

Historica Canada Education Portal

World War One Recruitment Posters

Overview

When Canada entered the First World War in 1914, men of all ages enlisted by the thousands. However, this zeal waned as reports of casualty rates arrived home. Recruitment posters were an integral part of encouraging men and women to enlist at all points between 1914 and 1918. They appealed to the many motivations for enlistment and used various propaganda techniques to achieve their goal. In this activity, students will examine reasons for enlistment, recruitment posters, and enlistment in the military today.

Aims

This exercise aims to familiarize students with the reasons why men and women enlisted in the First World War and the nature and techniques of recruitment posters, as well as connect the student personally to the recruitment process. Students will enhance their understanding of why young men and women go to war and how the government uses propaganda. Activities will involve the students in analyzing primary sources when conducting historical research, help them to explain and apply the concepts of cause and effect in history, and to identify bias and underlying values in historical sources. Students will work from the perspective of a regular person who enlisted in the First World War. It is important to stress that they must try to see things from the point of view

of a young person in Canada in 1914. Students will analyze similarities and differences between the past and the present.

Background

This brainstorm, analysis, and presentation can be used as an introduction to the study on Canada's role in the First World War. It is also a generic activity that can extend to the understanding of modern wars such as Canada in Afghanistan.

Activities

Time Allowance: 2 classes

Procedures:

Activate: Students brainstorm a list of push/pull factors to answer the question, "Why would a young person go to war in 1914?" or, "Why do young people go to war?"

Acquire: In pairs, students research and create a definition of propaganda and examine the techniques used by the media and government to influence people's thinking. Students share their findings in a class discussion. Or, the teacher can give a short lecture on propaganda and propaganda techniques. Individually, students choose or are assigned a propaganda poster from the First World War. They then analyze the approaches used, the message of the poster, and the push/pull factors appealed to in the poster. Students make a short presentation showing

their posters to the class and explaining their analysis.

Apply: (Choose one or all)

1. Students create a recruiting poster for recruiting young people to Canadian military service in Afghanistan or Iraq. In a gallery walk, students view the posters and then choose one to evaluate based on message, effective use of push/pull factors and propaganda techniques, effective layout and design, images, and colour.
2. In a journal, students answer the questions: Would you ever go to war or join the military? Are there any special circumstances that would change your mind from no to yes, or yes to no?
3. In an exit slip, students answer the question, what would you do if you were a young person in 1914? What would you do if you were a young person faced with going to war today? Explain any differences between responses. Have the reasons for going to war changed over time? Students share their journals in class.

Evaluation:

Assess the brainstorm for student's prior knowledge and student's ability to consider the context and the experiences of people who lived in the past.

Assess analysis of posters for student's ability to uncover, select and examine information using primary historical sources, to explain and apply the concepts of cause and effect in history, and to identify bias and underlying values in historical sources.

Assess student's posters for their creativity and ability to communicate information and ideas in a clear and accurate way. Assess journals and exit slips for student's ability to analyze similarities and differences

between the past and the present.

Resources

[First World War Recruitment Posters](#)

[Military Service Act - The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[Conscription - The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[Canadian Children and the Great War - The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[First World War – The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[First World War Timeline – The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[Canadian Expeditionary Force – The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[First World War Collection – The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)