

Soares Brussels-Lux Unit Plan:

“Conflicting Rhetoric of Propaganda in the European Union”



A defaced picture of Hitler, originally labeled “Putin,” altered to say Zelensky, in an acrimonious and public propaganda debate.

Unit Name:	“Conflicting Rhetoric of Propaganda in the European Union”
Instructor:	Dr. Michael Arthur Soares
Subject:	AP English Literature and Composition
Grade Level:	12
Unit Narrative:	The following unit plan is an exploration of both how propaganda works as a political tool but also how it functions in the European Union for selected current issues. In each case, competing viewpoints use rhetorical and visual elements to promote the urgency of a cause for the EU.
Standards:	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4.A Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p>

Objectives

- Students will demonstrate understanding of the function of language in propaganda and be able to apply this understanding to the unique issues faced by the European Union.

Essential Questions

- **What is propaganda?**
- **How does propaganda function rhetorically and visually?**
- **How is propaganda being used to bring attention to current issues in the EU?**
- **How can propaganda be altered to shift the argument from its original intent?**

Learning Acquisition and Assessments

Formative Assessments	Summative Assessment
Day 1: “Argument, Persuasion, or Propaganda?” worksheet	Day 5: Propaganda Artifact and Padlet Exhibit
Day 2: “Europe Complice de Genocide” in-class writing	

Day 3: “Conversation on a Train” partner exercise

Day 4: “Tourist Go Home” online research and creative writing assignment

Learning Activities (1 week – 5 days): Lesson introduction, body, and closing

**Day
1**

→ Introduction to Propaganda in the European Union



→

→ Context: Inspired by the Brussels-Lux Study Tour to the EU Quarter of Brussels, Day 1 examines examples among the plethora of visual rhetoric in the city.

→ Reading/Multimedia:

1. “European Policies in the Fight to Counter Propaganda.”

<https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/665-european-policies-in-the-fight-to-counter-propaganda>

2. “Anti-EU Propaganda.”

https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/topic/anti-eu-propaganda_13107

→ Activities:

1. Teacher-led discussion of readings and [propaganda](#).

2. Students will complete “Argument, Persuasion, or Propaganda?”

https://www.readwritethink.org/sites/default/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson829/Argument-Propaganda.pdf

3. Review student work and apply answers to readings.

4. Watch/discuss: “Commission Pulls Plug on 'Racist', 'Sexist' Propaganda.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKN67ImpO4k>

4. Students will record questions about the propaganda discussed in the video and discuss answers with classmates.

5. Homework: Day 2 readings.

Day
2

→ **Brussels “Europe Complice de Genocide”**



→



→ Context: While the European Union promotes itself as a force for peace on the continent and abroad, other forces around the world wage not only actual wars but propaganda campaigns against its effectiveness. Day 2 looks at both current and historical propaganda concerning the role of the EU in both the struggle in Ukraine and the atrocities in Rwanda.

→ Readings:

1. "Russia's War Against Ukraine: European Union Responses and US-EU Relations."

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11897#:~:text=Since%20February%202022%2C%20the%20EU,requires%20unanimity%20among%20EU%20members.>

2. “Rwanda Genocide: How the UN and EU Failed to Prevent it”

<https://www.brusselstimes.com/998658/rwanda-genocide-how-the-un-and-eu-failed-to-prevent-it>

→ Activities:

1. Students will sign up for Quizlet and explore the [“Propaganda Techniques”](#) flashcards.
2. With a partner, students will Google examples of propaganda concerning the Ukraine war, the peacekeeping mission with the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), or another pressing UN matter.
3. Partners will find examples of competing propaganda online.
4. Using Google docs and the Smartboard, partners will display and explain the rhetorical and visual techniques being used to classmates.
5. Homework: Day 3 readings.

Day
3

→ **Brussels and Luxembourg: “Free Palestine”**





→

→ Context: On a train from Luxembourg to Brussels, the above conversation was graffitied by unknown authors with opposing viewpoints. “Love Israel” is countered by “Free Palestine” and then altered to read “From Hamas.” Upon lowering the compartment tray, the conversation continues as someone draws a heart over profanity and a debate commences over which party, Israel or Hamas, is “terrorist.”

→ Readings:

1. “The Middle East Crisis.”

<https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-e>

[urope-world/middle-east-crisis_en#:~:text=The%20EU%20has%20unequivocally%20condemned,with%20humanitarian%20and%20international%20law.](#)

2. “The EU’s Support for Israel Makes it Complicit in Genocide.”

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/7/6/the-eus-support-for-israel-makes-it-complicit-in-genocide>

→ Activities: “Conversation on a Train”



→



→



→

1. Students will review and analyze the images above. After a brief teacher-led discussion connecting the images to the readings, students will work with their partners to Google issues that are currently being debated in the EU.

2. Students will choose a current issue and begin an informal propaganda debate with their partners. For ideas see: https://european-union.europa.eu/index_en.
3. Students will use a piece of paper and two colored markers to create a conversation like the one above with the following instructions:
 - A. Please keep the conversation on the piece of paper, no vandalizing the classroom, and no profanity.
 - B. Flip a coin to see who goes first. Once your partner has written something like “Love Israel,” counter the propaganda with the viewpoint of the other side of the debate.
 - C. Once the sheet of paper is full (or multiple sheets depending on the length of your debate), be prepared to explain to the rest of the class the current issue and how two or more sides are responding to it in the EU.
 - D. Note: please keep the conversation civil and professional. The point is not to “win,” but to explore the opposing viewpoints.
4. Using Google docs and the Smartboard, partners will display and explain the rhetorical and visual techniques being used to classmates.
5. Homework: Day 4 readings.

Day
4

→ **Barcelona: “Tourist Go Home!”**



	<p>→ Context: During a 2017 research trip to Barcelona, I photographed the above graffiti near the Plaça de Sant Felipe Neri. Over the last seven years, local friction over over-tourism has boiled over into physical conflict. In one example during the summer of 2024, locals in Barcelona squirted tourists with water guns on sidewalk cafes.</p> <p>→ Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Barcelona Anti-tourism Protesters Fire Water Pistols at Visitors.” https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/08/travel/barcelona-tourism-protests-scli-intl/index.html 2. “Spain's Tourism Minister Condemns Spraying of Barcelona Visitors with Water Pistols.” https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/spains-tourism-minister-condemns-spraying-barcelona-visitors-with-water-pistols-2024-07-11/ <p>→ Activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher-led discussion of the readings and the propaganda booth for and against (over)tourism in the Catalonian region. 2. Students will play “Match the Landmarks”: (https://learning-corner.learning.europa.eu/play-games/match-landmarks_en) to familiarize themselves with EU “landmarks.” Students will select an EU landmark (examples: Atomium in Brussels, Eiffel Tower in Paris, Coliseum in Rome - each student must choose a different landmark) and complete online research on both propaganda attempting to lure visitors to the landmark and the impacts tourism has on the city/country/region. 3. Students will prepare a brief online presentation that includes slides of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. A picture of the landmark B. An actual ad for visiting the landmark C. Any visuals of counter-propaganda or pictures of locals protesting tourists D. If students are unable to find counter-propaganda visuals, they can create one by placing anti-tourist text (such as “Tourist Go Home!”) on a picture of the landmark. 4. Each student will briefly present their landmark and discuss any propaganda they discovered online. 5. Homework: Preview Day 5 Artifact Project and prepare to complete in class.
<p>Day 5</p>	<p>→ Closing: Propaganda in the EU Summative Project: Artifact Project and Exhibit</p> <p>→ Project: Students will demonstrate understanding of propaganda and its relationship to issues in the EU by creating an artifact and contributing their work to an EU Propaganda Artifact exhibit.</p>

→ Activities:

1. Students will elect one of the twenty-seven EU countries (every student must choose a different one). List: https://european-union.europa.eu/easy-read_en.
2. Create an [artifact](#). Instructions to students: Create an artifact that demonstrates propaganda specific to an issue in the EU country you have selected. Examples of artifacts could include (but are not limited to): a video, poster, billboard, cereal box, postcard, placard, T-shirt- you are welcome to produce anything that carries your propaganda (just make sure it is classroom appropriate). You must actually create this artifact and bring it to class. Remember, you don't necessarily have to agree with the position of the propaganda on the artifact.
3. Memo: Students will write a one page, double-spaced memo describing the following:
 - A. An explanation of the context of the propaganda.
 - B. Description of the audience for the chosen artifact.
 - C. Intended message of the artifact.
 - D. Explanation of details of the artifact (colors? graphics? font sizes?)
 - E. How do the details support the propaganda message of the artifact?
 - F. Why is this artifact propaganda? What techniques were used?
4. Students will take photographs of or virtually submit their artifacts to [Padlet](#) for the class exhibit.

→ [Rubric](#)



Further Resources and Materials

- “Argument , Persuasion or Propaganda?”
https://www.readwritethink.org/sites/default/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson829/Argument-Propaganda.pdf
- “When Walls Talk! Posters – Promotion, Propaganda and Protest.”
<https://historia.europa.eu/en/exhibitions-events/temporary-exhibitions/when-walls-talk>
- “A Point of No Return: Why Europe Has Become an Epicenter for Anti-tourism Protests this Summer.”
<https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/27/travel/why-europe-has-become-an-epicenter-for-anti-tourism-protests-this-summer/index.html>
- “How to Use Padlet and 5 Ways to Implement it Into Your Classroom.”
<https://www.classpoint.io/blog/how-to-use-padlet>

Contact

dr.mike.soares@gmail.com