

# Lesson Title: Persuasion of the Patriots: Create a Revolutionary War Propaganda Poster

## Materials Needed

- Large sheet of paper or poster board (e.g., 11x17" or larger)
- Drawing and coloring supplies (markers, colored pencils, crayons, or paint)
- Pencil and eraser
- Access to the internet for viewing historical examples
- Optional: Old-looking paper (you can create this by dabbing a damp tea bag on plain paper and letting it dry)
- Optional: Ruler

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Analyze primary source examples of propaganda from the American Revolution.
- Identify at least two persuasive techniques used in historical propaganda (e.g., emotional language, powerful symbols, villainizing the opponent).
- Design and create an original propaganda poster that supports either the Patriot or Loyalist cause.
- Articulate the historical reasoning behind their choice of words, images, and symbols in their poster.

## Alignment with History Standards (Example: 5th Grade US History)

- **Causes of the American Revolution:** Understands the differing perspectives between Patriots and Loyalists regarding British policies (e.g., Stamp Act, Boston Massacre).
- **Key Figures and Events:** Recognizes the role of communication and persuasion in mobilizing support for either side of the conflict.
- **Analyzing Primary Sources:** Develops skills in interpreting historical images and texts for bias, perspective, and purpose.

## Lesson Plan & Activities

### Part 1: The Hook - What is Propaganda? (10-15 minutes)

1. **Start with a Question:** Ask the student, "If you wanted to convince everyone in town to join your cause, but you didn't have TV or the internet, how would you do it?" Discuss ideas like speeches, town criers, and printed flyers or posters.
2. **Introduce the Concept:** Explain that during the American Revolution, both sides used powerful images and words to convince people to join them. This is called **propaganda**—information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a particular political cause or point of

view.

3. **Analyze a Primary Source Together:** Show the student a famous piece of Patriot propaganda. A great example is Paul Revere's engraving of the "Bloody Massacre" (the Boston Massacre).
  - **Ask guiding questions:** *"What do you see happening in this picture? Who looks like the 'good guys' and who looks like the 'bad guys'? How does the artist make you feel that way? Do you think this is exactly how it happened?"*
  - Point out the techniques: The British soldiers are shown firing on an unarmed, peaceful crowd. The colonists look like innocent victims. This is an appeal to emotion (anger, pity).

## Part 2: Exploring the Tools of Persuasion (10 minutes)

1. **Examine More Examples:** Briefly look at 1-2 more examples online. Search for:
  - **"Join, or Die" snake cartoon by Benjamin Franklin:** Discuss what the snake represents (the colonies) and the message (they must unite to survive). This is an example of **symbolism**.
  - **British political cartoons mocking the colonists:** This shows the other side's perspective and their use of ridicule as a tool.
2. **Brainstorm Techniques:** Based on the examples, create a quick list of "propaganda tricks" together.
  - Use strong, emotional words (e.g., liberty, tyranny, freedom, massacre).
  - Create a clear villain and a clear hero.
  - Use powerful symbols (a snake, a flag, chains).
  - Appeal to a sense of unity or shared identity.

## Part 3: The Creative Mission - Design Your Poster (30-45 minutes)

1. **Choose a Side:** The student must now become a propagandist! They must choose a side to support:
  - **The Patriots:** Argue for independence from Britain. Focus on issues like "no taxation without representation," the presence of British soldiers, and the fight for liberty.
  - **The Loyalists:** Argue for remaining loyal to the British King. Focus on ideas like the benefits of being part of the British Empire, the chaos of war, and viewing the Patriots as dangerous rebels.
2. **Brainstorming & Sketching:** Before starting on the final poster, have the student use a pencil and scratch paper to brainstorm. They should answer:
  - **What is my main message?** (e.g., "Don't Tread on Me" or "Loyalty Brings Peace").
  - **What is my slogan?** (A short, catchy phrase).
  - **What main image or symbol will I use?** (A broken chain? A noble lion representing Britain? A minuteman?).
  - **Which "propaganda tricks" will I use?**
3. **Create the Poster:** Give the student the poster board and art supplies. Encourage them to be bold and creative. Remind them that these posters were meant to be seen from a distance and grab attention quickly.

## Part 4: Share and Justify (5-10 minutes)

1. **The Presentation:** Have the student present their finished poster.
2. **Explain the Choices (Assessment):** As they present, ask them to be the historian and explain their work. This is the key assessment part of the lesson.
  - *"Why did you choose this slogan?"*
  - *"Tell me about the symbols you used. What do they mean in the context of the 1770s?"*
  - *"Who were you trying to convince with this poster?"*

- "Which persuasive technique do you think is most effective here and why?"

## Differentiation and Extension

- **For Extra Support:** Provide a worksheet with pre-selected slogans or symbols that the student can choose from. Offer a simple poster template to help with layout.
- **For an Advanced Challenge:** Ask the student to write a short paragraph on the back of the poster from the perspective of their propagandist, explaining where they would hang the poster and what they hope it will achieve. Another challenge is to create a second, smaller poster that represents the \*opposite\* point of view.

## Assessment Method

The student's learning will be assessed based on the final poster and their oral presentation/justification. Use a simple rubric to evaluate:

- **Historical Accuracy (40%):** The poster's message, symbols, and slogans are relevant to the historical conflict between Patriots and Loyalists.
- **Use of Persuasive Techniques (30%):** The student successfully incorporates at least two propaganda techniques (e.g., emotional appeals, symbolism) and can identify them in their work.
- **Creativity & Clarity (30%):** The poster is visually engaging, and the message is clear. The student clearly articulates their creative choices during the presentation.