

Propaganda posters & women



Philpot Education

Instructions

Get into groups and analyse each poster, focusing on the five aspects listed below. Compare your analysis of each poster to the analyses provided. What do you think were the effects of these posters on women during these wars? What makes you say that?

- **Call to action:** How does each poster speak to women and call them to action? What are they expected to do in response to each poster?
- **Typography:** Fonts come in serif, sans-serif, large, small, bold and italics. What does the typography say about the message of each poster?
- **Symbolism:** What kinds of symbols are used in each poster? What do these symbols stand for, and how do they contribute to the message of each poster?
- **Idealisation:** How are people, objects, places and things idealised? What ideals are represented in each poster? How does the style of the artist's artwork contribute to the text's message?

WOMEN OF BRITAIN
SAY -
"GO!"



Text 1: 'Women of Britain' by Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, 1917

- **Call to action:** Women should encourage their husbands to leave home and fight in the war.
- **Typography:** White font is contrasted on blue sky. Underlining, capitals exclamation mark and quotation marks add emphasis to message.
- **Symbolism:-** Windowsill resembles 'home'. The horizon is about the future.
- **Idealisation:** Men march orderly, closely and uniformly. Women and children are close together. The mother is beautiful. The children are groomed.
- **Artistic style:** Soft colours with light on the mother suggest she is the centre point. Yellow dress shows she is brave and bold. Mother looks worried but in command.

AMERICAN RED CROSS



OUR BOYS NEED

SOX

KNIT YOUR BIT

Text 2: ‘Knit your bit’ by American Red Cross, 1918

- **Call to action:** Women should knit socks for the soldiers.
- **Typography:** The reds, whites and yellows all stand out against the use of black. Sans-serif fonts and capitalized letters are easy to read. ‘SOX’ stretches across the length of the poster, emphasizing the need for a simple clothing item.
- **Symbolism:** The Red Cross itself is a symbol of help and healing. The knitting needles are a sign of homeliness.
- **Idealisation:** The knitting basket is simple. The yarn looks soft.
- **Artistic style:** There is a sense of depth with the red cross behind the yarn and the letters at the foundation. The words, and therefore the message, is stronger than any drawings.



WOMEN OF BRITAIN

**COME INTO
THE FACTORIES**

ASK AT ANY EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE FOR ADVICE AND FULL DETAILS

Text 3: ‘Come to the factories’

- **Call to action:** Women should seek jobs in factories to produce planes and ammunition for the war.
- **Typography:** The white, sans-serif letters stand tall, like the woman, on a black foundation.
- **Symbolism:** Planes symbolise the war effort. The smokestacks symbolise the industrious factories.
- **Idealisation:** The planes fly in neat rows to infinity, suggesting an endless production line. The woman is the ideal worker: happy and healthy.
- **Artistic style:** The light shines on the back of the woman. The red sky suggests the sun is setting or rising. Her body language celebrates the flying machines she has helped create. The camera angle looks up to the sky and the glory of the Air force.



YOUR RED CROSS NEEDS YOU!

Text 4: 'Your Red Cross Needs You', 1942

- **Call to action:** Women should become nurses and listen to their country's call.
- **Typography:** The letters stand tall like the woman. White is contrasted on blue and the sans-serif font spans the width of the text's foundation.
- **Symbolism:** The square cross stands for safety. Uncle Sam stands for US values and traditions.
- **Idealisation:** The woman is the ideal nurse: beautiful, clean and healthy with rosy cheeks.
- **Artistic style:** Uncle Sam is not a cartoon, but a realistic looking, wise, old man, who deserves respect and commands presence. The nurse's gaze is determined. The reds and pure whites, with the cape, suggest heroism. In the background looms the debris of an explosion.

We Can Do It!



J. Howard Miller

POST FEB. 15 TO FEB. 28



WAR PRODUCTION CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

Text 5: 'We can do it!' by Westinghouse Electric, 1942

- **Call to action:** Strong women, working in factories, will win the war (it). So women should seek jobs in factories and get to work.
- **Typography:** Each first letter is capitalised like a title or slogan. The exclamation point is bold.
- **Symbolism:** She is wearing a depiction of herself on her collar. She is her own symbol. The headscarf stands for industriousness. Flexed muscle equals strength.
- **Idealisation:** The woman is wearing make-up and lipstick. She's both feminine and masculine
- **Artistic style:** The yellows, blues, whites and reds are all bold and iconic. Her gaze is piercing, as she looks at or down on the viewer. Rule of thirds is used effectively.



GEE !!

I WISH I WERE
A MAN

I'd JOIN
The **NAVY**

Howard Chandler Christy, 1918

BE A MAN AND DO IT
UNITED STATES NAVY
RECRUITING STATION

Text 6: 'I'd join the Navy', 1918

- **Call to action:** Men should join the Navy, because not everyone has the opportunity.
- **Typography:** A serif font with different sizes, colours and uses of capitals and underlining is intriguing. These words are contrasted with the bold sans-serif font at the foundation of the text which tell the reader to 'be a man' and join.
- **Symbolism:** The pin stripes, hat and emblem suggest rank and order, which is contrasted with her playful way of wearing the uniform.
- **Idealisation:** Her curly hair and apple cheeks suggest innocence and charm. She looks flirtatious.
- **Artistic style:** The use of watercolour and the inclusion of the artist's signature indicate that this is art and not an ad.

BOOBY TRAP



Syphilis and Gonorrhoea

Text 7: 'Booby trap,' 1943

- **Call to action:** Men should not have sex during the war so as to avoid STDs.
- **Typography:** The crooked angle of the letters, suggest the woman is a slippery slope or a 'trap'. The title 'booby' is a play on words.
- **Symbolism:** Beer and cigarettes stand for recreation and socialisation. Her eye shadow, cleavage, lipstick stand for seduction. The uniforms help the target audience identify with the characters.
- **Idealisation:** The soldier on the left has a boyish charm that show is naiveté.
- **Artistic style:** The light on the woman's chest is contrasted with the dark pub, drawing attention to the pun. The artist's use of cartoonification makes one laugh at the situation.

WAKE UP, AMERICA!



**CIVILIZATION CALLS
EVERY MAN WOMAN AND CHILD!**

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE 50 EAST 42ND ST.

THE HEGEMAN PRINT CO.

Text 8: ‘Wake up America’, The Major’s Committee, 1916

- **Call to action:** America, including every man woman and child, should get involved in the Great War.
- **Typography:** White letters with a yellow outline on a black background really stand out. The font screams to the sleeping woman to wake her up.
- **Symbolism:** Red stripes, white stars and blue all indicate Americanism. Dark clouds stand for doom and gloom, lurking in the horizon. The pillow and wicker chair are symbols of relaxation.
- **Idealisation:** America is a beautiful woman or goddess, soft and tender. Her red cheeks exude life.
- **Artistic style:** The woman’s skin is pale and soft. Her silky clothing is almost tangible for the viewer. The light on her chest and face contrast with the dark clouds, suggesting she is hope.

**VICTORY WAITS
ON YOUR FINGERS—**



KEEP 'EM FLYING, MISS U.S.A.

UNCLE SAM NEEDS STENOGRAPHERS! ★ GET CIVIL SERVICE INFORMATION AT YOUR LOCAL POST OFFICE
U.S. CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Text 9: ‘Victory Waits’ by US Civil Service Commission, 1943

- **Call to action:** Women should take secretarial positions to support the war effort.
- **Typography:** The letters are bold, black and red. The sans-serif font is tall and stretched like the lines of the flag.
- **Symbolism:** Red, white and blue stand for America and France. The typewriter and salute show the young woman’s servitude.
- **Idealisation:** The bow, curly, blond hair and round cheeks are signs of youthful beauty. Her white, starched and pressed blouse are perfect. The typewriter is a well-oiled machine.
- **Artistic style:** The image of the woman is slightly stylised. She looks the reader in the eye to gain contact.

WANTED!



FOR MURDER

Her careless talk costs lives

Text 10: Points to consider

- **Call to action:** Men should not talk to women about war about war strategy. Women should be careful about what they say to others.
- **Typography:** The letters are bold, black on white, with a red subheading. The italicised letters below are contrasted with the bold font above.
- **Symbolism:** Her earrings, makeup, hairstyle suggest that she has made an effort to look attractive.
- **Idealisation:** The woman's face is not the idealised face of a murderer, which is exactly the incongruity that the reader finds striking.
- **Artistic style:** The photograph is a realistic portrait photograph. Many soldiers carried photographs of their girlfriends, like this one.