

ALBA Lesson Plan – Social Studies

Title: Spanish Civil War Posters: Art and Propaganda in Republican Spain

Subject: World History, 20th Century History, Civics, Art History

Grade(s): 9-12

Standards: [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7](#),

Key words/phrases: Propaganda, origins of World War II, rise of fascism, rise of communism, authoritarianism, republic

Essential Questions: How is propaganda used to develop loyalty, responsibility, and dedication among its intended audience? How has art and visual images been used as propaganda during 20th century conflicts? How effective was propaganda as a tool of authoritarian and democratic governments during 20th century conflicts?

Synopsis: This lesson examines the role of art and propaganda in mobilizing resistance to Fascism during the Spanish Civil War. Students will engage in visual and historical inquiries into archival collections of wartime posters. Students will be able to recognize the power of visual imagery to convey ideas, and how imagery has been used in other 20th century conflicts.

Standard Alignment(s) Used: Common core State Standards (literacy in history/social studies)

Recommended Teacher Background: Teachers should watch the 10- or 40-minute introduction (primer) to the Spanish Civil War among the [ALBA teacher resources](#). Teachers should also preview the lesson [Spanish Civil War Posters](#) on the ALBA website.

Connections to other disciplines: This lesson could also be used in a Spanish language or English Language Arts lesson.

Number of Class Periods: 3-5 days (50-minute blocks)

Standards: (One or more of the following can be used.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7	Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Primary Sources:

Propaganda posters from the 1930s and 1940s are used from the following websites:

- [ALBA Poster Archive](#)
- [The Visual Front](#), University of California, San Diego
- [German Propaganda Archive](#), Calvin College
- [World War II Poster Collection](#), Northwestern University

Procedures

1. Lead-In/Hook: Ask students to describe or display an example of how a powerful image conveys a complicated message. Rather than refer to television or film, encourage students to examine print media, book covers, CD/album covers, or posters. Following an initial discussion of their examples, introduce the idea that the visual arts play a crucial role in motivating civilian populations during times of war and crisis. It's essential to remind students that visual propaganda is a powerful tool that has played a fundamental role in creating and controlling popular opinions in both authoritarian and democratic societies.
2. Pre-assessment and activation of prior knowledge: Review political vocabulary terms – propaganda, monarchy, authoritarian, totalitarian, democracy, republic, fascism, communism, monarchy
3. Step by Step:
 - a. After reviewing terms and concepts above, provide students with a basic understanding of the Spanish Civil War, either through a short lecture or a discussion using the short or long primer to the Spanish Civil War.
 - b. Direct students to a website for understanding the context of posters in Republican Spain: [Spanish Civil War Posters](#). Students can either read some or all of the subheadings shown on the left of this page, or perhaps divide students into groups and give them each one subheading to read and report to the rest of the class.
 - c. Have students brainstorm about what functions posters have played during wartime in general, and in Republican Spain in the 1930s in particular.
 - d. In individual or small groups, ask students to pick one compelling poster on which to focus from the ALBA collection and write information using the following technique that a historian would use in assessing the significance of a poster:
 - i. **Observe:** Without assigning meaning, simply study the poster for several minutes. Then describe all images, text, dates, references to locations, or anything else on the poster's face.
 - ii. **Analyze:** Using the background knowledge you have acquired about this period, Write what might have been the goal of your poster. Then write one or more alternative goals that the creators of the poster might have had.
 - iii. **Interpret:** Combine your observations, analysis, and any additional information and write an interpretation by answering the following questions – Who was the intended audience and what impact would this poster have had upon the people who saw it? Was the poster likely successful in conveying its message? Why?

- e. Teachers can go in different directions from this point, perhaps repeating i, ii, and iii above as a class activity, a homework assignment, or an individual project assignment. Small groups can present their posters and analysis to the rest of the class. A class discussion might include comparing the reoccurring themes in the SCW posters and comparing/contrasting the posters with the images students thought about at the beginning of the lesson, and why modern organizations rely on visual imagery to communicate ideas and values.
4. Closure: Inform students that the theme of propaganda will be revisited in World War I and World War II; furthermore, invite students to examine modern visual images using the analysis criteria.

Differentiation/Enrichment:

- Students can compare their analyses of posters with historical analyses from The Visual Front’s treatment of Spanish Civil War posters. [The Visual Front](#) is a collection from University of California, San Diego. The Visual Front could be used as an alternative source to the ALBA Spanish Civil War posters at any step of this lesson.
- Students can compare Spanish Civil War posters with other war propaganda posters from websites including the [German Propaganda Archive](#) of Calvin College, or the [World War II Poster Collection](#) from Northwestern University.

Assessment:

Assessment items might include observation/analysis/interpretation of a yet unused poster. Additionally, students could be asked to describe the main, reoccurring themes depicted in the posters, or compare and contrast the themes of two dissimilar posters, or answer the following question: Why do governments, businesses, and other organizations use visual imagery to convey fundamental ideas and values, or to sell products?