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# Wartime Posters



<b>Grade Level</b>	6-8, 9-12
<b>Subject Area</b>	U.S. history
<b>Curriculum Focus</b>	art, civics
<b>Duration</b>	1 week

## Objective

1. To recognize that, despite America's eventual involvement in World War II, not everyone initially agreed that intervention was the answer.
2. To conduct research about the political, economic, sociological, and historical factors in the United States prior to World War II.
3. To interpret and evaluate a position, then present it visually on a poster.

## Materials

[Gallery](#), information sources including Internet sites, magazines and books, electronic encyclopedias and databases; posterboard, construction paper, markers, Hyperstudio or some other presentation software (optional).

## Procedure

## ★ Related Materials

### Elements of Chemistry 6-pack DVD

Product Type: DVD  
Price: 289.95

Covering key topics in the high school chemistry curriculum, this series is an effective overview for the visual learner. Using ....



World War II was an event requiring participation by every citizen. The propaganda posters promoted citizen involvement in production, finance, attitude, efficiency, and teamwork, in addition to support for and participation in the military. However, in 1940 not everyone agreed that going to war was the best decision. Some believed that isolation, not intervention, was the answer.

### 1. Setting the Stage

Read aloud the following premise to the class:

It is December 6, 1941. The United States is beginning to emerge from the Great Depression and war is raging in Europe. Every day you hear the reports of how it is spreading to other parts of the world. You have heard of the Nazi atrocities but it all seems so far away. Is war the best thing for the nation? Should the United States get involved with such a costly effort?

### 2. Looking Back

To develop a real sense of how Americans in 1941 might have answered this question, students should conduct research to develop a background about the United States and the world between the end of World War I and 1940. What were the issues for people who were vacillating between intervention and isolation in World War II. The research should be centered around the following discussion questions:

What was the economic status of the United States in 1940? To what extent were World War I and the Great Depression still a factor?

What were the political conditions in Europe in 1940? What countries were at war?

What was happening in Asia at this time? Which Asian countries were engaged in war?

What factors supported United States entry into World War II?

What factors cautioned against U.S. involvement in World War II?

### 3. The Gallery

Have students visit the [poster gallery](#) to investigate how the U.S. government used this medium to rally support for war efforts.

For more examples of World War II poster art, direct students to the following Websites. Be sure to bookmark this page for convenience.

[World War II Posters](#) ♦ [Powers of Persuasion](#)  
[Produce for Victory](#)  
[Propaganda Posters](#) ♦ [World War II](#)

### 4. A Closer Look

After seeing several examples, students should select one and answer the following questions about it:

Does the poster contain a hidden/implied message? What is the desired effect?

What emotions do the images convey? What words are chosen for impact?

In what ways does the poster glamorize or villainize war or the people involved?

What effect would this poster have had on people of different genders and

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what effect would this poster have had on people of different ages and backgrounds in the 1940s? For example, how would a teenager react to it? A veteran of World War I? A mother? A doctor? A bus driver?

### 5. Isolation v. Intervention

Have students discuss and decide whether or not they would support U.S. involvement in World War II if they had lived during that time. In what ways would they have participated to support their position on isolation or intervention?

### 6. Creating a Poster

Have students use the poster criteria below to design and display artwork which convey their messages of isolation or intervention successfully:

How does the picture deliver the message in and of itself?

What actions or ideas do the words ask the observer to take or share?

How do the words and pictures together convey a stronger message?

What role does color play in creating the message?

How does the placement of the words and pictures add to the impact of the message?

What feelings does the poster engender in the observers?

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### Closure

When the posters are complete, have students pair up to present each other's posters. Create a poster gallery in your classroom and invite students to select the most persuasive student poster art in each category.

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### Extension

Choose other eras from which to examine posters, commercials, or other propaganda. Select from 20th century conflicts including the Cold War and struggles in Yugoslavia and Ireland.

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### Credits

Our thanks to Tish Raff, a social studies teacher and administrator at Sequoyah Elementary School in Derwood, Maryland, for her consultation.

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