign which sells a candidate for a political office (dog-catcher, justice of the peace, mayor, or even president).

Loaded Words Can Blow You Away - cluster synonyms in groups of four or five and ask students to rank them in the following way: Which one would you:

use about a good friend or loved one?

rather have someone else use to describe you?

probably like to use about something you don't like?

consider more neutral in objectively describing someone?

Examples: fat, plump, obese, hefty, chunky, huge, thin, slim, skinny, emaciated, bony, attractive, gorgeous, beautiful, pretty, a 'hunk,' nice looking, handsome, cool, ugly, a real dog, normal-looking, nice personality, boisterous, rowdy, obnoxious, enthusiastic, loud.

Positive/Negative -- Have students examine current examples of both positive and negative propaganda. Positive examples include the 'Just Say No' to drugs campaign or the SADD - Students Against Drunk Driving campaign. Negative examples include the tobacco industry showing healthy, young active people smoking in print ads, and the current anti-immigration movement in Germany: 'Germany for Germans.'

Questions for classroom discussion include: What are the differences and similarities in these propaganda campaigns? Are they equally effective? What do each of these campaigns say to their targets? What is the other side of the campaign, the one not talked about?

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