

The Influence of Emotionally Charged WWII Propaganda

Week 6 Essay Assignment

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ENG 102 English Composition II

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World War II propaganda was introduced to the general public as a way to encourage unity and patriotism while gaining support for the war. The posters emotionally charged content was created as a means of disseminating war information while influencing the general public's view of the war.

In an effort to disseminate information to the general public related to the war, President F.D.R. signed Executive order 9182, and the Office of War Information was formed. The introduction paragraph of this document clearly defines F.D.R.'s intentions for forming the Office of War Information: "In recognition of the right of the American people and of all other people opposing the Axis aggressors to be truthfully informed about the common war effort" (Roosevelt, 1941).

A good portion of the posters were created as a method of disseminating information about the war. For example, the general public was encouraged to understand why we were bombed by Japan at Pearl Harbor, and also encouraged American's to support the government's decision to declare war.

Before the Pearl Harbor bombing on December 7, 1941, the United States had not yet officially declared war. 4 days after Pearl Harbor, Germany declared war against the United States giving the U.S. no option but to defend itself. The poster in Figure 1 is intended to draw anger against The Evil Axis (Germany, Japan and Italy), as it portrays the Japanese bombing attack on the United States; the Evil Axis' response to America's alliance with Britain.

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The Library of Congress, reported on events during December of 1941 as follows: “The Japanese surprise attack on the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, brought America into the war. Four days later, Germany declared war on the United States, making U.S. involvement in Europe inevitable.” (Library of Congress, *retrieved 12/4/2011*)

Figure 1: “Seppla” by Joseph Plank



(Image courtesy of <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/churchill/wc-sword.html>)

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Posters used during the war encouraged women to join the war effort or highlighted other specific aspects of the war effort. The posters, focused on a sense of pride and patriotism encouraged both military and civilian involvement in the war.

One such poster depicted an attractive young woman as a nurse for the military. Her image seems almost of angelic nature as she is outlined by a bright glowing light. Her facial features are also highlighted with the same glowing-light effect. The focal point of the image is the woman's bright blue eyes and face. Her eyes seem fixed upon a distant object in the sky, while her facial expression is full of determination and concern. One feels a sense of pride knowing that America's military is supported by attractive young women who are willing to sacrifice themselves in an effort to help American soldiers. Please see the poster in Figure 2.

Figure 2: U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps



(Image courtesy of the State of Delaware Public Archives)

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It is obvious that the posters offered during World War II were effective in drawing an emotional response in an effort to disseminate information while influencing public view. Those emotions, whether they were positive or negative, resulted in an effective war campaign from the view of the general public, as well as an effective manner of disseminating war information by the Office of War Information and the F.D.R. administration.

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