



Media Military Complex Lesson Plan Peace and Global Education action group

Lesson Objectives:

- recognize the role the media plays in upholding the military industrial complex.
- identify militainment, and the societal consequences that arise from such forms of entertainment.
- identify the funding and influence behind forms of militainment.
- recognize the codes, rhetorical tools, and strategies that are employed to justify military spending.
- recognize rhetoric, and the role that rhetoric can play in fostering a culture of fear and the construction of an enemy.
- consider the relationship between rhetoric and societal impressions.

1. Hook

- Explore a variety of World War I and World War II propaganda posters.
- Ask students to identify how 'the enemy' was constructed through these posters. In order to ensure students are using their visual literacy, ask them to explain how they recognize the enemy. In this way, students will need to decode the posters through the visual codes of colour, symbolism, light and dark, shading, caricature, font size, slogans, etc.
- Using the same process, ask students to identify how the war is justified through the posters.

2. Discussion questions

- Do you think you could recognize the tactics used by the government and/or media today to justify spending and policies?
- Do you think you could recognize the tactics used by the government and/or media to construct 'fear' and 'the enemy'?
- In what ways do the platforms below construct and justify?
 - TV network news
 - TV and streamable content
 - professional sports
 - video games
 - social media platforms

3. Classroom Activity:

The options below can be used in isolation or as a series of stations, with students rotating through the stations in groups.

a. NFL case study

Use photos, screenshots or video clips of an NFL game opening. As the students view these items, ask them to consider what messages are implicit in:

- announcers' commentary (words and terms)
- flyovers
- camouflage and badges on team uniforms
- flags.

b. Foreign policy and military spending

Select print, digital or video news items or government announcements about military spending or foreign affairs. Students examine these artifacts and decode them for rhetorical strategies. Ask students to identify and consider the impact of:

- i. ethos, pathos and logos
- ii. additional rhetorical strategies
- iii. reduced or simplified information
- iv. omission of important facts and statistics
- v. attacks on opponents.

c. Popular Culture - TV, film, and streamable content

Ask students: Did you know that “the military has been recruiting Hollywood studios as war filmmakers since at least World War I?” (Andersen & Mirrlees, 2014).

Use popular film, TV, or streamable content that represents war in order to consider the perceptions of war that are transmitted. In examining this media artifact, students consider:

- i. How war is represented. Is it glorified?
- ii. How these representations compare to historical accounts of war.
- iii. Which narratives of the soldiers’ and their families’ lives are missing? How might post-war or family narratives alter the impression the audience has of war?

d. Video games

Ask students to identify video games that depict war. These can be representations of war or ones in which gamers act as soldiers. With this list, ask students:

- i. Why do you think there are so many war games?
- ii. What impact do you think ‘playing’ war has on gamers? How might this normalize war?
- iii. Within the games, what impressions of war are you given? How do these representations compare to historical accounts of war?
- iv. How do these games construct ‘the enemy’? Who is ‘the enemy’? How might the representations of enemies in games impact impressions of countries?

Post Activity Assignment: Media analysis

Ask students to decode a media artifact. How does this artifact:

- glorify war?
- justify military spending?
- perpetuate fear?
- construct an enemy?

4. Extension activities:

- a. For one month, keep an archive of media artifacts that glorify or justify war, and/or construct fear and ‘the enemy’.
- b. Find film, news, streamable content, sports broadcast, video game, or social media commentary that pushes back at the dominant narrative or provides a counter-narrative.
- c. Create a display of pacifist actions or peace activists.
- d. Consider other implicit messaging in media. Other than war or military messaging, what other indirect messaging is encapsulated in the media you interact with?