World War II: Government Posters
Introduction

In this lesson you are going to look at some posters from World War 2. These sources show how the government encouraged people to salvage certain materials for the war, pointed out the dangers of “careless talk,” and to persuade a nation to commit terrible atrocities against Jews and other minorities.

Posters were put up in shops and shop windows, council buildings and village halls. Different posters were used to put over different messages. For example, the famous “Dig for Victory” posters were used as the British government wanted people to grow their own food during wartime.

The sources used in this lesson show how the government hoped to get people at home to play their part in the war.

Key words:
Salvage: collecting and reusing or recycling waste material.
Persuade: to try and change a person’s mind or way of thinking.
Slogan: catchword or catch phrase e.g. “Dig for Victory”

Tasks

Look at Source 1, 2, 3 and 4

1. Look at each of the salvage posters. Explain how they use the following ways to persuade people to save waste:
   - How do the posters use slogans?
   - Do they use powerful/forceful words?
   - Do they appeal to feelings and emotions?
   - How do the posters use humor?
   - How do the posters use different font sizes?
   - How do the posters use color to help make their point?
   - Which do you think is the most persuasive poster? Give your reasons, use the questions above to help.
   - Are the posters aimed at different types of audience (men, women, children or all groups)?

Look at Source 5, 6, and 7

2. Look at each of the posters and answer the questions below:
   - List the situations in which you must be careful about what you say
World War Two Government Posters: How did Britain encourage people at home to help win the war?

- Which poster warns about being careful who to trust? Can you explain how the poster makes this clear?
- Which posters show the results of “careless talk”?
- Are the posters aimed at different types of audience (men, women, children or all groups)?
- Which do you think is the most persuasive poster? Give your reasons, use the questions from task 1 to help.

Look at Source 8, 9, and 10

3. Look at each of the posters and answer the questions below:

- How does each poster use graphics/illustrations to convey their message?
- Do they use powerful/forceful words?
- Do they appeal to feelings and emotions?
- How does each poster reflect the anti-Semitic message of Hitler’s regime?
- Which do you think is the most persuasive poster? Give your reasons, use the questions above to help.

Background

All of the posters used in this lesson are the work of artists who worked for the government Ministry of Information formed in 1939. The posters were used to try and influence public opinion.

For example, people were encouraged to grow their own food, and save waste. This was because it was difficult to import food from other countries during wartime. Kitchen waste could be fed to hens and pigs. People were asked to salvage as many materials as they could. Wastepaper, metal or bones could be made into planes and ammunition.

The Ministry of Information was also keen to explain to the people the danger of “careless talk.” They wanted the public to become much more careful about security because information or secrets might be used by enemy spies listening in.

When Hitler ascended to power in 1933, Goebbels took over the Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, which controlled radio, press, publishing, cinema and the other arts. Goebbels subjected artists and journalists to state control and eliminated all Jews and political opponents from positions of influence. Goebbels promoted the Nazis' anti-Semitic message through black and white films.

"The essence of propaganda consists in winning people over to an idea so sincerely, so vitally, that in the end they succumb to it utterly and can never again escape from it," wrote Joseph Goebbels in his diary. Adolph Hitler agreed. Following the Nazis' rise to power in 1933, Hitler established a Reich Ministry of Public
Enlightenment and Propaganda with Goebbels as its head. Goebbels promoted the Nazi message through art, music, theater, films, books, radio, and the press, and censored all opposition. Goebbels worked to inflame the anger of Germans over their defeat in World War I and emphasized German cultural and military achievements to boost national pride. He played an important role in creating an atmosphere in Germany that made it possible for the Nazis to commit terrible atrocities against Jews and other minorities.

Orchestrated by Joseph Goebbels, and supported by Hitler, Nazi propaganda ordered the elimination of Jews from the German economy, the repossession of their property, and businesses, and their exclusion from schools, resorts, and parks. He warned of a "final reckoning with the Jews." In 1941 he gave the order to "carry out all preparations with regard to ... a general solution of the Jewish question in those territories of Europe which are under German influence."
Source 1: Salvage poster: “Up Housewives and at ’em!” (INF 3/219)
Source 2: Salvage Poster: “Still more paper, rags, bones wanted for salvage” (INF 3/196)
Source 3: Salvage Poster: “Please put your litter in the bin” (INF 13/149 f15)
Source 4: Salvage Poster: “The great round up” (INF 13/148 f8)
Source 5: Careless talk poster: The test of soldier (INF 13/217f9)

THE TEST OF A SOLDIER –

is to keep his mouth shut when he would look big if he told what he knew
Source 6: Careless talk poster: Beware (EXT 1/119f10)

Whether alone or in a crowd,
Never write or say aloud,
What you’re loading, whence you hail,
Where you’re bound for, when you sail.

—AboVE ALL NEVER GIVE AWAY
THE MOVEMENTS OF H.M. SHIPS
Source 7: Careless talk poster: Careless talk may cost his life (EXT 1/119f13)
Source 8: Nazi Propaganda

The cover of *The Eternal Jew*, an anti-Semitic book published by the Nazi Party's publishing house in 1937. The book contained 265 images with captions that supported the negative stereotypes of Jews. This cover shows an ugly Jew holding part of Russia, a whip, and some coins.
Source 9: Nazi Propaganda
This is the cover of a four page flyer used to justify the yellow star that Jews were forced to wear in Germany following September 1, 1941. The cover states, "When you see this symbol..." The last page concludes with, "you must ensure through your behavior that Jewry never again has even the slightest influence on our people."
Source 10: Nazi Propaganda
“Jews- make wars longer, start wars” (translated)