

Weed Out Propaganda

A bold digital poster outlines a simple acronym — S.E.E.D. — to help students learn to spot propaganda by recognizing four of its key techniques.

GRADE LEVEL: Middle and high school, university

TIME: 30–60 minutes

MATERIALS: Weed Out Propaganda poster (download); Weed Out Propaganda worksheet (download); access to the gallery of historical propaganda on this page (either printed copies or via devices); contemporary examples of propaganda (one possible source: [Mind Over Media](#))

PREPARE

1. Download and print and/or project the Weed Out Propaganda poster; review the poster content.
2. Make copies of the Weed Out Propaganda worksheet, one per student.
3. Review the historical examples of propaganda in the gallery on this page.
4. Pre-select examples or provide access to a source for examples of contemporary propaganda (see above).

DO

1. As a class, define propaganda. Be sure your definition includes the ideas that propaganda is a persuasive message/media intended to influence thoughts and actions and that it may attempt to override reason/facts with emotions/gut reactions. Explain that propaganda can be used to promote a wide variety of causes, some of which we would deem “good,” and some of which we would deem “bad,” and that students may be familiar with many propaganda techniques because advertisers borrow them to sell goods and services. Being able to identify propaganda is important in order to make sure that we are forming our opinions about the world based on facts and not being manipulated into thinking/doing things without realizing it.
2. Tell students they are going to look at propaganda from the past and the present to see how some of its key techniques have changed and stayed the same. Review the Weed Out Propaganda poster to ensure students understand the four key techniques: simplification, exploitation, exaggeration and division.
3. Hand out the Weed out Propaganda worksheet and assign or have students select one historical example (from the gallery on this page) and one contemporary example to analyze.
4. After students have completed the worksheet, allow them to share their findings and discuss the questions below.

DISCUSS

1. Which techniques seem to be the most commonly used? Why do you think this is?
2. Which techniques do you think are the most/least effective? Why?
3. Are the techniques that were effective in the past also effective today? Explain.
4. Which of the historical examples analyzed do you think were effective at changing minds in their time? Why? Are any still effective today?
5. How are the contemporary examples the same as/different from the historical examples? How do you explain the similarities and differences?
6. Why is it important to be able to recognize propaganda? What impact has it had on history? What impact does it have today?

7. The poster describes propaganda as something you should try to remove before it “takes root.” Do you think it becomes harder to recognize propaganda if you have started to believe in the ideas it presents? Explain.