

Learning About Propaganda Techniques through Chinese Propaganda Posters

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This lesson plan—intended for high school students as a tool to learn about propaganda techniques through Chinese propaganda posters—accompany the article **“Stories from the Revolution in Mao’s China: Teaching Students to Think about Socialism and Communism”** by Aminda Smith (*Education About Asia*, Volume 29:2, Fall 2026).

These posters were selected as examples for multiple uses of propaganda, in which discussions are held as a class about which techniques were used, why some techniques were omitted all together, and, more broadly, how students have seen these techniques used today, both politically and commercially. The lesson also introduces twelve techniques as designated by the U.S.-based Institute for Propaganda Analysis as a tool for critically analyzing political propaganda from both China and the United States. In addition, these slides provide students with increased familiarity with the ideals of communism, Chinese culture under Mao, and the history of China.

The [PowerPoint Slideshow](#) and exit ticket are meant to be completed in two days but can be divided (or revised to include fewer poster examples) as needed.

This lesson teaches to 7/10 National Social Studies Themes as determined by the National Council of the Social Studies and meets the Washington State Social Studies Standards listed below:

- H2: Understands and analyzes causal factors that have shaped major events in history.
- H3: Understands that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations of historical events.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

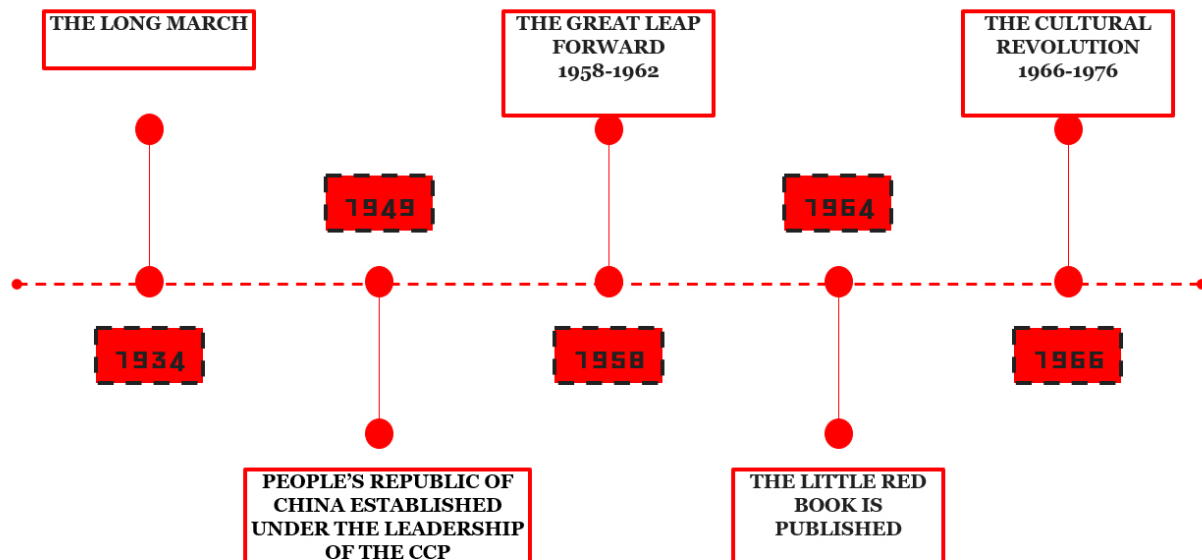


Directions: As you view the [PowerPoint Slideshow](#), fill in the blanks with the missing words provided on each slide. In addition, notes in the margin or graphics would be especially helpful for future recall of information.

❖ Essential Questions:

- How did Chinese leaders use propaganda posters to promote communism?
- What messages and values underlie the images?
- What can these posters tell us—and what can't they?

History of Chinese Communism & Mao



Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

❖ The Little Red Book

- “How to” Guide
 - How to think and act as a good “_____” under Mao
- Mao Speak/Thought
 - Meme-able phrases that proved you were with the “_____”

“In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes, art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause; they are, as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine.”

—Mao Tse Tung

“Talks at the Yen'an Forum on Literature and Art” (May 1942), Selected Works, Vol. III, p. 86.

❖ _____ Propaganda Vital

- Low _____
- Mass Mobilization
- Unity

❖ 4 Characteristics of Propaganda

- Strong _____
- Simplified Info
- Hopes, Dreams, & _____
- Attacks _____

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

★ 12 TYPES OF PROPAGANDA ★

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Bandwagon | 7. Loaded Words |
| 2. Testimonials | 8. Fear Appeals |
| 3. Transfer | 9. Stereotyping |
| 4. Glittering Generalities | 10. Ad Nauseam |
| 5. Name Calling | 11. Scapegoating |
| 6. Card Stacking | 12. Snob Appeal |

EVALUATING ★ PROPAGANDA

1. *Braving the wind and the waves, each reveals their remarkable abilities: 1958*

a. What is the message of this poster?

b. What propaganda techniques are being used?

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

2. *Everybody is fully occupied in production, the trade sector is also fully occupied for everybody: 1958*

a. What is the message of this poster?

b. What propaganda techniques are being used?

3. *The melons are sweet, grain and rice are fragrant, everybody tries the flavor: 1958*

a. What is the message of this poster?

b. What propaganda techniques are being used?

4. *Chairman Mao gives us a happy life: 1954*

a. What is the message of this poster?

b. What propaganda techniques are being used?

5. *The sunlight of Mao Zedong Thought illuminates the road of the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution: 1966*

a. What is the message of this poster?

b. What propaganda techniques are being used?

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

6. *Long live the General Line! Long live the Great Leap Forward! Long live the People's Communes!:* 1964

a. What is the message of this poster?

b. What propaganda techniques are being used?

7. *If the enemy does not surrender, let him perish!:* 1967

a. What is the message of this poster?

b. What propaganda techniques are being used?

8. *Hold high the great red banner of Mao Zedong Thought to wage the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution to the end— Revolution is no crime, to rebel is justified:* 1966

a. What is the message of this poster?

b. What propaganda techniques are being used?

9. *Warriors love reading Chairman Mao's books most:* 1966

a. What is the message of this poster?

b. What propaganda techniques are being used?

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

10. Thoroughly criticize the 'theory of human nature' of the landlord and capitalist classes: 1971

a. What is the message of this poster?

b. What propaganda techniques are being used?

11. Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought are the fundamental guarantee for the victory of our cause. Warmly celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China: 1991

a. What is the message of this poster?

b. What propaganda techniques are being used

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

❖ **Answer the Guiding Questions:**

➤ How did Chinese leaders use propaganda posters to promote communism?

➤ _____

➤ What messages and values underlie the images?

➤ _____

➤ What can these posters tell us - and what can't they?

➤ _____

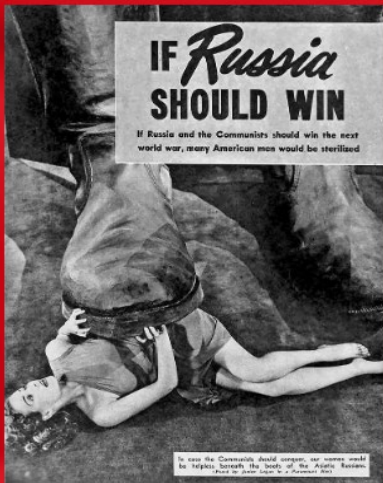
❖ **Exit Ticket Instructions**

MODERN AMERICAN PROPAGANDA:

- Find an American ad (from the year 2000-present) that uses images to promote its message through one or more of the 12 techniques for propaganda. Print the ad to a PDF and attach it to this assignment.
- Then write a paragraph (5-10 sentences) describing the propaganda, the technique it uses, and why it would be effective on the American population.

❖ **Example:**

EXAMPLE:



American Film *The Red Menace*, 1949

Technique Used:

- Fear Appeals

In this poster for the movie *The Red Menace* from 1949, a beautiful American woman is being crushed by the boot of an "Asiatic Russian." The main caption reads "If Russia and the Communists should win the next world war, many American men would be sterilized." This clearly uses the fear appeal propaganda technique. Its primary target would be American men, who would fear the inability to get married and have children. To a lesser extent, this propaganda technique would affect American women through the threat of violence by the communists. *The Red Menace* is a great example of the American Red Scare and the sensationalism that accompanied it.