

Jonah Berman's Process Paper

Last summer, before I had even heard about National History Day, I took a class about the history of art during World War II. The use of propaganda fascinated me, and it piqued my interest in both propaganda and that time period. When I heard about National History Day and its theme, my mind immediately went to World War II propaganda. From there, I narrowed down my topic to World War II's print propaganda. I feel that my topic exemplifies this year's theme perfectly because print propaganda can not only communicate direct ideas but also show complicated attitudes and beliefs that are difficult to display with words.

Although the primary sources were plentiful, I chose which ones I included based on two main criteria: relevance to the theme and reliability. I made sure my primary sources were genuine by mainly using university websites, Google Arts and Culture, and government archives. I picked posters that were relevant to the theme by considering their value both as a spectator from the 1940s and a student from today. For example, I would be more likely to focus on a poster that used racist caricatures rather than one that just had pictures of well-known leaders from the time, because the former remains more educationally and emotionally poignant. For my secondary sources, I prioritized nuanced and unbiased analysis coupled with useful primary sources.

My thesis is: "The Allied and Axis powers in WWII used the same fundamental techniques in their propaganda to shape public will to increase patriotism. While these posters were incredibly important in their own time, they take on a new importance today for learners who wish to see WWII from multiple perspectives and attitudes." To expand on this, I believe that each side of the war capitalized off of ideas such as racism, fear, and masculine archetypes in order to relate to the masses in ways that felt familiar. I believe that this is still significant for

historians and society at large because, at a time when media is consumed more than ever, natural biases and manipulative tactics can greatly affect someone's outlook on the world.

When creating my website, I wanted to prioritize both ease of use and efficacy of information. For the former, I made sure that the website navigation was simple and that if a large number of pages were necessary, it would not be difficult to access them. When designing each page, I tried to make the pages easy on the eyes, with no overbearing colors, which is why I chose white as my main background color. When writing the pages, I tried to balance the amount of writing I did with the display of the poster. One challenge was to keep the word count under 1200 while still presenting a quality project, and even though it was difficult, I think that I accomplished it.