How did the Food Administration Convince Americans to Make Sacrifices during World War I?

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Grade Level:
9 – 12

Objectives:
At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to
• Explain the purpose of the Food Administration
• Explain the sacrifices many Americans had to make on the home front during World War I
• Explain the series of events that eventually drew the United States into World War I

Guiding Question:
How did the Food Administration convince Americans to make sacrifices and change their way of living during World War I?

Connections to Common Core:
CCSS.ELA–Literacy.RH.6–8.1 – Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
CCSS.ELA–Literacy.RH.6–8.2 – Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
CCSS.ELA–Literacy.RH.6–8.6 – Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

Connections to C3 Framework:
D2.His.1.9–12 – Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
D2.His.5.9–12 – Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.
D2.His.11.9–12 – Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.
D2.His.16.9–12 – Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.
D4.2.9–12 – Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear or non–linear), examples, and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose.
Documents Used:

**Primary Sources:**

*Food Will Win the War.*  
http://research.archives.gov/description/512499

*Eat More Corn.*  
http://research.archives.gov/description/512500

*Little Americans, Do Your Bit.*  
http://research.archives.gov/description/512566

*Uncle Sam Says…*  
http://research.archives.gov/description/5711623

World War I poster collection, United States Department of Agriculture  
http://specialcollections.nal.usda.gov/imagegallery/poster-collection

**Secondary Sources**  
Video clip – “WWI Packs”  
http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/videos#world-war-i-packs

**Lesson Description:**

**Overview:** This lesson is intended to help students understand the role that the Food Administration played in helping United States citizens on the home front contribute to the war effort during World War I. The lesson is modeled after the “Reading Like a Historian” curriculum developed by Sam Wineburg and the Stanford History Education Group. The lesson begins with a central investigative question that allows for multiple interpretations. Students must sort through a series of primary sources to discover evidence and determine the main tactics that the Food Administration used to convince United States citizens to make voluntary changes to their lifestyles. Once students have developed an interpretation that answers the investigative question, they must use primary source evidence to support their answer.

**Time:** 1 to 2 class periods

**Materials**

- World War I timeline
- Primary documents packet
- Essay rubric
Lesson Preparation:
- Project one copy of the World War I timeline in front of the class
- Make one set of primary source documents per student
- Make one set of guiding questions per student
- Make one essay rubric copy per student

Procedure:
- **Attention Grabber:** Play the video clip, “WWI Packs” to provide context. The video clip will introduce students to the supplies needed by an American soldier during World War I.
- **Anticipatory Set:** Ask students to do a think-pair-share and respond to the following question: What sacrifices do citizens on the home front need to make during a war? Students should brainstorm a list of ideas on their own first, and then share their list with a partner. While each group shares their ideas with the larger group, the instructor should develop a master list for the whole class to see. Wrap up the discussion by emphasizing the need for countries to mobilize a fighting force but also to transform their economies if they want to become involved in wars.
- **Introduction:** Display the World War I Timeline and briefly review the major events listed on the timeline. Remind the class that the United States did not get involved in the war for three years. The investigation will focus on the propaganda published by the Food Administration during the war and the ways in which American citizens chose to respond to that propaganda.
- Instruct students that they will become historical detectives today. Their job is to investigate how a government agency was able to successfully convince millions of Americans to make voluntary changes to their livelihoods to help the war effort in World War I. Introduce the central investigation question for the lesson: *How did the Food Administration convince Americans to make sacrifices and change their way of living during World War I?*
- Inform the students that they will investigate four “clues” or sources and at the conclusion of the activity, report their findings and answer the investigative question.
- Distribute the documents and guiding questions.
- Begin the investigation by going over Document A as a class and answering the guiding questions as a large group.
• Divide students into groups of 2–4. Have students complete the guiding questions for Document B in small groups. After five minutes, review the answers as a class.
• Have students complete the rest of the guiding questions for Documents C–E in small groups. Review student answers for guiding questions with the large group.
• Reintroduce the central question with the students: How did the Food Administration convince Americans to make sacrifices and change their way of living during World War I? As a class, brainstorm two or three large categories that could be used to answer the question.
  o Suggested categories: Appealing to patriotism, linking individual efforts to national efforts, making people feel like they are part of a bandwagon, giving people a “reason why,” suggesting food substitutions, using data to sway opinions…
• After students have established a set of broad categories, they should write an essay that explains the tactics that the Food Administration used and supports their assertions with evidence drawn from the historical sources. Review the assessment rubric with students before they begin writing.

Assessment Materials:
• Guiding Questions for Primary Source Documents
• Essay Rubric

Methods for Extension:
• Students could explore the National Agricultural Library’s collection of World War I Food Posters and pick out a favorite poster from the time period. Students could display these posters around the classroom and explain why they think their selected poster was effective or meaningful. Posters can be accessed at http://specialcollections.nal.usda.gov/imagegallery/poster-collection

Adaptations
• Challenging vocabulary should be pre-taught prior to the lesson for English Language Learners and students with special needs. The instructor should model how to look for evidence within a visual primary source and use that evidence to answer the central investigative question.
Bibliography:

Primary Sources


Secondary Source
World War I Timeline

June 8, 1914 – Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria assassinated

August 1914 – With World War I underway in Europe, President Wilson proclaims neutrality and offers to mediate the conflict

May 7, 1915 – German U-Boats sink the *Lusitania*, killing 1,198 people, including 128 Americans

November 7, 1916 – Woodrow Wilson elected to a second term as president on the campaign pledge, “He Kept Us Out of War”

January 31, 1917 – Germany announces its intention to resume unrestricted use of submarine warfare

February 3, 1917 – United States breaks diplomatic relations with Germany in response to January 31 announcement

April 2, 1917 – Woodrow Wilson delivers message to Congress asking for Declaration of War against Germany

April 6, 1917 – Congress declares war on Germany

August 10, 1917 – President Wilson creates the Food Administration and appoints Herbert Hoover as the director

ca. 1918 – The Food Administration begins a campaign to get Americans to make voluntary changes to their diet by instituting “Wheatless Wednesdays” and “Meatless Mondays”

November 11, 1918 – An armistice ends the fighting in World War I

December 13, 1918 – President Wilson arrives in France to help negotiate a treaty

June 28, 1919 – The Treaty of Versailles is signed, formally ending World War I
Food Will Win the War; c. 1917

Source: National Archives and Records Administration
EAT MORE CORN, OATS AND RYE PRODUCTS — FISH AND POULTRY — FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND POTATOES BAKED, BOILED AND BROILED FOODS

EAT LESS WHEAT, MEAT, SUGAR AND FATS TO SAVE FOR THE ARMY AND OUR ALLIES

Source: National Archives and Records Administration
Little Americans, Do Your Bit; c. 1918

Eat Oatmeal-Corn meal mush-Hominy - other corn cereals- and Rice with milk.
Save the wheat for our soldiers.
Leave nothing on your plate

Source: National Archives and Records Administration
Document E: USDA Posters; c. 1917

**Eat More Cottage Cheese**

- Supplies more protein than one pound.
- You'll need less meat.

*A Postal Card Will Bring Recipes for using this meat substitute.*

- Cottage cheese or meat? Ask your pocketbook!

**Build Your Meals Around Potatoes**

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food Administration urge that you eat potatoes.

- Every meal to save wheat.

*We are making it possible for you to buy more and eat more potatoes by selling them at very low prices.*

- Today's potato campaign price:
  - Old potatoes
  - New potatoes

**Have You Eaten Your Pound of Potatoes Today?**

- We are doing our part in moving the large surplus of potatoes by serving liberal portions at low prices.

*Save wheat by eating potatoes.*

- Is being urged by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food Administration.

Source: United States Department of Agriculture
Guiding Questions

Document A – “Food Will Win The War”
1. What is the main message of this source?

2. Who is the intended audience?

3. What tactics does this poster use to persuade its audience to make voluntary lifestyle changes?

Document B – “Eat More Corn”
1. What is the main message of this source?

2. Who is the intended audience?

3. What tactics does this poster use to persuade its audience to make voluntary lifestyle changes?

Document C – “Little Americans, Do Your Bit”
1. What is the main message of this source?

2. Who is the intended audience?

3. What tactics does this poster use to persuade its audience to make voluntary lifestyle changes?
Document D – “Uncle Sam Says...”

1. What is the main message of this source?

2. Who is the intended audience?

3. What tactics does this poster use to persuade its audience to make voluntary lifestyle changes?

Document E – USDA Posters

1. What is the main message of this source?

2. Who is the intended audience?

3. What tactics does this poster use to persuade its audience to make voluntary lifestyle changes?
Essay Rubric

- **4 Essay = A**
  o Introductory paragraph has background information, a thesis and a roadmap that introduces the analytical categories to be developed
  o Body paragraphs are clearly organized and arranged in the order of the thesis roadmap
  o Body paragraphs contain topic sentences, transitional sentences and conclusion sentences
  o Uses information from ALL of the sources reviewed in class
  o Includes citations when using evidence from sources
  o Evidence and analysis are used in each body paragraph that supports the thesis.
  o Demonstrates an analysis of close detail, synthesis and contextualization
  o Essay is well written with few or no errors in sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization

- **3 Essay = B**
  o Same as 4, EXCEPT
  o Essay uses a majority of the sources, but is unable to use ALL
  o Central argument or analysis is missing from one of the body paragraphs
  o Essay does not have the in-depth analysis required for a 4; some nuances, details, contexts or syntheses were left unexplored in the argument.
  o Is well written but includes some errors in grammar and spelling

- **2 Essay = C**
  o Addresses the question but lacks some focus
  o Introductory paragraph is functional. Thesis statement is recognizable
  o Main ideas are divided into body paragraphs
  o References some of the documents, but there could easily be more
  o Does not clearly explain how evidence answers the question
  o Is generally written with complete sentences, but contains too many errors in verb tense, agreement, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization

- **1 Essay = D**
  o Unable to address the question
  o Lacks a clear thesis
  o Organization is unclear. Body paragraphs are not organized around a set of main ideas.
  o Makes references to few documents. Documents are often misunderstood
  o Contains serious errors in sentences structure and mechanics