Practice Exercises

DISCUSSION TOPICS

What is Propaganda?

1. What are some potential sources of propaganda in the modern world?

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2. In order to qualify as propaganda, a message must meet the following criteria:
   • persuasive function
   • sizeable target audience
   • representation of a specific group’s agenda
   • use of faulty reasoning and/or emotional appeals

   Describe an example of a message that would meet all but one of the above criteria. Explain your answer.
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3. Identify an example of propaganda you have recently been exposed to, and explain to the class why this message constitutes propaganda.
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Part 1: Assertion

1. What makes a statement an example of “assertion” propaganda?

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2. Describe an example of an assertion you have seen in politics or advertising. Do you think that this claim has affected your point of view? Explain your reaction.

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3. Identify which of the following assertions qualify as propaganda, and explain your answer. Modify those that are not propaganda to make them fit the four criteria.

3A. Parent to child: “If you eat your vegetables, you’ll grow up to be big and strong.”

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3B. Billboard: “Mario’s Pizza, Next Exit.”

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3C. Magazine ad for “age-defying” makeup: “True Beauty is Ageless.”

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Name: ____________________________________________
3D. Commercial: “According to a study by the National Heart Association, eating this cereal, as part of a balanced breakfast, may reduce the risk of heart disease.”

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3E. Political commentator: “Richard Williams obviously doesn’t have the experience it takes to be President of the United States.”

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4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of assertion propaganda.

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Part 2: Bandwagon

1. What makes the bandwagon technique appealing to most people?
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2. Identify a decision you have made based primarily on popular opinion. Describe the situation, and explain whether following the majority made sense in that context.
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3. Does the fact that numerous experts agree about a theory constitute logical grounds for accepting it? Why, or why not?
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4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of bandwagon propaganda.
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Part 3: Card Stacking

1. Why is it often difficult to distinguish card stacking propaganda from legitimate arguments?

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2. What clues can help you make the distinction between card stacking propaganda and legitimate arguments?

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3. Describe the different forms card stacking takes in print advertisements and television commercials. What kinds of products are often advertised with card stacking propaganda?

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4. Identify the audience and purpose for this advertisement, and discuss whether this is an example of card stacking propaganda.

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CARTOON
Your Way to Popularity and Profit

FREE BOOK
Shows How To Make Money
With Simple Cartoons

Cartooning, Commercial Art and Portrait Painting may open up a vast new future for you. You can now enjoy the thrill of a cartoonist's popularity while earning. Our exclusive, revolutionary new inventions simplify and shorten student training. Get LAUGH FINDER—COMIC CHARACTER CREATOR—MAGIC MARIONETTE, a sensational, yet simple device that will amaze you—also our new PORTRAIT COURSE just out—^ill at NO EXTRA COST. No previous art experience needed, 34 big lessons, Profusely Illustrated. So simple even a sixth grade pupil can start learning first day.

Send no money, just name. Get booklet, "How to Make Money With Simple Cartoons," Fascinating facts on your
FREE
CARTOONISTS' EXCHANGE, Dept. $1-D, Pleasant Hill, Ohio
Part 4: Glittering Generalities

1. Glittering generalities are a common part of political campaigns. Compose a list of glittering generalities you have heard in campaign slogans, in debates, or in the news media.

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2. Like politicians and journalists, advertisers often use glittering generalities to promote their products. Create a list of glittering generalities that are commonly used in advertising.

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3. Under what conditions are words like “freedom” and “choice” not glittering generalities? Use each word in a sentence that does not qualify as a glittering generality.

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4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether, in the context of this poster, Lincoln’s words are being used as glittering generalities. If so, which words stand out as glittering generalities? If not, why not?

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Part 5: False Dilemma

1. List some examples of false-dilemma arguments you have heard in real life.

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2. What are some of the clues that can help you distinguish a false dilemma from a legitimate presentation of facts?

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3. Following the examples provided in this section, create a false-dilemma argument to fit each of the following scenarios. (Hint: False dilemmas often take the form of “either/or” assertions.)

- encourage recycling
- endorse a political candidate
- support a tax increase

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4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of false-dilemma propaganda.
Part 6: The Lesser of Two Evils

1. How is the lesser-of-two-evils technique similar to the false-dilemma approach? What sets these techniques apart from one another?

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2. What are the keys to identifying the lesser-of-two-evils fallacy?

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3. The lesser-of-two-evils fallacy is often used to defend the status quo, as exemplified in the familiar idiom, “better the devil you know than the devil you don’t know.” Generate a list of real-life scenarios in which this technique of propaganda is used to preserve the status quo.

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4. Create a caption to go with this image that would make the poster an example of lesser-of-two-evils propaganda.

TEMPORARY BASEMENT FALLOUT SHELTER
Part 7: Name-Calling

1. What are some examples of name-calling you have seen in advertising, politics, or popular culture?
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2. In indirect name-calling, words that are not necessarily negative, in and of themselves, are used to subtly disparage an opponent. List some examples of words that can be used in this way, and describe a possible context in which they would be considered name-calling.
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3. What makes name-calling a logical fallacy?
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4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of name-calling propaganda. Note: President Theodore Roosevelt coined the term “muckrakers” to describe journalists and politicians who were known for exposing social injustices.
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Practice Exercises 9 Handout
Part 8: Pinpointing the Enemy

1. How is pinpointing the enemy similar to name-calling? How are the two techniques different?
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2. Identify an instance of pinpointing the enemy that you have witnessed in the media. What companies, groups, or individuals have been blamed for many of the world’s problems?
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3. How is pinpointing the enemy related to “scapegoating,” and the ancient Hebrew practice of driving a goat into the wilderness to take away the people’s sins?
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4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of pinpointing the enemy. Note: The term “Hun” was used to refer to the Germans during World War I.
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Part 9: Plain Folk

1. What are some examples of plain-folk propaganda that you have seen in advertising? What product lines have used this technique, and how?
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2. What kinds of advertisements and/or political campaigns would not benefit from using the plain-folk approach? Under what circumstances would this technique be counterproductive?
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3. Read the following quote. Then, describe one situation in which this quote would constitute plain-folk propaganda and another scenario in which it would not.

   I grew up on a farm in rural Mississippi, so I know the meaning of struggle. I learned the value of hard work and determination at an early age, and it’s a lesson I won’t soon forget.

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4. Imagine that you are running for office, and create a speech in which you promote yourself using plain-folk propaganda.

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Part 10: Testimonials

1. What qualifies a person to give a trustworthy, legitimate testimonial?
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2. What are some of the warning signs that cast suspicion on a testimonial?
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3. Imagine that you are an advertiser, attempting to market a product. How would you go about using the testimonial technique in a way that appears trustworthy?
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4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of testimonial-based propaganda.
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The PRESIDENT says
“Hunger does not breed reform; it breeds madness and all the ugly distemper that makes an ordered life impossible …… The future belong to those who prove themselves the true friends of mankind”
Part 11: Transfer

1. What is a symbol that most people in your community would view as positive, and what specific associations would this symbol transfer?
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2. What is a symbol that would evoke a negative response from your community? What negative associations are attached to this symbol?
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3. Describe an instance of transfer that you have witnessed in advertising, politics, or some other public arena, and explain to the class why this qualifies as transfer.
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4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of transfer propaganda.
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Practice Exercises 13 Handout
Conclusion: Identifying Propaganda

Identify which propaganda technique is represented by the image and description.

This way? Or This way? The new year—crossroads of the future

Sure I want to fight Communism—but how?

Victory or Bolshevism

The nation's dreams have come true!
“After total war can come total living”

Greater Germany [Vote] Yes! On April 10

Stop this monster that stops at nothing... PRODUCE to the limit!

This man is your FRIEND

Russian

He fights for FREEDOM
DISCUSSION TOPICS

What is Propaganda?

1. What are some potential sources of propaganda in the modern world?

   Sources include commercials, billboards, print ads (catalogues, magazines, direct mail, etc.), and political campaigns, among many others.

2. In order to qualify as propaganda, a message must meet the following criteria:
   - persuasive function
   - sizeable target audience
   - representation of a specific group’s agenda
   - use of faulty reasoning and/or emotional appeals

   Describe an example of a message that would meet all but one of the above criteria. Explain your answer.

   Example: A high school assembly called to discuss the dangers of drunk driving may meet the following criteria:
   - persuasive function (persuading students not to drive drunk)
   - sizeable target audience (the entire high school)
   - representation of a specific group’s agenda (the school board’s desire to protect the school’s image).

   Nevertheless, the argument against drunk driving may be based on sound reasoning and facts, rather than emotional appeals and logical fallacies.

3. Identify an example of propaganda you have recently been exposed to, and explain to the class why this message constitutes propaganda.

   Answer will vary.
Part 1: Assertion

1. What makes a statement an example of “assertion” propaganda?

   In addition to meeting all the criteria of propaganda, a statement must present a debatable idea as a fact without explaining or justifying this claim in order to constitute assertion propaganda.

2. Describe an example of an assertion you have seen in politics or advertising. Do you think that this claim has affected your point of view? Explain your reaction.

   Answer will vary.

3. Identify which of the following assertions qualify as propaganda, and explain your answer. Modify those that are not propaganda to make them fit the four criteria.

   3A. Parent to child: “If you eat your vegetables, you’ll grow up to be big and strong.”

       Must be modified to target a larger audience.

   3B. Billboard: “Mario’s Pizza, Next Exit.”

       This is merely a statement of fact. Must be modified to make an unjustified claim about the restaurant (e.g., “Mario’s Pizza: The Best Pizza in the World”).

   3C. Magazine ad for “age-defying” makeup: “True Beauty is Ageless.”

       Propaganda. This is an unjustified assertion, made to a large audience, that appeals to the viewers’ feelings in order to advance the advertiser’s agenda.

   3D. Commercial: “According to a study by the National Heart Association, eating this cereal, as part of a balanced breakfast, may reduce the risk of heart disease.”

       This is merely a statement of facts. Must be modified to make an unjustified claim about the cereal (e.g., “eating this cereal will reduce your risk of heart disease”).

   3E. Political commentator: “Richard Williams obviously doesn’t have the experience it takes to be President of the United States.”

       Propaganda—assuming this statement is not explained with a logical argument.
4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of assertion propaganda.

Aimed at an American audience (during World War II), this poster was intended to dissuade citizens from discussing military affairs. This slogan can be considered an example of assertion propaganda; however, the qualifier “might” opens this question to debate. If students emphasize the use of “might” in the poster, they can argue that this is a reasonable claim.
Part 2: Bandwagon

1. What makes the bandwagon technique appealing to most people?

   *Answers will vary.*

2. Identify a decision you have made based primarily on popular opinion. Describe the situation, and explain whether following the majority made sense in that context.

   *Answers will vary.*

3. Does the fact that numerous experts agree about a theory constitute logical grounds for accepting it? Why, or why not?

   *Answers will vary.*

4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of bandwagon propaganda.

   *Aimed at the British public (during World War I), this poster was meant to encourage citizens to enlist in the armed services. The phrase “all answer the call” qualifies the poster as an example of bandwagon propaganda.*
Part 3: Card Stacking

1. Why is it often difficult to distinguish card stacking propaganda from legitimate arguments?

*Card stacking is not always easy to recognize as propaganda because it often relies on facts and logic and makes mention of opposing viewpoints.*

2. What clues can help you make the distinction between card stacking propaganda and legitimate arguments?

*If opposing viewpoints are either omitted altogether or unfairly represented, you are probably looking at an example of card stacking.*

3. Describe the different forms card stacking takes in print advertisements and television commercials. What kinds of products are often advertised with card stacking propaganda?

*In print advertisements, details are often obscured in small print or in inconspicuous colors or fonts. In audio-visual media such as television commercials, these visual techniques of obscuring information are often present, sometimes accompanied by speedy voice overs detailing drawbacks or disclaimers. Card stacking is often used in advertisements for vehicles, cigarettes, medications, and many other products.*

4. Identify the audience and purpose for this advertisement, and discuss whether this is an example of card stacking propaganda.

*Aimed at the readers of a magazine or comic book, this advertisement is intended to promote a book and a portraiture course. This is not an example of card-stacking propaganda because the words in fine print are not meant to be obscured—they simply describe the less vital information.*
Part 4: Glittering Generalities

1. Glittering generalities are a common part of political campaigns. Compose a list of glittering generalities you have heard in campaign slogans, in debates, or in the news media.

   *Answers will vary.*

2. Like politicians and journalists, advertisers often use glittering generalities to promote their products. Create a list of glittering generalities that are commonly used in advertising.

   *Answers will vary.*

3. Under what conditions are words like “freedom” and “choice” not glittering generalities? Use each word in a sentence that does not qualify as a glittering generality.

   Words like “freedom” and “choice” often qualify as glittering generalities when they are left to stand alone, with no explanation. However, they are not glittering generalities when they are assigned specific meanings. For example, “freedom” is not a glittering generality when used to describe emancipation from slavery. (E.g., “The former slave had earned his freedom through years of hard labor.”) Likewise, “choice” is not a glittering generality when it is used to refer to a specific kind of choice. (E.g., “She was given the choice to rewrite the paper, but she chose, instead, to accept a failing grade.”)

4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether, in the context of this poster, Lincoln’s words are being used as glittering generalities. If so, which words stand out as glittering generalities? If not, why not?

   *Aimed at the American public (during World War I), this poster was meant to inspire its audience to save food. Lincoln’s words are used as glittering generalities in the context of this poster. Words like “charity,” “just,” and “peace” may sound admirable, but they are given no specific definition within this passage.*
Part 5: False Dilemma

1. List some examples of false-dilemma arguments you have heard in real life.

   *Answers will vary.*

2. What are some of the clues that can help you distinguish a false dilemma from a legitimate presentation of facts?

   *In a false-dilemma argument, a limited number of possibilities are presented, one of which is depicted in a far more favorable light than the others. In a legitimate presentation of facts, by contrast, a wider variety of options will be introduced, and each will be evaluated in an unbiased manner.*

3. Following the examples provided in this section, create a false-dilemma argument to fit each of the following scenarios. (Hint: False dilemmas often take the form of “either/or” assertions.)

   • encourage recycling
   • endorse a political candidate
   • support a tax increase

   *Answers will vary.*

4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of false-dilemma propaganda.

   *Aimed at the American public (during World War I), this poster was meant to encourage people to buy liberty bonds. This is an example of a false dilemma because it suggests that if people fail to buy bonds, there will be no liberty left on earth.*
Part 6: The Lesser of Two Evils

1. How is the lesser-of-two-evils technique similar to the false-dilemma approach? What sets these techniques apart from one another?

   Like the lesser-of-two-evils approach, the false dilemma reduces a complex situation to a limited number of possibilities. Unlike the former technique, however, propaganda that uses the lesser-of-two-evils tactic offers two unpleasant alternatives.

2. What are the keys to identifying the lesser-of-two-evils fallacy?

   In the lesser-of-two-evils fallacy, a limited number of possibilities are presented (usually two). This propaganda technique also encourages you to make a decision based on the fear of one outcome, rather than the merits of the other.

3. The lesser-of-two-evils fallacy is often used to defend the status quo, as exemplified in the familiar idiom, “better the devil you know than the devil you don’t know.” Generate a list of real-life scenarios in which this technique of propaganda is used to preserve the status quo.

   Answers will vary.

4. Create a caption to go with this image that would make the poster an example of lesser-of-two-evils propaganda.

   Examples: 1) You may not want to spend your summer building a fallout shelter, but it's better than dying of radiation poisoning. 2) Maybe you won't be able to afford a vacation this year, but that's a small price to pay for protecting your family against nuclear attacks. 3) It may not be pretty, but it's better than living in a nuclear wasteland.
Part 7: Name-Calling

1. What are some examples of name-calling you have seen in advertising, politics, or popular culture?

   Answers will vary.

2. In indirect name-calling, words that are not necessarily negative, in and of themselves, are used to subtly disparage an opponent. List some examples of words that can be used in this way, and describe a possible context in which they would be considered name-calling.

   Answers will vary.

3. What makes name-calling a logical fallacy?

   Name-calling is a logical fallacy because it is used to attack not the argument, but the individual delivering it.

4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of name-calling propaganda. Note: President Theodore Roosevelt coined the term “muckrakers” to describe journalists and politicians who were known for exposing social injustices.

   Aimed at the American public, this editorial cartoon is intended to poke fun at Teddy Roosevelt and the “muckraking” senators with whom he sometimes clashed. By referring to these senators as a “muck heap,” the cartoonist plays on the term “muckrakers.” This is a dismissive treatment of the senators, but the degree to which this qualifies as an instance of name-calling propaganda is open to debate.
Part 8: Pinpointing the Enemy

1. How is pinpointing the enemy similar to name-calling? How are the two techniques different?

Both techniques are frequently used to attack an individual. However, pinpointing the enemy is often used to assign blame, while name-calling is usually used to discredit an opponent.

2. Identify an instance of pinpointing the enemy that you have witnessed in the media. What companies, groups, or individuals have been blamed for many of the world’s problems?

Answers will vary.

3. How is pinpointing the enemy related to “scapegoating,” and the ancient Hebrew practice of driving a goat into the wilderness to take away the people’s sins?

Scapegoating is a particular kind of pinpointing, in which the scapegoat is blamed for the propagandist’s own failings. As in the Hebrew tradition, the scapegoat is forced to bear the moral failures of others.

4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of pinpointing the enemy. Note: The term “Hun” was used to refer to the Germans during World War I.

Aimed at an American audience during World War I, this cartoon is meant to disparage the German government and the practice of producing and drinking alcohol. This can be considered an example of name-calling propaganda because of the use of the term “Hun” and because it depicts the German public as wasteful, poor, alcohol-loving criminals, rather than arguing against the nation’s government.
Part 9: Plain Folk

1. What are some examples of plain-folk propaganda that you have seen in advertising? What product lines have used this technique, and how?

   *Answers will vary.*

2. What kinds of advertisements and/or political campaigns would not benefit from using the plain-folk approach? Under what circumstances would this technique be counterproductive?

   *Products or politicians who appeal to an elite audience would not benefit from using the plain-folks technique. Likewise, an individual or product that could not make a realistic claim to being ordinary and common should not use this approach.*

3. Read the following quote. Then, describe one situation in which this quote would constitute plain-folk propaganda and another scenario in which it would not.

   *I grew up on a farm in rural Mississippi, so I know the meaning of struggle. I learned the value of hard work and determination at an early age, and it's a lesson I won't soon forget.*

   *This quote would constitute plain-folk propaganda if delivered by a public figure, such as a politician, in an attempt at self-promotion. However, if spoken by a grandfather to his grandchildren, for example, this would not be an instance of propaganda.*

4. Imagine that you are running for office, and create a speech in which you promote yourself using plain-folk propaganda.

   *Responses will vary.*
Part 10: Testimonials

1. What qualifies a person to give a trustworthy, legitimate testimonial?

   A person with some degree of true expertise who is unbiased and uncompensated may be considered a trustworthy source for a testimonial.

2. What are some of the warning signs that cast suspicion on a testimonial?

   Scripted, paid testimonials delivered by celebrities, experts, or even “plain folk” should be viewed with suspicion.

3. Imagine that you are an advertiser, attempting to market a product. How would you go about using the testimonial technique in a way that appears trustworthy?

   Answers will vary.

4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of testimonial-based propaganda.

   Aimed at the American public (during World War II), this poster uses President Franklin Roosevelt’s speech as a testimonial encouraging Americans to save food. Americans were expected to trust Roosevelt enough to believe his assertion that “Hunger does not breed reform…” and save food, based on his suggestion.
Part 11: Transfer

1. What is a symbol that most people in your community would view as positive, and what specific associations would this symbol transfer?

   Answers will vary.

2. What is a symbol that would evoke a negative response from your community? What negative associations are attached to this symbol?

   Answers will vary.

3. Describe an instance of transfer that you have witnessed in advertising, politics, or some other public arena, and explain to the class why this qualifies as transfer.

   Answers will vary.

4. Identify the audience and purpose for this poster, and discuss whether this is an example of transfer propaganda.

   Aimed at the American public (during World War I), this poster is intended to encourage Americans to enlist in the Army. Depicting the familiar figure of “Uncle Sam,” clad in patriotic garb, the poster is meant to transfer the esteem and loyalty inspired by this figure to the Army’s cause.
Conclusion: Identifying Propaganda

Identify which propaganda technique is represented by the image and description.

**Lesser of Two Evils**

**Plain Folks**

**Transfer**

**Testimonial**

**False Dilemma**

**Card Stacking**
Practice Exercises

Assertion

Pinpointing the Enemy

Bandwagon

Name-Calling

Glittering Generalities