

The Great War and the United States Home Front

Analyzing U.S. Home Front Efforts: World War I Poster Collection

Description:

Those who served in the Great War received continuing encouragement and support from the U.S. Home Front. Today we can learn how citizens answered the call to **service at home**, through Pequot Library's collection of vibrant posters from World War I. Together, these posters demonstrate a sense of civic duty that permeated community life during the war years.



Objective:

Address the following questions by analyzing posters from the collection:

- How were citizens asked to express their civic duty?
- What are some of the striking differences – in life, war, politics, and society – as seen from a distance of 100 years?

Background:

As it happened, the war coincided with the "Golden Age of American Illustration", a time when book and magazine illustration flourished and was accompanied by advances in technology permitting low cost reproductions. Many of the artists whose works are included were second generation immigrants. Additionally, several of these artists painted women, or painted for women's magazines, before creating war posters. All are of a similar age, born in the 1870s and 1880s.



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Several projects encouraged these artists to create posters. One was the Division of Pictorial Publicity, a part of the Committee on Public Information that was led by Charles Dana Gibson and included some of the most famous artists of the time, who volunteered to create posters. A well-known product of this project was James Montgomery Flagg's famous Uncle Sam poster. The American Library Association (ALA) launched its "Books for Sammies" campaign in 1917. France had given U.S. soldiers the name "Sammies" for Uncle Sam. The posters were used to promote the campaign. Another promoter of patriotic posters was the U.S. Food Administration, under the direction of Herbert Hoover. This was the agency responsible for managing the food reserves for the U.S. Army overseas and the allies. Finally, to support the allied cause, an Act of Congress authorized issuing Liberty Bonds, which became a symbol of patriotic duty in the U.S., had several artists create stimulating posters to encourage the purchase of these securities. The Act is still used today as the authority under which all U.S. Treasury bonds are issued; for example, securities, also known as Liberty Bonds, were issued in the aftermath of September 11th to finance the rebuilding of the areas affected by the attacks.

The following posters reflect efforts concerning Women and the War, the U.S. Food Administration, Liberty Bonds, and the American Library Association, to educate and inspire citizens to do their part in support of the war abroad.



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THE RED CROSS



I summon you to Comradeship with the Red Cross.

Harrison Fisher (1875-1934)

This "Fisher Girl" quotes Woodrow Wilson's call to service.



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US FOOD ADMINISTRATION



Be Patriotic

Paul Stahr (1883-1953)

An appeal from the U.S. Food Administration, headed by Herbert Hoover



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Food is Amunition

J.E. Sheridan (1880-1948)

Doughboys in the background helps to link nutrition with amunition



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"Here Sir" at your Service

An encouraging poster from the State of Connecticut for farmers and everyone to use potatoes in place of wheat.



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LIBERTY BONDS



Weapons for Liberty

Joseph Christian Leyendecker (1874-1951)

Born in Germany, Leyendecker's posters show an idealized America, here emphasizing support for the Boy Scouts of America.



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Americans All!

Howard Chandler Christy (1873-1952)

Surnames from various ethnic groups underscore the strength that unity brings.



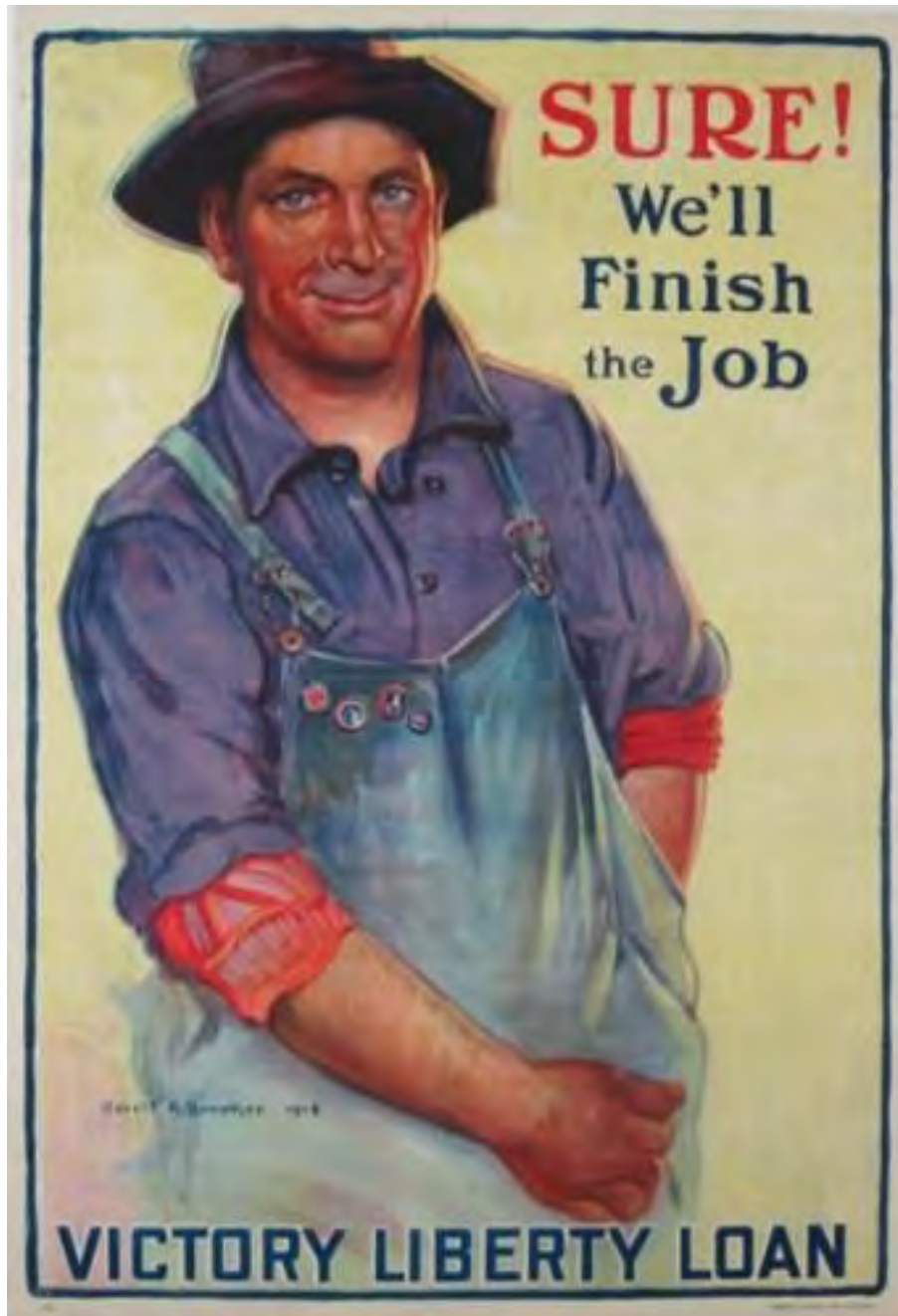
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Sure. We'll finish the job.

Gerrit A. Beneker (1882-1934)

U.S. workers contributed essential skills and labor to help the war effort.



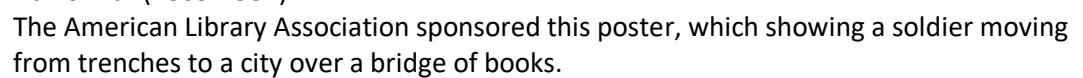
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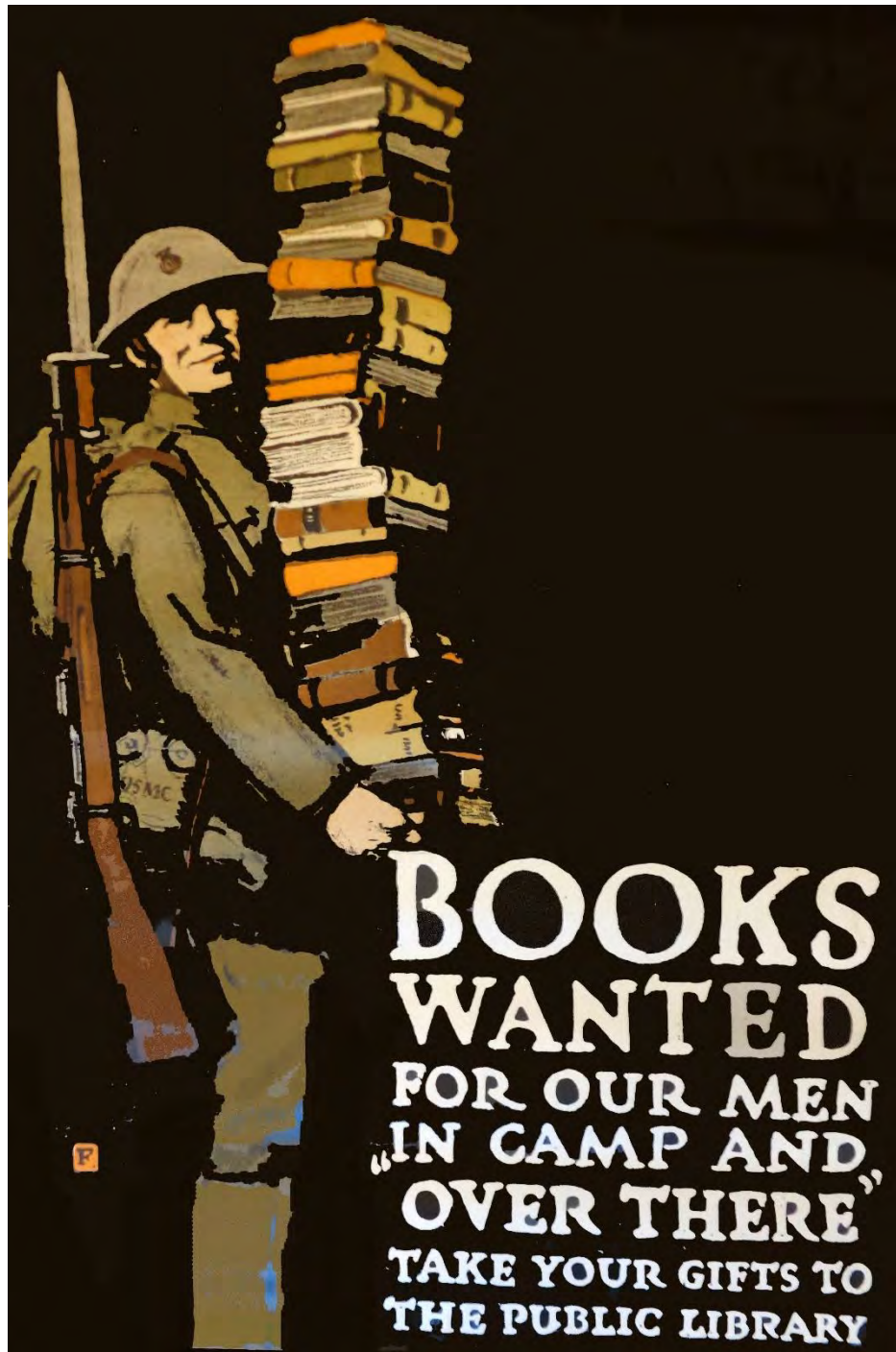
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Books Wanted

Charles Buckles Falls or C.B. Falls (1874-1960)



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POSTER ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

- What colors are used in the poster?
- What symbols are used in the poster?
- How are the symbols used memorable? Are they easy to understand?
- Are the messages mostly verbal, visual, or both?
- Who do you think the intended audience is?
- What does the government hope the audience will do?
- What government purpose is served by the poster?
- The most effective posters use symbols that are unusual, simple, and direct.
Why or why not is this an effective poster?
- List two things the poster tells you about life in the United States at the time it was created.
- Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the poster.
- What propaganda techniques are used by this poster?

Source: The National World War I Museum and Memorial, *Lessons of Liberty: Patriotism*:
https://theworldwar-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/prod/s3fs-public/LessonofLiberty_Patriotism.pdf



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From the National Archives:

<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/poster.html>

Analyze a Poster

MEET THE POSTER.

Quickly scan the poster. What do you notice first?

OBSERVE ITS PARTS.

WORDS	VISUALS
<i>Does it have a message printed on it?</i>	<i>List the people, objects, places, and activities in the poster.</i>
<i>Are there questions or instructions?</i>	<i>What are the main colors used?</i>
<i>Does it say who created it?</i>	<i>Are there any symbols?</i>



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Does the poster try to persuade mainly through words, visuals, or both equally?

Write one sentence summarizing this poster.

TRY TO MAKE SENSE OF IT.

When is this from?

What was happening at the time in history this poster was created?

Who do you think is the intended audience?

Why was it created? List evidence from the poster that tells you this.

USE IT AS HISTORICAL EVIDENCE.

What did you find out from this poster that you might not learn anywhere else?

What other documents or historical evidence are you going to use to help you understand this event or topic?