

# CURRICULUM RESOURCES AND LESSON PLANS

An Educational Interactive Website

<http://www.mindovermedia.tv>

**MIND OVER MEDIA**  
ANALYZING CONTEMPORARY PROPAGANDA

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media education lab

LEARN ?

RATE

BROWSE

UPLOAD

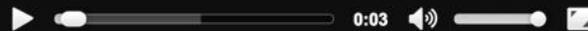
For Teachers

Propaganda Techniques ▾

## PROPAGANDA IS ALL AROUND US.

*Do you know how to recognize and respond to it?*

Propaganda is all around you.



LEARN

...how to recognize propaganda when you see it.



RATE

...examples, interpret their messages, and assess their impact.



BROWSE

...and sort examples uploaded to this site.



UPLOAD

...and share examples from your community.



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## Mind Over Media: Analyzing Contemporary Propaganda

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# MIND OVER MEDIA: ANALYZING CONTEMPORARY PROPAGANDA

These activities accompany the interactive user-generated content website at  
[www.mindovermedia.tv](http://www.mindovermedia.tv)

## Overview: Why Teaching about Propaganda Matters

### Lesson Plan 1

#### Defining Propaganda

Students examine different definitions of propaganda and explore how to find propaganda in news, advertising, public relations, entertainment, advocacy and education.

### Lesson Plan 2

#### Propaganda Techniques

Students identify four different techniques of propaganda found in advocacy and entertainment by analyzing the “KONY 2012” and “The Interview” cases.

### Lesson Plan 3

#### Propaganda in Context

Students learn about Voice of America’s global video news releases and use role-playing and research activities to explore the importance of context in critically analyzing contemporary propaganda.

### Lesson Plan 4

#### Understanding Viral Media

Students learn about viral media and marketing and consider how audiences participate in the marketing process by deciding what to share through social media.

### Lesson Plan 5

#### Sponsored Content as Propaganda

Students learn about sponsored content, the highly differentiated and customized online content that blurs the line between entertainment, information and persuasion, considering whether sponsored content is fundamentally fair or a form of deceptive propaganda.

### Lesson Plan 6

#### The Ethics of Propaganda

Students examine the ethics of propaganda through analysis of case studies of controversial advertising and Hollywood entertainment, considering the potential short and long-term consequences from the point of view of creators, the audiences, and the society.

## Alignment with National Standards

### Learn More

### Credits and Acknowledgements

## Overview

# Why Teaching About Propaganda Matters

Critical thinking about propaganda and understanding propaganda's intent are crucial responsibilities of citizenship. During the 20th century, there was plenty of public discourse about propaganda. Unfortunately, in recent years, the study of propaganda has diminished in many educational settings. At the same time, we are more dependent on digital media and technology than ever, with near-constant exposure to social networks, advertising, the 24-hour news cycle, and an ever-expanding array of entertainment media, including music, TV shows, movies, video games, apps and more.

Online, new forms of propaganda, including sponsored content and native advertising, challenge us to keep pace with the changing media ecosystem. Because we now create and actively contribute to the volume of messages in our daily lives through our own use of digital media, new forms of propaganda can sometimes be difficult to recognize.

Also, people may feel overwhelmed or overloaded by all the media in our lives, which can lead to a "tuning-out" phenomenon where we are exposed to propaganda but do not actively recognize how it is influencing our emotions, attitudes, knowledge and behavior.

[MIND OVER MEDIA](http://www.mindovermedia.tv) is an educational website which provides an opportunity for educators and students to explore the subject of propaganda. It's a gallery of contemporary propaganda that has been uploaded by users.

Users can browse examples of propaganda and rate them as beneficial or harmful. They can upload their own examples and comment on the examples shared by others.

Entering into a discussion about contemporary propaganda invites us to think about the power of communication and our responsibilities as authors and audiences. It raises questions about the uses and potential impact of new media and technologies. This learning experience encourages dialogue, intellectual curiosity, active engagement, message interpretation and analysis.

### Learning Outcomes

When learners explore and contribute to the [MIND OVER MEDIA](http://www.mindovermedia.tv) website, they will

- Learn to recognize new forms of propaganda in everyday life
- Practice skills of interpretation and critical analysis
- Consider how context shapes the way messages are understood
- Reflect on diverse interpretations of media messages in ways that promote understanding of and respect for others' perspectives
- Shift from passive receivers to critically engaged participants in global public discourse



The essential question asks: What responsibilities do producers and consumers of propaganda bear for its consequences?

The [MIND OVER MEDIA](#) website can be used flexibly as a single lesson or, with the lesson plans, as a longer unit of study. Educators are encouraged to review the lesson plans to advance their own learning and to optimize the educational value of the website.

### **About the Website**

[MIND OVER MEDIA](#) enables users to upload, examine and discuss examples of propaganda from our own daily lives. Users examine propaganda and rate its potential impact, then find and upload examples of contemporary propaganda, and share their interpretations with others. By sharing interpretations and commenting on the ideas of others, critical thinking skills are strengthened.

### **Classroom Gallery**

Teachers can create a customized Classroom Gallery with a unique URL and select specific content from the website that will be appropriate for learners. Students can be invited by email to participate in a Classroom Gallery and upload and share content on the customized Classroom Gallery.

### **About the Lesson Plans**

Use the [MIND OVER MEDIA](#) lesson plans below to help students define and recognize new forms of contemporary propaganda and to assess its impact on individuals and society. The lesson plans engage learners to:

- Discuss definitions of propaganda and identify common propaganda techniques
- Read and respond to writing about historic and contemporary propaganda
- Learn about and analyze new forms of contemporary propaganda
- Share and discuss interpretations of media messages to consider their potentially beneficial, benign or harmful impact on individuals and society
- Evaluate the context of propaganda - the conditions of its making and its use
- Reflect on the social responsibilities of those who create and consume propaganda.

### **Target Audience**

MIND OVER MEDIA activities are suitable for learners ages 13 to adults in both formal and informal learning environments. Because users can upload their own examples, they help to create a robust, fresh dialogue about contemporary propaganda. Because propaganda addresses all aspects of culture, MIND OVER MEDIA provides opportunities for authentic inquiry about a variety of topics, including business and the economy, health care, global issues, science and technology, politics and government, crime and law enforcement, education, the environment, and issues of faith and values.

### **High Tech and Low Tech Classrooms**

Each [MIND OVER MEDIA](#) lesson is designed for one classroom period and multiple options are presented for educators who are working in Low Tech classrooms where only an Internet-enabled computer and projector is available. In High Tech classrooms, students can access the learning materials directly from their mobile devices, tablets or laptops and their computers are equipped with microphones and webcams so that they can create screencasts to share their ideas using image, language, sound and multimedia.

### **Feedback and Evaluation**

We value your feedback on MIND OVER MEDIA. [Share your opinions with us.](#)

# Lesson Plan 1

## Defining Propaganda

*Students examine different definitions of propaganda and explore where to find propaganda in news, advertising, public relations, entertainment, advocacy and education.*

### Rationale

Propaganda techniques are designed to attract and hold people's attention. It's important to be able to recognize and resist persuasive techniques that can be used to shortcut or block critical thinking.

### Essential Question

- What persuasive techniques tend to shortcut, block or interfere with critical thinking?

### Learning Outcomes & Key Messages

- Recognize four common techniques used in propaganda
- Identify examples of propaganda in news advertising, public relations, entertainment, advocacy and education
- Appreciate that even though the term 'propaganda' may have negative connotations, it found nearly everywhere and is present in all aspects of contemporary social life

### Preparation

In a low-tech classroom, make copies of Worksheets 1.1 and 1.2 for all students and have poster paper and markers available for student use.

### Activity 1.1. "A Television Commercial for Communism"

Imagine that the world's last five remaining *communist* countries decided to unite forces and hire the world's top advertising agencies to re-brand and create a resurgence of interest in Communism.

### Prepare:

**Q: What is communism? Which countries are communist?**

A: Communism is an ideology of equality through common ownership and the elimination of private property, money and the state. Current communist countries include: China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam.

#### View:

#### TV Commercial for Communism

<http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/684>

This commercial shows a highly idealized vision of the positive values of communism. Encourage students to analyze the video by discussing these five critical questions of media literacy. You may want to view the video multiple times with students in order to observe how it is constructed and how it communicates a message.

Ask these five questions:

**Q: Who created this message and what is the purpose?**

**A:** A group of artists (who are also professional creative advertising professionals) created this TV commercial. The video was shown as an art installation at the Guggenheim Museum. The purpose of this commercial is to provoke viewers to consider how ideas and ideologies are “sold” through advertising.

**Q: What techniques are used to attract viewer attention?**

**A:** The happy white people in white clothing, frozen in action, look perfect and pure. The camera movement and the music have a feeling of energy that is appealing. The spoken language sounds similar to public foundational documents like the Declaration of Independence or the U.S. Constitution. The red and white logo is corporate looking and optimistic in spirit.

**Q: What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented?**

**A:** This video communicates positive feelings about people’s different social relationships -- in the family, with friends, and in the workplace. We see young people and older people working together. They are all dark-haired, light-skinned attractive, thin and healthy-looking people. Because they are all wearing white, it makes them feel like they are all members of the same team. The paper cut-out world they inhabit is flat and unrealistic, and this might be designed to activate viewers’ feelings of skepticism or anxiety. The icon used for communism is like petals on a flower and this communicates a feeling of togetherness.

**Q: How might different people interpret this message differently?**

**A:** Some people may feel positive feelings about communism after watching this video. Other people will be unnerved by the video, feeling uncomfortable by the images of frozen, nearly-identical looking people in an idealized and “fake” paper-world type display. Some will be surprised at the way Communism is made to seem positive because this contradicts other messages they have received about the topic. Because people interpret messages differently, this message may be harmful or beneficial depending on the audience, setting and context.

**Q: What is omitted?**

**A:** This video doesn’t give information about the countries and cultures where Communism is currently practiced: China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam. It doesn’t give information about formerly Communist countries which were part of the Soviet Union: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

**Beneficial or Harmful?** Conclude this activity by using a pair-share reflection, inviting students to discuss whether this particular message is beneficial or harmful. After discussing different points of view, you may ask students to make a personal judgment using the “beneficial – harmful” scale and compose their explanation of their reasoning using the [MIND OVER MEDIA](http://www.mindovermedia.tv) website. While on the website, students should appreciate that there can be many different points of view about whether the TV Commercial for Communism is beneficial or harmful.

## Activity 1.2. What is Propaganda?

Read the six different definitions of propaganda on Worksheet 1.1 and ask students to identify key elements of each definition that could be used to explain why “Television Commercial for Communism” is art, advertising and propaganda. In discussing the definitions and the example of propaganda, these seven key ideas should emerge:

- Propaganda appears in a variety of forms
- Propaganda is strategic and intentional
- Propaganda aims to influence attitudes, opinions and behaviors
- Propaganda can be beneficial or harmful
- Propaganda may use truth, half-truths or lies
- To be successful, propaganda taps into our deepest values, fear, hopes and dreams
- Propaganda uses any means to accomplish its goal

## Activity 1.3. Where is Propaganda Found?

Students break into six groups, reviewing one of the six different sites of propaganda and generating a list of specific examples. After discussing various examples, students collaborate to create a poster to represent their examples or they may use a digital poster tool like [Padlet](#) to create a digital poster. Encourage students to defend their choices and examples by using the key elements of the definition of propaganda in their reasoning. Large-group sharing will help students appreciate that propaganda is everywhere!

### Teacher Reflection

Through discussing an example of propaganda and comparing and contrasting various definitions, students learn that propaganda appears in a variety of forms and is strategic and intentionally designed to influence attitudes, opinions and behaviors. Propaganda can be beneficial or harmful, and it may use truth, half-truths or lies because propagandists may use any means to accomplish their goals. But propaganda doesn't always work. To be successful, propaganda taps into our deepest values, fear, hopes and dreams. Propaganda is an integral part of a democratic society as people use the power of language, image and sound to inspire and motivate human behavior: that's why its part of advertising, entertainment, politics, government, journalism, advocacy and even education.

### Evaluation

Students should be able to identify the features of propaganda and know that there are six locations where propaganda can be found.

# 1.1

## What is Propaganda?

Neil Postman once wrote that of all the words we use to talk about talk, the word “propaganda” is the most mischievous. That’s because the word has a wide variety of definitions:

**1. Propaganda** is a form of communication aimed towards influencing the attitude of a population toward some cause or position.

-Wikipedia

**2. Propaganda** is a form of information that panders to our insecurities and anxieties.

-Jacques Ellul

**3. Propaganda** is indifferent to truth and truthfulness, knowledge and understanding; it is a form of strategic communication that uses any means to accomplish its ends.

-Walter Cunningham

**4. Propaganda** is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.

-Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell

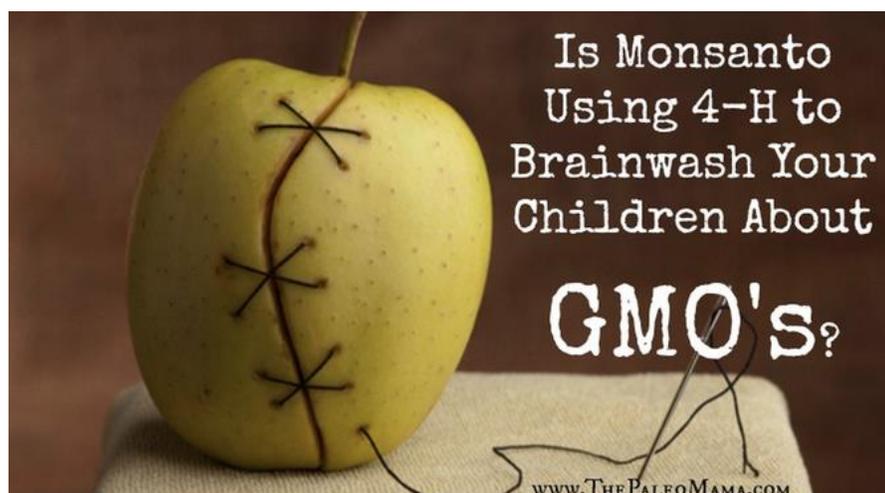
**5. Propaganda** is a form of purposeful persuasion that attempts to influence the emotions, attitudes, opinions, and actions of specified target audiences for [ideological](#), political or commercial purposes through the controlled transmission of one-sided messages (which may or may not be factual) via mass and direct media channels.

-Richard Alan Nelson

**6. Propaganda** is intentionally-designed communication that invites us to respond emotionally, immediately, and in an either-or manner.

-Neil Postman

However it is defined, one thing is clear: contemporary propaganda is everywhere - in news, information, advertising and entertainment. In a Web 2.0 world, propaganda is impossible to avoid.



## Where to Find Propaganda

*Instructions: After reading each section, provide a specific example to demonstrate your understanding of how to find propaganda.*

Propaganda can be found in news and journalism, advertising and public relations, and education -- and in all aspects of daily life. It is present in politics and government, business, religious and non-profit organizations, and in many forms of entertainment including music, TV shows, movies, videogames and social media like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

**1. Advertising:** Advertising is a form of propaganda, but there are some differences between advertising and propaganda. Advertising supports *sales and marketing* goals. For example, McDonald's spent \$998 million to buy advertising placements in television, outdoor advertising, radio and magazines in 2013. Advertisers want to generate increased consumption of their commercial products and services by using a variety of forms of mass media and digital media to persuade readers, viewers, users or listeners. The public is generally aware of advertising and recognizes its purpose. Many forms of free mass media, including broadcast television, radio and search engines depend on selling advertising, which enables businesses to sell products and services.



Your Example: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Entertainment:** Some stories are just entertainment, but many stories are also a form of propaganda. Stories offer ideas and information about good and evil, right and wrong, thus embedding values and ideology into narrative form. For example, as early as the 1930s, Warner Bros. movies offered stories that interpreted contemporary life by presenting a specific point of view on current events, often indirectly through the lens of history. In many American movies and video games, violence is depicted as justified and morally courageous, which is a value message that is generally not questioned in society. Another way that propaganda is embedded in entertainment is through *native advertising* or *sponsored content*, where a company's world view is presented as a form of entertainment. In 2014, the restaurant chain Chipotle launched an online comedy series about the agriculture industry on Hulu. Using comedy, the show reflected the company's values about sustainable agriculture and the humane treatment of animals used for meat.



Your Example: \_\_\_\_\_



**3. Government and Politics:** To get elected, politicians use propaganda to persuade voters. Often this involves the construction of messages that are oversimplified and that appeal to people's existing beliefs and attitudes, sometimes exploiting their fears and prejudices. Once elected, propaganda is used as a tool of governance, helping generate support for new laws or weaken political opponents. Governments also may generate war propaganda by defining battles as conflicts between good and evil. They may also use propaganda in positive ways to help improve public health. You may be familiar with *public service announcements* (PSAs) that aim to alter your behavior. For example, when researchers found that college

students overestimated how many of their peers were involved in binge drinking, they designed messages that showed that binge drinking is not as common as many people think. By reshaping perceptions of *social norms*, the campaign had a beneficial impact in helping lower the rate of binge drinking among college students.

Your Example: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Journalism and Public Relations:** *Public relations* is the term used for communication professionals who seek to shape perceptions and influence public opinion on behalf of a business client. In the U.S., there are four public relations professionals for every working journalist. PR people feed journalists based on their *agenda*. They may aim to get information and positive opinions about a business into the news media by using events, video news releases, blogging, newsletters, policy documents, and social media. In general, people are not aware of how public relations efforts have shaped the content of newspaper articles, blog posts or other online information.



Your Example: \_\_\_\_\_



**5. Advocacy:** People who are trying to improve society or create social change use propaganda to influence public opinion. Activists try to promote social, political, economic or environmental change through using communication activities and public events that attract attention and influence people's knowledge, attitudes and opinions. For example, a group of people may *stage a public event* (like a rally, a sit-in or other public demonstration) in order to attract media attention to their cause. Sometimes advocates will use viral videos, online surveys, or celebrity spokespeople to gain support for their cause. In 2014, the advocacy group ALS raised \$41 million dollars in through a viral media campaign that involved challenging people to pour ice water over their head.

Your Example: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Education:** From kindergarten to college, some forms of education are explicitly designed to lead people to accept a particular world view. Education can be a form of *indoctrination* when certain *doctrines*, ideas, information, values and beliefs are not permitted to be questioned. Propaganda enters the classroom in many ways. Many businesses and technology companies provide curriculum materials to educators which are explicitly designed to promote a particular point of view. For example, Monsanto and other biotechnology firms provide videos, lesson plans and other materials for science teachers. In Illinois, a state law mandates that schools promote a positive image for coal mining.



Your Example: \_\_\_\_\_

# Lesson Plan 2

## Propaganda Techniques

*Students identify four different techniques of propaganda found in entertainment and advocacy*

### Rationale

Non-profit activists use propaganda to bring attention to their causes. Propaganda techniques are designed to attract and hold attention by activating strong emotions and promoting *either-or* thinking to create a sense of urgency. Propaganda can be a powerful tool for advocacy but the way people respond to propaganda can be unpredictable. Sometimes people have trouble recognizing and resisting propaganda techniques when strong emotional techniques block critical thinking.

### Essential Question

- How may the techniques used in propaganda interfere with critical thinking?

### Learning Outcomes & Key Messages

- Recognize four common techniques used in propaganda
- Analyze examples of contemporary propaganda in news advertising, public relations, entertainment, advocacy and education to identify how techniques have been used to construct the message
- Understand how and why these techniques may interfere with critical thinking
- Appreciate that people respond to propaganda in different ways and they are able to recognize and resist it

### Preparation

Have a video projector and speakers available to display [MIND OVER MEDIA](#) and make copies of Worksheet 2.1 for all students.

### Activity 2.1. “Kony 2012”

#### KONY 2012

View: <http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/697>

It’s the viral YouTube sensation that rocked the Internet in the spring of 2012. You may want to watch this video in class or you can assign it for homework. Before introducing this lesson, [you may want to gain background information about the Kony 2012 case](#), which exploded on the American scene in 2012, attracting more than 120 million viewers in less than 30 days. Non-profit activist groups have never before achieved such visibility and success with a viral video.

Watch just the first five minutes of the video and ask students to share their feelings about what they have viewed. Ask:

**How does this video make you feel?** This video activates a sense of belonging to or joining something important and world-changing; it promotes sentimental feelings about childhood; positive emotions about the power of the Internet to connect people; and positive emotions about the value of children,

parents and the love between them. It cultivates curiosity about the filmmaker and about Jacob, the Ugandan boy

**What does the filmmaker do to attract your attention?** The filmmaker ignites our curiosity within the first 90 seconds when he says, "The next 27 minutes are an experiment, but in order for it to work, you have to pay attention." The scenes from the hospital room and the birth of his son are riveting and the images showing the child's life (including his playful filmmaking activities with special effects explosions) capture attention.

## Activity 2.2. Recognizing Propaganda Techniques in KONY 2012

Read about the four propaganda techniques used in KONY 2012 on Worksheet 2.1. Use these questions to check for comprehension:

**Q: Why is the KONY2012 video called the most viral video ever?**

A: This YouTube video attracted more than 120 million viewers in just one week and generated \$32 million dollars in donations.

**Q: This video activates people's feelings of pride. According to the article, how does it do this?**

A: It puts the viewers on a pedestal, positioning them as heroes, by activating feelings of collective pride. Towards the end of the film, Russell says: "We have reached a crucial time in history, where what we do or don't do, right now, will affect every generation to come. Arresting Joseph Kony will prove that the world we live in has new rules... we are not just studying human history-- we are shaping it."

After viewing the KONY 2012 video and completing Worksheet 2.2, discuss these questions:

**Q: Which of the four propaganda techniques was used most effectively in KONY2012?**

A: Answers will vary. Encourage students to use reasoning and evidence from the text to support their ideas.

**Q: Is the KONY2012 video beneficial or harmful?**

A: Answers will vary. Encourage students to use reasoning and evidence from the text to support their ideas.

## Activity 2.3 Propaganda in Entertainment

**View: "The Interview" Film Trailer**

<http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/698>

"The Interview" was a controversial Hollywood comedy that featured two lightweight celebrities who go to North Korea to interview and, with the help of the U.S. government, murder the head of the country, Kim Jong-Un. In December 2014, when the movie company, Sony, decided to cancel the release of the film after their company's computer systems had been hacked, the U.S. government blamed North Korea for the hacking and urged Sony to release the film.

Review the four propaganda techniques and encourage students to discuss how these techniques are used in this Hollywood entertainment film. Use pair-share discussion to help students generate ideas for how this form of propaganda may be interpreted differently by different audiences.

**Discuss:**

- What propaganda techniques are used?
- What were the unpredictable consequences of this film?
- How do these propaganda techniques interfere with critical thinking?
- Why does propaganda have unpredictable consequences?

**Teacher Reflection**

It's important to recognize four different strategies that are commonly used to influence our beliefs, attitudes, emotions and behavior. Both "The Interview" film and the KONY 2012 non-profit activism campaign activate strong emotions, respond to audience needs & values, simplify information & ideas, and attack opponents by creating an "us-vs-them" mentality. These forms of media have unpredictable consequences that can be both beneficial and harmful.

**Evaluation**

Students should be able to identify four propaganda techniques in entertainment and advocacy and know that public response to propaganda is unpredictable.

## Powerful Propaganda: KONY 2012

By Renee Hobbs

It was the most-watched YouTube viral video of all time. Launched on March 5, 2012, the KONY 2012 campaign encouraged viewers to participate in a youth uprising. Using tweets, rallies and posters, people who watched the video were encouraged to speak out to the U.S. government to increase efforts to help find and capture Joseph Kony, the Ugandan warlord who recruited child soldiers through violent abductions.

Developed by filmmaker and activist Jason Russell and his group, Innocent Children, the YouTube video attracted more than 120 million viewers in just one week and generated \$32 million dollars in donations.

Why was it so successful? The KONY 2012 video used four powerful propaganda techniques: it activated strong emotions, responded to audience needs & values, simplified information & ideas, and attacked opponents by creating an “us-vs-them” mentality. It reached a wide audience because hundreds of thousands of young people felt emotionally connected to this organization and this cause. As they shared the video with peers through Facebook and social media, the KONY 2012 campaign was a very good example of a powerful propaganda campaign for an important global issue. But the public response to propaganda cannot be controlled, and sometimes the consequences of the use of propaganda can be both beneficial and harmful.



### Technique 1: Activate Strong Emotions

Propaganda plays on human emotions to direct audiences toward the desired goal. The KONY 2012 video takes viewers on an emotional roller coaster. Viewers feel a sense of curiosity, caring, love, anger, empowerment, humor, inspiration, sadness, hope, and even pride. Research has shown that information and events are more memorable when they are attached to a strong emotion. The filmmaker understood how to psychologically tailor messages to activate people’s emotions in order to create strong emotions that suppress critical thinking.



### Technique 2: Respond to Audience Needs & Values

Effective propaganda conveys messages, themes, and language that appeal directly, and many times exclusively, to specific and distinct groups. KONY 2012 was directed to teenagers and young adults. It appealed to them through flattery, acknowledging how they use social media to document every part of their lives and connect to people all around the world. The video activates a sense of idealism by suggesting small, well-coordinated actions can make a big impact on politicians. The video communicates generational solidarity by suggesting that Western teenagers can help African teenagers. The campaign also capitalized on our fascination with celebrities like Justin Bieber and Oprah Winfrey. By creating messages that appeal directly to the needs, hopes, and fears of teenagers and young people who want a better future for their own children, KONY 2012 became more personal and relevant to the target audience.

### Technique 3: Simplify Information & Ideas

Successful propaganda tells simple stories often using storytelling, metaphors, imagery and repetition. In KONY 2012, the filmmaker is the hero of his own story. As he explains the situation in Uganda, it makes it very simple because he's literally explaining it to his 5-year old son. Facts and opinions are used very strategically, as propaganda may use accurate and truthful information, or half-truths, opinions, lies and falsehoods. Using the power of language and imagery, this film takes a complex global issue and, using a simple label, turns it into a brand: KONY 2012.

### Technique 4: Attack Opponents

Propaganda can serve as a form of political and social warfare to identify and vilify opponents. In KONY 2012, the villain is Joseph Kony. Attacking opponents also encourages "either-or" or "us-them" thinking. But this video isn't just about attacking Joseph Kony. It puts the viewers on a pedestal, positioning them as heroes, by activating feelings of collective pride. Towards the end of the film, Russell says: "We have reached a crucial time in history, where what we do or don't do, right now, will affect every generation to come. Arresting Joseph Kony will prove that the world we live in has new rules... we are not just studying human history-- we are shaping it."

The frenzy of public attention that KONY 2012 received was phenomenal. But public response to propaganda cannot be controlled. Ultimately, the massive amount of media attention also brought strong criticism of Jason Russell and the activist strategies of his non-profit group, Innocent Children. He was accused of over-simplifying and distorting the facts of the situation in Uganda, positioning white Westerners as the saviors to rescue the Ugandan people from their own political leaders and civic problems. There were questions about how his organization used the money they received. Shows like *South Park* and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* offered a cynical, satirical perspective on the activism. The large volume of personal attacks Russell faced from his critics contributed to his mental breakdown, which instead of activating sympathy, led to further public humiliation. Still, non-profit activists all over the globe learned much from the KONY 2012 case. They recognized that the skillful use of film and social media can be powerful even though consequences of the use of propaganda can be unpredictable.



# 2.2

## Can You Identify Propaganda Techniques in KONY 2012?

*Instructions: After reading and viewing, give examples of the four different propaganda techniques used in the film.*

**KONY 2012**

**View:** <http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/697>

**Activate Strong Emotions**

**Respond to Audience Needs and Values**

**Simplify Information and Ideas**

**Attack Opponents**

# Lesson Plan 3

## Propaganda in Context

*Students learn about news releases and explore the importance of context in critically analyzing contemporary propaganda*

### Rationale

Propaganda thrives on ignorance. When propaganda looks like information, people may lack the context to evaluate its quality. Many large companies create and distribute news releases, which are designed to look like news and journalism. As an important form of public relations, news releases provide information but they also communicate the point of view of the company or author who created it. We experience many forms of propaganda as a type of information. By gathering information from many different sources and examining the context of contemporary propaganda, people deepen their ability to evaluate the messages they receive.

### Essential Question

- How do people distinguish between propaganda and information?

### Learning Outcomes & Key Messages

- Gain knowledge about public relations and the genre of news releases
- Appreciate how propaganda's effectiveness depends on the message, techniques, environment and context, the means of communication and format, and audience receptivity.
- Apply critical thinking skills to analyze propaganda
- Consider the context in evaluating whether propaganda is beneficial or harmful

### Preparation

In a high-tech class, provide access to Internet. In a low-tech classroom, display the [MIND OVER MEDIA](#) website and make copies of Worksheet 3.1 for all students.

## Activity 3.1 “Board Game Helps Fight Real World Ebola”

### Board Game Helps Fight Epidemic

View: <http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/699>

America's propaganda agency, Voice of America, produced a video news release that shows how the board gaming community is banding together to play a cooperative game about fighting wars against disease as a way to raise awareness and money to fight the spread of Ebola in Africa.

Watch the video and ask students to briefly summarize the video and share their opinions.

#### **Q: What emotions are activated by watching this news release?**

A: Answers will vary. Encourage students to use reasoning and evidence from the text to support their ideas.

#### **Q: Is this propaganda? Why or why not?**

A: Answers will vary. Encourage students to review the definitions of propaganda from Lesson 1.

## Understanding How Context Shapes Interpretation

Explain that understanding of *context* can sometimes change people's interpretations of a media message. Explain more about the context of this message:

- **Message:** This message expresses the idea that board game designers create games to teach players about important global issues and that players are combining play and activism by hosting game parties to raise money for Ebola.
- **Author, Means of Communication & Format:** This video was created by Voice of America, the U.S. propaganda agency which is responsible for promoting U.S. policy around the world. The format of the message is a video news release. It is distributed free via satellite to television stations all around the world
- **Techniques:** The use of close-up images of game play increases people's curiosity and interest in the game. Interviews with the game designer and the players create feelings of emotional closeness.
- **Environment and Context:** The board game, Pandemic, was created by Matt Leacock in 2008 and is available for sale on Amazon for \$30. Seeing this video in the context of a television news program, international viewers are likely to find it credible and believable. They are not likely to interpret it as a promotion designed to increase sales for the board game. They are not likely to interpret it as a form of pro-American propaganda.
- **Audience Receptivity:** The video is likely to promote feelings of warmth and feelings of identification with gamers and game designers. The audience may be responsive to the idea that Americans are creative entrepreneurs who find ways to profit from their playfulness. It's also possible that some people could perceive this in a negative way, as it reflects Americans' superficial approach to important global issues. Because it appears on the news, the audience is unaware that it was created by the U.S. government as a form of propaganda, and so viewers may not truly be free to accept or reject the message.

**Discuss:** Does more information about the context of the video change your interpretation? Why or why not?

## Activity 3.2 Video News Releases: Beneficial or Harmful?

Invite students to consider whether this video about the board game community and Ebola is beneficial or harmful. Depending on your point of view, people will answer this question differently. Assign students to one of four groups and use Worksheet 3.2 for a guided role-play discussion activity.

Students break into four groups for a role-play activity. Each group represents the point of view of one of these groups: (a) the Voice of America, (b) the citizens of the African nation Sierra Leone, (c) doctors and the medical community, and (d) the citizens of the United States.

### Discuss: Is this video beneficial or harmful?

Students work in their groups to develop reasoning and evidence to support their ideas. Then each group writes a response to post on the Mind Over Media website.

Conclude the activity by reviewing students' different interpretations and noting that people's understanding of whether a specific example of propaganda is harmful or beneficial depends on their role in society and their point of view.

### Activity 3.3 Putting Propaganda in Context

To understand propaganda's potential beneficial or harmful impact, we often need additional information and ideas about the context of the message. Having more information about a message generally helps us understand and evaluate it better.

In this activity, students upload an example of visual propaganda or select one from the online gallery at the [MIND OVER MEDIA](#) website and use the Internet to gather more information to deepen their interpretation of the message. Students complete Worksheet 3.2 to document their learning process.

#### Review these Key Elements of Context

- **Message:** The nature of the information and ideas being expressed
- **Techniques:** The use of symbols and rhetorical strategies that attract attention and activate emotional response
- **Environment and Context:** Where, when and how people encounter the message
- **Means of Communication & Format:** How the message gets to people and what form it takes
- **Audience Receptivity:** How people think and feel about the message and how free they are to accept or reject it

#### Search Strategies: Advanced Google Search

Encourage students to gather at a variety of different sources of information about the topic or issue related to the propaganda example they choose to analyze. By learning more about the topic or issue, they gain information and knowledge that helps them analyze and evaluate contemporary propaganda. When people have access to multiple information sources, it can help them to recognize the point of view or bias of a particular message.

A search engine like Google is a powerful and effective tool for exploring contemporary issues. Each example of propaganda will require a unique search strategy as students gather information about the topic or issue.

Learn more about [how Google Search works.](#)

Learn how to [filter and refine your results on Google](#)

Learn how to [filter by reading level](#)

Learn more about [Google Image Search.](#)

Remind students that there is no one "right answer" for this kind of search – each source adds a little to their understanding of the context and helps them make better interpretations of the message.

#### Teacher Reflection

Information is essential in helping people analyze and evaluate propaganda. Information can also convey propaganda – as the form of news releases and video news releases reveals. We can't take any messages for granted – especially ones that look or seem "informative." Access and using multiple sources of information is

an important strategy that helps us deepen our understanding of the context of messages. Having good skills in searching for information and evaluating the quality of the information we find is an essential life skill today.

### **Evaluation**

Students should be able to gather several sources of information, gaining information to create a summary and analysis of a single example of propaganda. They should be able to use information to support their interpretation of how propaganda's effectiveness depends on the message, techniques, environment and context, the means of communication and format, and audience receptivity.

# 3.2

## Video News Releases: Beneficial or Harmful?

*Instructions: Discuss whether video news releases are beneficial or harmful by imagining that you are representing one of the four groups. Use reasoning and evidence to support your group's point of view. Then compose a reaction to the video and post it to the [MIND OVER MEDIA](http://www.mindovermedia.tv) website.*

### **Board Game Helps Fight Real World Ebola**

View the Video:

<http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/699>

This video news release was widely distributed to countries all around the world and viewed by millions of people as part of their local or national television news.

**DISCUSS:** What's your point of view? Is this form of propaganda beneficial or harmful? Why or why not?

#### **GROUP 1**

##### **Voice of America**

Your group represents the point of view of the people who created this video. You are professional communicators who are dedicated to advancing American political and economic interests around the world.

#### **GROUP 2**

##### **Citizens of Sierra Leone**

Your community has been struck by a terrible epidemic of Ebola that has caused much personal tragedy. Thousands of people have died and the medical system is struggling to manage the disease.

#### **GROUP 3**

##### **Doctors and the Medical Community**

You are a group of medical professionals who have spent years in advancing your knowledge of how to research and treat complex epidemics like Ebola.

#### **GROUP 4**

##### **Citizens of the United States**

Your tax dollars pay for the Voice of America to create and distribute messages like this video, which helps influence the attitudes and beliefs of people all around the world.

### **COMPOSE YOUR GROUP'S RESPONSE TO THE VIDEO**

As you discuss, make notes to develop your reasoning and evidence to support your ideas. Then compose a response to the video that represents your group's interpretation and post it on the Mind Over Media website.

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# 3.3

## Putting Propaganda in Context

*Instructions: Select or upload an example of propaganda on the Mind Over Media website and then find several sources of online information using Google Search to deepen your understanding of the context of the propaganda example you are analyzing.*

### Mind Over Media: Analyzing Contemporary Propaganda

<http://mindovermedia.tv>

**Your Choice of Propaganda:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Sources.** As you search, keep track of what you find using this structure:

Website Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Author: \_\_\_\_\_

URL: \_\_\_\_\_

What You Learned: \_\_\_\_\_

### Synthesize What You Learned

After your search is complete, analyze the image by using evidence from your search to support your interpretation of the message by answering these questions:

#### Key Elements of Context

- 1. Message:** What is the nature of the information and ideas being expressed?
- 2. Techniques:** What symbols and rhetorical strategies are used to attract attention and activate emotional response? What makes them effective?
- 3. Means of Communication & Format:** How did the message reach people and what form does it take?
- 4. Environment and Context:** Where, when and how may people have encountered the message?
- 5. Audience Receptivity:** How may people think and feel about the message and how free they are to accept or reject it?

## Lesson Plan 4

# Understanding Viral Messages

*Learn about viral messages and analyze how this form of propaganda activates and relies upon audience participation to complete the communication process.*

### Rationale

Today, we are not just consumers of advertising – we are active participants in the process of marketing and persuasion. In *viral marketing*, audiences spread and share marketing messages that engage their attention and interest. The consumer therefore does the work of the marketer by using social media to communicate about the product, brand or service.

### Essential Question

- How and why do audiences participate in viral marketing and what are the consequences of their actions?

### Learning Outcomes & Key Messages

- Recognize the many forms of viral marketing that are now part of contemporary culture
- Practice skills of interpretation and critical analysis
- Consider how audiences are complicit in propaganda when they share it with others
- Consider one's personal identity and social responsibility in deciding what viral messages to share

### Preparation

Use a projector to display the [MIND OVER MEDIA](http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com) website. Make copies of Worksheets 4.1 and 4.2 for all students.

## Activity 4.1. Viral Marketing is Everywhere

View: **T-Mobile Airport Flash Mob**

<http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/692>

This is a video of a flash mob in an airport. The skillful combination of images, music and dance, plus the sense of discovery or surprise we experience and see in the reactions of the people at the airport, create an intense emotional reaction that is designed to increase visibility for T-Mobile's "Life's for Sharing" campaign. It has been viewed 14 million times since 2010.

### Discuss:

- What feelings do you experience when you view this video?
- What circumstances might cause a person to choose to share this particular video on their social networks?
- What are the features of the video that make it share-able?

## Activity 4.2. What is Viral Marketing?

These videos take students behind-the-scenes to understand the point of view of the marketer in creating messages designed to influence people's attitudes and behaviors.

### **View: Viral Marketing Smart**

<http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/733>

This is a video produced by a marketing company to brag about its work for SMART USA, a car company. It created an interactive Facebook game that encouraged people to share information about the company with their social networks.

**AND**

### **View: IKEA Facebook Showroom**

<http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/734>

This is a video produced by a marketing company to brag about its work for IKEA, a furniture company. It created an interactive Facebook competition that encourage people to tag themselves in furniture photos, thereby spreading images of IKEA products to their friends and social contacts.

**OR**

### **View: Poop Tweet Case Study**

<http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/732>

This is a case study produced by a marketing company responsible for the SMART car account. It created a vital Twitter campaign using bird-poop humor to counteract some negative chat on Twitter about the size and safety of the vehicle. NOTE: Preview before viewing. This content may not be appropriate for all learners.

### **Discuss:**

- What did you learn from watching these videos?
- Have you ever participated in a Facebook game that was a form of marketing or promotion?
- Have you ever shared something on social media that had unexpected consequences?
- What are the pros and cons of users doing the job of marketers?

### **Key Ideas to Emphasize**

Marketers are creative media professionals and use their creativity to the benefit of their clients. In each case, we see specific strategies that are used to encourage users to participate in the marketing process. Users are helping marketers when they participate in these new forms of propaganda.

## Activity 4.3 Viral Marketing: What You Need To Know

Students read Worksheet 4.3, which introduces students to concepts and terms of viral marketing. Use these questions to check for comprehension.

**Q: How is viral marketing defined?**

**A:** *Viral marketing* is a marketing strategy in which audience participation and interaction is activated to intentionally spread a marketing message.

**Q: According to the reading, what makes certain content more likely to be shared widely?**

A: In the article, it states that people may be more likely share online media content when it activates strong emotions, including pride, attachment, and empathy as well as negative emotions, including guilt, shame and social anxiety.

**Q: Branded flash mobs are not always successful in accomplishing their marketing goals. Why not?**

A: In the article, it states that as consumers develop more experience and familiarity with branded flash mobs, this knowledge helps them to recognize and cope with new forms of persuasion.

### **Activity 4.4. To Share or Not to Share**

Working with a partner, students review some propaganda videos at the [MIND OVER MEDIA](http://www.mindovermedia.tv) website and discuss how viral videos activate strong emotions that encourage sharing.

**Q: Can you find a video on this website that you would like to share?**

**Q: Can you find a video on this website that should definitely NOT be shared?**

Encourage students to make a list of videos that they would or would not share. After giving them time to work, use large group discussion and ask students to identify their choices and explain their reasoning.

### **Teacher Reflection**

Through examining examples of viral media and marketing, students will be able to understand how these new forms of propaganda use strong emotions and unconventional content to activate and engage users. We aren't paid by marketers to participate in the marketing process, though. We choose to do it freely because it may be pleasurable or give us status among our social networks. We should "think before we share." Fortunately, people do not need to be victims of viral marketing: people actively analyze, interpret, evaluate, and remember new forms of persuasion and they can use coping tactics to resist these messages. Awareness of advertising and sales tactics can help people become critical consumers of viral marketing. It's essential that people become socially responsible for their online sharing.

### **Evaluation**

Students should be able state that viral marketing is more sharable when it activates strong emotions. Strong emotions may short-circuit critical thinking. They should be able to define viral marketing as branded messages that are shared by users with their social networks. They should be able to select videos that they believe their peers would find valuable and important; they should also be able to identify others they may be dangerous to share widely and offer reasons to support their opinions.

## Viral Marketing: What You Need to Know

# 4.3

*Instructions: Read and discuss the article and answer the questions below.*

By Renee Hobbs and Kaylen Shimoda

When Smart USA wanted to increase young people's awareness of their new little car, they created an online game that enabled users to "tag your own adventure" by voting on what should happen next in an animated story. The game was fun to play – and as people played, they shared their experience, generating 36 million impressions in just six months, helping to increase people's awareness of the car company.

*Viral marketing* is a marketing strategy in which audience participation and interaction is activated to intentionally spread a marketing message. Viral marketing works by getting people to activate their social networks. People naturally desire to share meaningful content and stay up-to-date on what's popular.



People may be more likely share online media content when it activates strong emotions, including pride, attachment, and empathy as well as negative emotions, including guilt, shame and social anxiety. The term 'viral marketing' was popularized by media critic Douglas Rushkoff who in 1994 book, *Media Virus*, observed that people like to share viral media as an excuse to engage socially and intellectually with each other.

### Branded Flash Mobs

In order to get people to share branded content, marketers use their creativity to come up with new ways of engaging people and increasing visibility for products and services. A flash mob occurs when a large group of people simultaneously assembles in a public area, do something unusual, and then leave the scene. Though the concept first started out as a social experiment, corporations have started using it for their own marketing initiatives. T-Mobile's "Life's for Sharing" campaign have featured branded flash mobs in public places. But as consumers develop more experience and familiarity with branded flash mobs, they may begin to critically analyze them. People can actively analyze, interpret, and evaluate new forms of persuasion and they can use coping tactics to resist these messages.

### To Share or Not To Share

Working with a partner, review some propaganda videos at the [Mind Over Media website](http://www.mindovermedia.tv) and discuss how viral videos activate strong emotions that may inspire and encourage sharing.

**Can you find a video on this website that you would like to share? Which one? Why?**

**Can you find a video on this website that should definitely NOT be shared? Which one? Why not?**

## Lesson Plan 5

# Sponsored Content as Propaganda

*Students learn about online sponsored content and create screencasts to document and consider the privacy implications of the highly customized propaganda messages they receive via social media*

### Rationale

Many people are exposed to *sponsored content* without realizing it. It's sometimes called *native advertising* or *content marketing*. Whatever label is used, it's a key component of contemporary online propaganda. As a form of paid media where the advertising resembles the form and function of the user's experience of a particular website, sponsored content blends in and seems like a natural or inherent part of a website. Messages can be customized, making the content seem informative and credible.

In this lesson, students learn about sponsored content and then create screencasts to document the highly customized contemporary propaganda that they find on social networking sites, search engines (Google, Yahoo), blogs, online media sites and more.

### Essential Question

- Is sponsored content fair or unfair?

### Learning Outcomes & Key Messages

- Learn about sponsored content as a form of highly customized propaganda
- Consider the reasons why advertisers want their messages to seem a "natural" part of a website
- Examine how a user's previous online behavior shapes what kinds of native advertising that are displayed
- Reflect on the concepts of relevance and privacy in online social media

### Preparation

In a high-tech classroom, use a projector to display the [MIND OVER MEDIA](#) website and then enable students to work with a partner online, using a computer that can record audio. In a low-tech classroom, make copies of Worksheets 5.1 and 5.2 for all students and have poster paper and markers available for student use.

## Activity 5.1. Native Advertising: Fair or Unfair?

### View: Overview of Native Advertising by Comedian John Oliver

<http://www.hbo.com/last-week-tonight-with-john-oliver/episodes/1/13-august-3-2014/video/ep-13-clip-native-advertising.html#/>

John Oliver's funny take on native advertising includes a historical perspective on the blurred lines between news and advertising. Can consumers tell the difference between news and advertising? Does the difference matter any more? NOTE: Preview before viewing. This content may not be appropriate for all learners.

Is native advertising unfair and deceptive? Or just part of how business is done today? To promote discussion, students read Worksheet 5.1 to learn about advertising and native advertising. Working individually or with a partner, students compose a set of bullet points to identify arguments why native advertising might be considered both fair and unfair.

## **Activity 5.2. Document your Experience with Native Advertising**

Students create a screencast to document the highly customized native advertisements they experience while navigating through social media and news sites. Encourage students to review Worksheet 5.2 which offers a detailed description of the activity instructions. Students can complete this work in class or for homework; they will need access to a computer with a webcam and microphone.

### **View: Native Advertising Overview**

<http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/693>

This video is a sample of the kind of inquiry students will undertake in this assignment. It's a simple screencast, where a teacher has recorded the computer screen while talking about the native advertising and sponsored content. In the screencast, we see many different types of native advertising that can be found on just one website. Every individual experiences native advertising differently because the content is customized based on the characteristics of the user.

After viewing, check for comprehension. Ask the following four questions:

#### **Q: What advertisements were observed in the screencast?**

A: Aldi, Verizon, Intel, Rate Market Place, PR Web, Time Warner Cable Central, Next Advisor Daily

#### **Q: What native advertisements were observed in the screencast?**

A: Ad Choices sponsored content, banner ad for Missouri's number one auto group, Aldi list of appetizers, main dishes and desserts, coupons, mortgage advertisements, ally bank, Tripit, chocolate ad, fitness ad

#### **Q: What did the screencast point out regarding companies who create native advertisements?**

A: A company called Ad Choices which provides a description for who the ad is served by Quantcast who creates interest based advertising by using advertising that is more likely to be of interest to the user, along with a privacy policy, ability to opt out, Taboola; recommended because they look at your patterns of use and assume you might like the services they offer; several companies involved in bringing sponsored content or native advertising to websites such as FOX News.

#### **Q: What did the screencast point out regarding the personal experience of the consumer?**

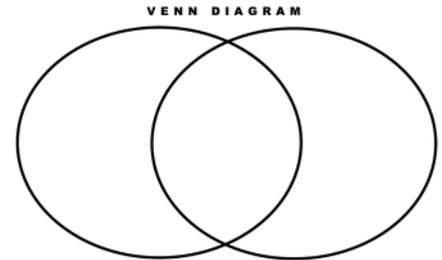
A: She has a mortgage, is preparing for the holidays, and she is a traveller.

**Opting Out.** Consumers have some control over their exposure to native advertising. Learn more about how Facebook uses the data you provide when you contribute content to serve you ads.

<https://www.facebook.com/about/privacy/advertising>

### Activity 5.3. Present, Reflect and Share

After their screencasts are completed, students work with a partner and view and discuss each other's work. They take notes about the information revealed in each screencast and create a Venn diagram to identify the similarities and differences between the two screencasts.



**Discuss:** How is native advertising designed to affect our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors? Does native advertising manipulate or trick people? Does it violate our privacy? Why or why not?

### Teacher Reflection

Customization and personalization can make online advertising seem natural. This form of contemporary propaganda may be more effective than traditional advertising because the ads are highly relevant to the user. Students may see this as positive personalization that makes advertising relevant. They also may see this as an effective form of control and manipulation. Both of these perspectives are valuable.

It is important to note that we supply plenty of information to advertisers when we use social media – this is what enables them to market to us more effectively. There are ways to opt-out of such advertising: this requires careful examination of the privacy policies of social media websites.

Making a screencast helps us notice that users have very different experiences when using digital content online. Even through teachers, parents and students may all use Facebook or visit the same website, they will have unique experiences. Considering the implications of this form of online personalization is important.

### Evaluation

Students are expected to create a screencast which will analyze the native advertising they observe and explain key features, including what it is, how it impacts their decisions and the pros and cons of this type of practice. They should be able to state that native advertising may be an effective form of propaganda precisely because it is not easily recognized as propaganda. Native advertising or sponsored content are forms of advertising that works by disguising itself as information.

# 5.1

## Native Advertising: Fair or Unfair?

*Instructions: Read and discuss the article and analyze whether native advertising is fair or unfair.*

By Kaylen Shimoda and Renee Hobbs

**Advertising** is defined as a form of marketing communication designed to persuade an audience to take or continue some type of action. Advertising informs, entertains and persuades by bringing attention to a specific type of product or service through paid announcements in newspapers, magazines, radio, television, billboards, and/or digital media. As the *economic engine* for both mass media and online media, advertising is carefully designed to attract and hold audience attention and communicate a message.



**Native advertising** is specifically a form of online advertising that matches the form and function of the platform on which it appears. The word *native* refers to the idea that the ad is designed to *blend in* or *look natural* by matching the other information on the website page. Sometimes this form of advertising is also called **sponsored content** or **content marketing**, which means that it is editorial content that has a marketing goal.



The practice of disguising ads as non-commercial content -- whether that content is an article from a professional newsroom or a Facebook post from your aunt -- is very profitable for media companies. Native advertising seen on a website page may look like a video, news or other content item, when in reality, it is an ad meant to be clicked and ultimately, persuade the user. Native advertising blurs the line between editorial content and advertising content, and, when most effective, engages readers in the same way as the surrounding editorial content.

Because native advertising is served to you by using the information that you provide when using the Internet, two people who visit the same website may see very different examples of native ads. You may not be aware of it, but everything you do online – every search term keyword you use, websites you visit, and photos and text messages you share – is used to customize ads and present sponsored content for you.

**Is Native Advertising Fair?** The Federal Trade Commission is responsible for regulating advertising in the United States. In general, they have established four principles for advertiser's responsibility to consumers: (1) Advertising must be truthful and not misleading. (2) Advertising must substantiate any express or implied claims. (3) Advertising cannot be unfair or deceptive. (4) Any disclosures necessary to make an ad accurate must be clear and conspicuous.

**Fair or Unfair? You Decide.** Make a list of pros and cons of sponsored content or native advertising. What are the advantages and disadvantages from the point of view of the consumer? What's your position? Is native advertising fair or unfair?

## Document Your Unique Experience with Sponsored Content

**Your Mission:** Create a screencast to show your unique experience with the native advertising that you see when you use social media and news websites. Then compare and contrast your experience with that of a partner to see the similarities and differences you can find.

**Sample Screencast:** <http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/693>

### Materials Required:

- Access to the Internet and computer with built-in webcam and microphone
- A free account for Screencast-o-matic: <http://www.screencast-o-matic.com>
- OR a screencast tool on your mobile phone

### Instructions:

1. Explore your social media and news sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google, Yahoo, CNN, NYTimes, BuzzFeed, Pinterest etc., and analyze the native advertising or sponsored content that you find on the pages you view. Follow some links to discover who is creating this stuff.
2. Review the Observation Questions below and analyze the native advertising that you experience.
3. Create your screencast by navigating on your computer, discussing and observing the native ads you see. Describe and narrate what it is and why you think it was placed there. Follow links to see what you can find about the creators of native advertising.

### Native Ad Example

### Observation Questions

#### What is it?

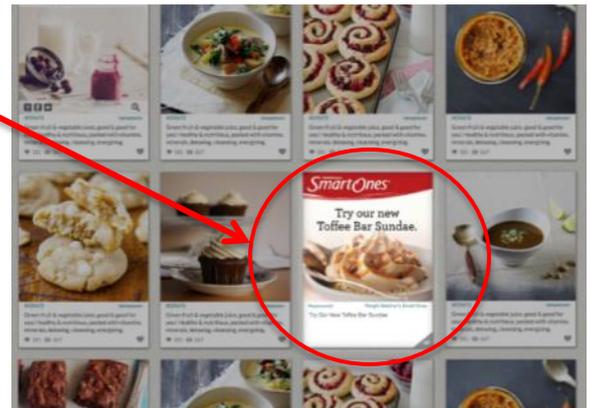
- What types of native advertising or sponsored content do you see on your social media pages?
- What types of native advertising or sponsored content do you find on other websites you visit?
- How can you tell that it is native advertising?
- Why is the example considered a native advertisement?

#### Why is it there?

- How does the native advertisement example fit into the overall page?
- Would a user be likely to recognize it as an ad? Why or why not?
- Why did you get this particular kind of native advertising or sponsored content?
- What information was gathered about you in order for this content to be placed here?

#### What impact does it have?

- What do online marketers know about you? Does it matter to you how much they know? Why or why not?
- What are the potential consequences of online ad personalization?
- Is native advertising or sponsored content beneficial or harmful?



# Lesson Plan 6

## The Ethics of Propaganda

*Examine the ethics of propaganda through examining the short and long-term consequences from the point of view of the producer and the consumer*

### Rationale

Each of us applies a moral compass when it comes to the contemporary propaganda we come across in daily life. We can evaluate the ethical dimensions of propaganda by thinking about its impact in the short-term and over a longer period of time and we can assess propaganda's impact by considering the point of view of the producer, the consumer and the society. In this lesson, students share their ideas about the ethics of propaganda by exploring two case studies and using an extemporaneous online public speaking tool to share their ideas in a public forum.

### Essential Question

What are the short- and long-term consequences of living in a world full of propaganda?

### Learning Outcomes & Key Messages

- Reflect on diverse interpretations of media messages in ways that promote understanding of and respect for others' perspectives
- Consider ethical dimension of propaganda from multiple points of view
- Consider the short- and long-term consequences of propaganda to appreciate how it might be beneficial or harmful

### Preparation

In a low-tech classroom, make copies of Worksheets 6.1 and 6.2 for all students. In a high-tech classroom, use a projector for video display and then enable students to work online, using a computer, to use [FlipGrid](#), an extemporaneous online public speaking tool that requires no special login or account. The computers must have a video camera option in order to complete the high-tech activity.

### Two Case Studies

These two case studies have distinctively coded messages about gender. You may use the "Dove Beauty Patch" as a whole-class model and then have students work independently to analyze "American Sniper." Or you may choose to have girls and boys break into two teams; each team analyzes one of the messages, followed by whole group discussion. Use these case studies to explore the short- and long-term positive and negative consequences of contemporary propaganda on individuals and society.

## Activity 6.1. The Ethics of “Dove Beauty Patch”

### The Beauty Patch

**View:** <http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/694>

This 4-minute Dove commercial which illustrates one of the company’s beauty campaigns, “Beauty Patch.” This campaign tricked women into thinking that the patch contained a special formula that would make them feel confident and beautiful; as long as they wore the patch, their confidence and beauty would shine.

**Q: What was Dove’s intended message?**

A: You don’t need the patch to feel beautiful.

**Q: What did you like about the commercial?**

A: Answers will vary. The commercial features real women with real confidence issues; it offers true insight into the struggles that women face when it comes to body image; sheds light on the issue of body image and makes it a relevant and important conversation; the overall message seems positive.

**Q: What did you dislike about the commercial?**

A: Answers will vary. It makes women look like they are vulnerable, helpless human beings who are easily tricked. Why does the company manipulate women in order to make them feel good about themselves? Although there is an admirable message, the company is not altruistic. They are promoting their brand.

Review the Activity presented on Worksheet 6.1 which introduces the definition of ‘ethics’ and invites students to reflect on short- and long-term consequences of the ad from two different points of view. Invite students to work individually, with a partner or in a small group to complete the chart on Worksheet 6.1.

### ANSWERS TO WORKSHEET 6.1 “Dove Beauty Patch”

What are the long- and short-term ethical consequences for the company, viewers and society?

	BEAUTY COMPANY	VIEWERS	SOCIETY
Short-Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate sales</li> <li>• Increases the sense of the “company as hero “ or “savior”</li> <li>• Links company to the cause of improving self-esteem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short burst of positive feeling</li> <li>• Feel the urge to support company by buying something</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neutralizes criticism of the industry as activating or exploiting women’s fears and insecurities</li> </ul>
Long-Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of trust in the company brand and message.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel manipulated, taken advantage of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains the status quo beauty culture</li> </ul>

## Activity 6.2. The Ethics of “American Sniper”

### American Sniper – Film Trailer

VIEW: <http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/rate/735>

This film trailer promotes a Warner Brothers film – a true story -- about Chris Kyle, a soldier working in Iraq for the special forces as a sniper. The film trailer introduces us to the character and encourages us to identify with the sniper as he considers whether to kill. The film also hints at the contradictions between the soldier’s life as a sniper and his life back at home, as a husband and father.

#### **Q: What was Clint Eastwood’s intended message?**

A: We are introduced to an actor playing the role of real-life Chris Kyle, the most lethal sniper in U.S. history, who killed more than 250 people in Iraq. We are brought into the suspense and anticipation in the moment of the sniper’s decision to shoot and kill.

#### **Q: What did you like about the film trailer?**

A: Answers will vary. It’s suspenseful and the feeling of anticipation creates tingles. We are offered flashbacks – or flashforwards? – of Kyle’s home life in the United States, including scenes that suggest the birth of his child. This juxtaposition between death and life creates a feeling of curiosity.

#### **Q: What did you dislike about the film trailer?**

A: Answers will vary. The character is a professional killer and we are encouraged to identify with him. The film may communicate the idea that the special-forces troops are the true heroes of the Iraq War.

Review the Activity presented on Worksheet 6.2 which introduces the definition of ‘ethics’ and invites students to reflect on short- and long-term consequences of the film from two different points of view. Students can work individually, with a partner or in a small group to complete the chart on Worksheet 6.2.

**ANSWERS TO WORKSHEET 6.2 “American Sniper”**

What are the long- and short-term ethical consequences for the filmmaker, the viewer and for the society?

	FILM COMPANY	VIEWERS	SOCIETY
Short-Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate sales</li> <li>• Increases the filmmaker’s and company’s reputation</li> <li>• Inspires people to create similar stories, characters and themes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates a short burst of feeling</li> <li>• Increases interest in seeing the movie</li> <li>• Promotes feelings of respect for the special-ops forces.</li> <li>• Increases curiosity about Iraq War</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports a “hero complex” about lone individuals with special talents in killing</li> <li>• May influence the attitudes and behavior of current and future soldiers</li> </ul>
Long-Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positions the company as addressing important and serious contemporary public issues</li> <li>• Contributes to continuing social dialogue about war</li> <li>• Offers a portrait of soldiers that deepens public awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fictional character becomes more “real” than actual soldier</li> <li>• Encourages good vs evil thinking about the Middle East</li> <li>• Increases feelings of war as justified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distorts public understanding of recent history</li> <li>• Desensitizes people to war violence</li> <li>• May affect public decision-making about future wars</li> </ul>

**Activity 6.3. Create an Extemporaneous Oral Presentation Online**

Students summarize their analysis charts by making an extemporaneous oral presentation.

**HIGH TECH CLASSROOMS**

You don’t need logins or passwords to use [Flipgrid](http://www.flipgrid.com), just a mobile device or computer with Internet access, a microphone and a webcam. This software enables to students to post, share and review the video comments others on “Dove Beauty Patch” and “American Sniper.” Flipgrid provides your students with access to a wider audience that goes beyond the classroom.

**DOVE BEAUTY PATCH.** Students can click on this link <http://flipgrid.com/#ccfe6e27> to leave a comment. When they press the green “plus” button, they can create a oral presentation up to 90 seconds in length. In a low-tech classroom, students give 90-second oral presentations, responding to this question:

**AMERICAN SNIPER FILM.** Students can click on this link <http://flipgrid.com/#5fd9d0ff> to leave a comment. When they press the green “plus” button, they can create a oral presentation up to 90 seconds in length. In a low-tech classroom, students give 90-second oral presentations, responding to this question:

When students have completed their response, host a class discussion based on their answers. Give students the opportunity to volunteer and show their FlipGrid responses to the class. Have the class make comments and share their opinions on the case study.

### **RUBRIC FOR EVALUATION STUDENT ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

<b>Content</b>	<b>Feedback and Comments</b>
The response includes short- and long-term consequences from multiple points of view, including individuals and society.	
The response considers how media depictions of human behavior have ethical dimensions and consequences.	
<b>Format</b>	
The presenter’s voice is clear and easy to listen to.	
The presenter seems confident and relaxed.	
The presenter’s pace is dynamic but not rushed.	
The presentation has a clear beginning, middle and end.	

### **Teacher Reflection**

To explore ethical issues, it’s important to be able to “walk a mile in the shoes of another.” When students visualize themselves as the advertiser, the filmmaker, the audience, and the society as a whole, they are more likely to truthfully and honestly generate positive and negative short-term and long-term consequences.

### **Evaluation**

Students create a FlipGrid response (or give an informal oral presentation in a low-tech classroom) by providing a thoughtful analysis of the short- and long-term consequences faced by the consumer and the producer. They should be able to understand the different roles and how people’s perceptions of the ethics of propaganda reflect their point of view.

# 6.1

## The Ethics of Dove's "Beauty Patch" Campaign

*Instructions: Read about ethics, then view and discuss Dove's "Beauty Patch" Campaign. Following the video, answer the questions.*

**Ethics**, is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. In other words, ethics are the moral principles and values that govern the actions and decisions of individuals and groups. They try to answer questions like:



- What actions are good?
- What actions are bad?
- How do our actions affect others?

Propaganda is oftentimes portrayed as a negative concept because past definitions have focused on biased or misleading information. Today, we are able to identify propaganda in a more positive light, which has allowed us to distinguish between negative and positive propaganda efforts.

Ethics help creative people consider the consequences of their work because communication has the power to change the world – for good or for evil.

There are short- and long-term consequences of propaganda and it can be thought about from two different points of view: ***The person who makes it and the person who receives it.*** Ultimately, ethical decisions depend on your point of view.



### For Discussion

What are the long- and short-term **consequences** of this commercial for the beauty company, the beauty industry, the viewers of this ad campaign, and the overall society?

	BEAUTY COMPANY	VIEWERS	SOCIETY
Short-Term			
Long-Term			

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## The Ethics of “American Sniper” Film

## 6.2

*Instructions: Read about ethics, then view and discuss the film trailer, “American Sniper.”*

**Ethics**, is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. In other words, ethics are the moral principles and values that govern the actions and decisions of individuals and groups. They try to answer questions like:



- What actions are good?
- What actions are bad?
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### For Discussion

What are the long- and short-term **consequences** of this film for the filmmaker, viewers and for society?

	FILM COMPANY	VIEWERS	SOCIETY
Short-Term			
Long-Term			

# **Standards Alignment**

## **MIND OVER MEDIA:**

### **ANALYZING CONTEMPORARY PROPAGANDA**

#### **Common Core State Standards for Social Studies**

- 7.G& C.1.4 Compare the sources of power and governmental authority in various societies (e.g. monarchs, dictators, elected officials, anti-governmental groups and religious, political factions).
- 7.H.1.3 Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.
- 7.H.2.1 Analyze the effects of social, economic, military, and political conflict among nations, regions, and groups (e.g. war, genocide, imperialism, and colonization).
- 7.C.1.1 Explain how culture unites and divides modern societies and regions (e.g. enslavement of various people, caste system, religious conflict, and Social Darwinism).
- 7.C.1.2 Explain how cultural expressions (e.g. art, literature, architecture, and music) influence modern society.

#### **Common Core State Standards for Language Arts**

- R.I.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.
- R.I.7.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.
- L.W.7.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

#### **College Board Standards for College Success - English Language Arts**

#### **Media Literacy Standard 3 Composing & Producing Media Communication**

- M3.1-2.1 Understands that credibility, logical and emotional appeals, and aesthetic composition affect the achievement of purpose and goals (e.g., to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to share a personal perspective) and considers these when developing an informational or creative media communication
- M3.1-2.2 Explains and illustrates how credibility, logical and emotional appeals, and aesthetic composition affect the achievement of purpose and goals (e.g., to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to share a personal perspective) and considers these when developing an informational or creative media communication

## **National Board of Professional Teaching Standards**

### **Standard IX: Viewing and Visual Literacy**

Accomplished early and middle childhood literacy: reading–language arts teachers know, value, and teach viewing and visual literacy as essential components of literacy instruction in order to prepare students to interpret and interact with an increasingly visual world.

"Visual literacy also incorporates the ability to analyze the purposes of visual texts, including for propaganda, commercial, aesthetic, and intellectual uses." (pg 82)

"Accomplished teachers understand that developing students' abilities to interpret and manipulate visual elements requires purposeful and planned instruction. They teach their students how to be discriminating viewers who can synthesize the message and identify the purpose of a given medium and also recognize bias and propaganda embedded in visual media." (pg 84)

## **National Council of Teachers of English**

### **2013 NCTE Definition of 21st Century Literacies**

A literate person possesses a wide range of abilities and competencies, inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities and social trajectories of individuals and groups. They develop proficiency with the tools of technology; build intentional cross-cultural connections and relationship with others so to pose and solve problems collaboratively and strengthen independent thought; design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes; manage, analyze and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information; create, critique analyze and evaluate multimedia texts; attend to ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments.

### **1970 Resolution on Media Literacy**

Educators should explore more vigorously the relationship of the learning and teaching of media literacy to other concerns of English instruction, and further, that this exploration be made in the total context of the development of students to control and direct their own lives

## **National Council for the Social Studies**

### **NCSS Position Statement on Media Literacy**

"In the 21st century, media literacy is an imperative for participatory democracy because new information/communication technologies and a market-based media culture have significantly reshaped the world. The better we can prepare our students to critically question the information and media they are seeing, hearing, and using, the more likely they are to make informed decisions and to participate as citizens who can shape democracy for the public good."

## **NCSS National Social Studies Standards**

**Source:** Themes

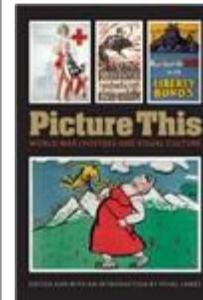
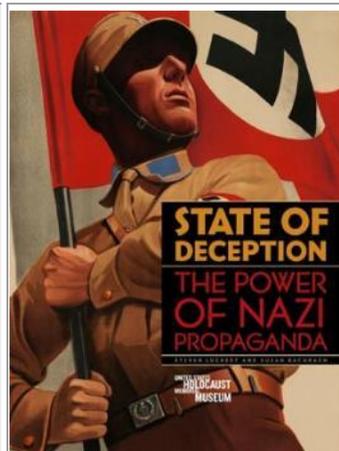
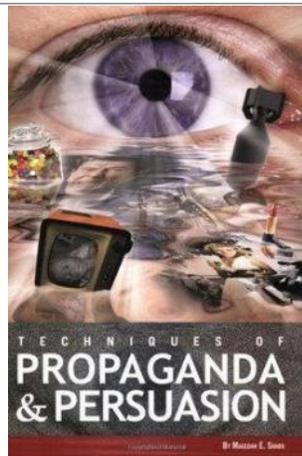
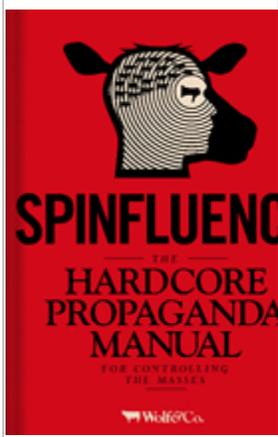
### **Time, Continuity & Change**

"guide learners in using such processes of critical historical inquiry to reconstruct and interpret the past, such as using a variety of sources and checking their credibility, validating and weighing evidence for claims, searching for causality, and distinguishing between events and developments that are significant and those that are inconsequential."

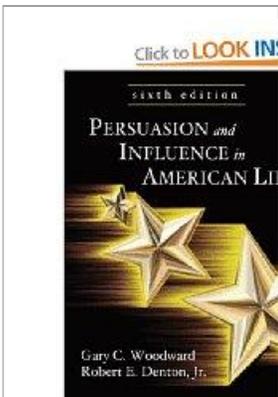
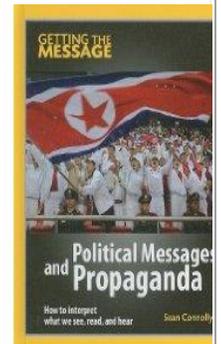
### **Individual Development & Identity**

"have learners compare and evaluate the impact of stereotyping, conformity, acts of altruism, discrimination, and other behaviors on individuals and groups"

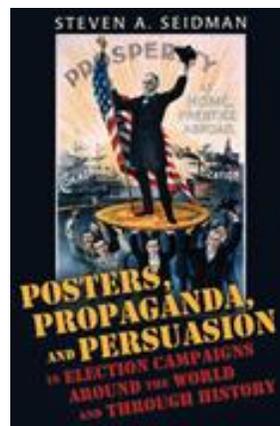
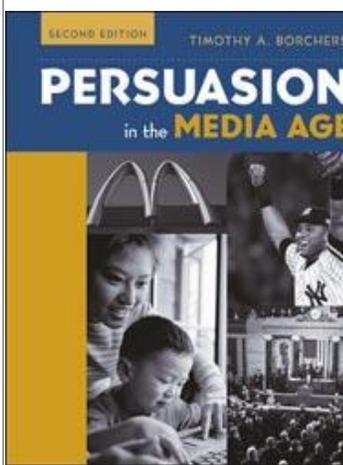
## Learn More: Resources



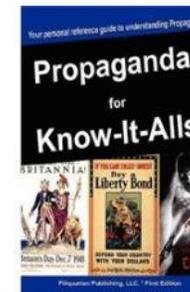
[Picture This](#)  
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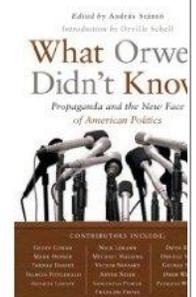
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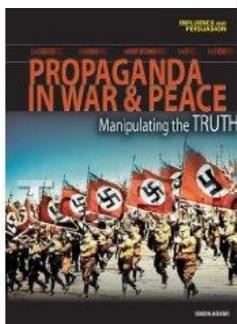


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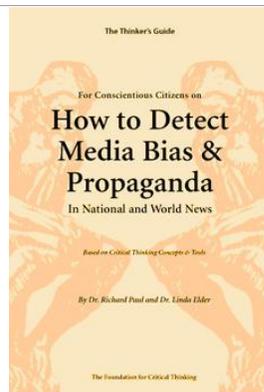


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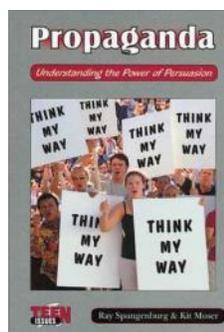
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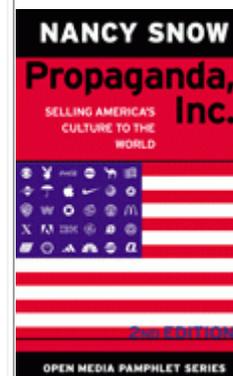
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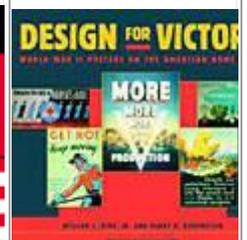
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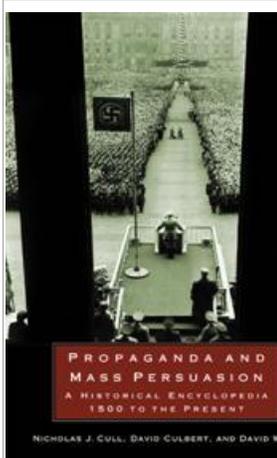


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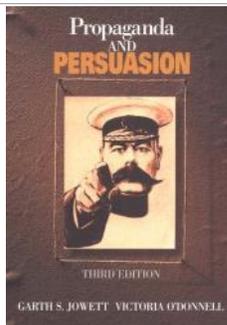


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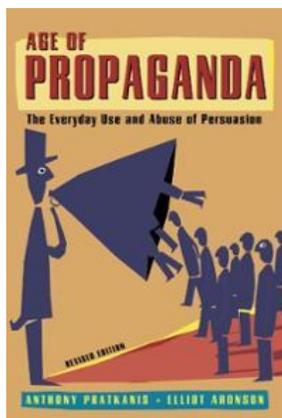
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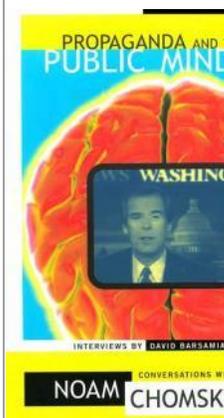
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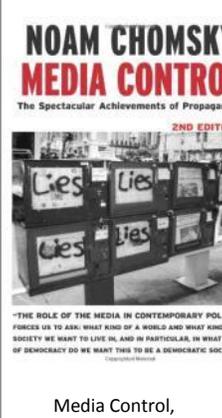
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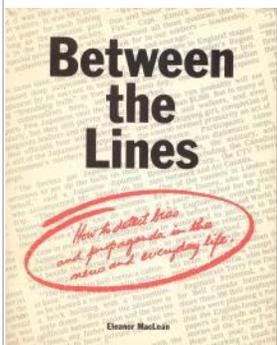
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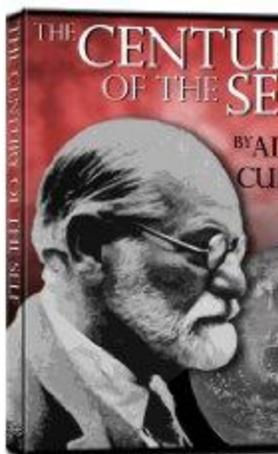
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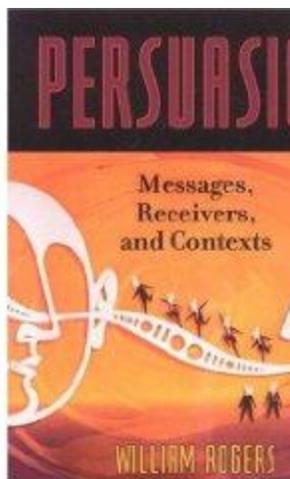
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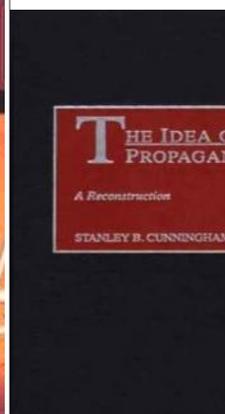
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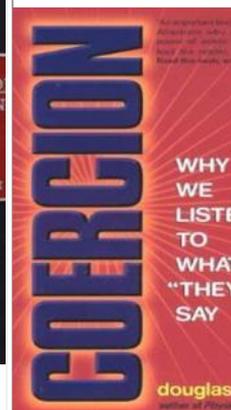
VIDEO  
available as a download from [Google](#) and [BBC](#)



Persuasion by William Rogers



The Idea of Propaganda by Walter Cunningham



Coercion by Doug Rushkoff

Thanks to Frank Baker for curating this collection of resources for learning more

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## Credits and Acknowledgements

### **Media Education Lab**

Located at the Harrington School of Communication and Media at the University of Rhode Island, the Media Education Lab advances media literacy through scholarship and community service. Learn more: [www.mediaeducationlab.com](http://www.mediaeducationlab.com)

### **About the Project**

“Mind Over Media: Analyzing Contemporary Propaganda” resulted from a collaboration between Renee Hobbs and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in developing the [educational resources for the special exhibition, State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda](#). At the Museum, David Klevan led the website initiative. At the Media Education Lab, Renee Hobbs, Kaylen Shimoda, Jonathan Friesem, Frank Baker, Sandy McGee, and Lili Schliesser contributed to the development of the program. Special thanks to JoAnna Wasserman whose insight on propaganda (past and present) inspired us all. Web design and production services provided by Local Projects and Night Kitchen Interactive.

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