Persuasion by design: World War I, the Committee on Public Information, and the effectiveness of good poster design

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PERSUASION BY DESIGN: WORLD WAR I, THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION, AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOOD POSTER DESIGN

BY

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Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, University of Tampa, 1993

THESIS

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

in Partial Fulfillment of

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in

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WORLD WAR I TIMELINE

1914

June – Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife Sophie, the duchess of Hohenberg were assassinated.

July – Austria declares war on Serbia and Russia fully mobilizes in support. Germany is forced by treaty to support Austria.

August – Germany declares war on Russia and France. England declares war on Germany. 200,000 Americans stranded in Europe when the war broke out.

September – Britain, France, and Russia sign a pledge to stand by each other.

October – Turkey declares war on Russia.

November – Russia takes Turkish land.

1915

January – Germans drop great amount of bombs on Great Yarmouth.

February – Germans proclaim war zone around Great Britain.

March – Submarine warfare begins.

April – President Wilson declares he will keep America out of war.

May – The Lusitania is sunk.

June – President Wilson tells Germany it has no right to endanger unarmed ships.

September – Germany promises not to sink Liners without warning.

1916

January – Germany pledges humanity at sea.

April – President Wilson threatens Germany with war.
June – Germany blocks Britain’s waters.

August – Rumania declares war with Austria.

November – Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria dies.

December – Warring nations state terms in which the war may be ending

1917

February – Germany begins ruthless sea warfare.

March – Germany asks Japan & Mexico to join her. Wilson releases the Zimmerman telegram.

April – America declares war on Germany.

May – President Wilson urges nation to win the war.

June – First American troops reach France.

December – Wilson calls for war on Austria. Congress included Turkey and Bulgaria.

1918

March – Wilson Pledges Aid to Russia.

September – British wipe out Turkish army.

October – Bulgaria Quits the war.

November – Turks surrender and Austria quits.

1919

June – Paris Peace Conference. Nations meet to decide what Germany should pay in punitive damages and Wilson tries to get the nations on board with his 14 points. Treaty of Versailles created with some of Wilson’s 14 points included and the creation of the League of Nations. Congress did not support the treaty and never joined the League of Nations.
ABSTRACT

PERSUASION BY DESIGN: WORLD WAR I, THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION, AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOOD POSTER DESIGN

by

Kelly LaBrecque

University of New Hampshire, September, 2008

World War I propaganda posters were examined for design effectiveness. The Wilson Administration’s policy of neutrality lead to the need for the creation of the Committee on Public Information (CPI) with a Department of Pictorial Publicity (DPP) when the United States entered the war in April, 1917. Illiteracy and foreign speaking Americans made the poster the most effective way of communicating messages of food conservation, support for the troops and Allies, and hatred of the enemy. By applying modern graphic design theory to the posters created by the CPI it is possible to evaluate which posters may have had the greatest impact on the American public.
INTRODUCTION

Is a political poster art, graphic design, or merely a product of pop culture? Maybe it is a combination of all three. Some art historians have argued that the poster should not be considered art, while others believe that the poster holds the same importance in culture as painting, drawing, and sculpture. No matter how a poster is categorized, there is no mistaking its ability to relay information with eye-catching color and images. The beginning of the twentieth century marks a unique time for the poster. Great advances had occurred in printing, making production easier and giving designers more freedom. No longer did images and text need to be carved into a wood printing block. When the First World War broke out, the poster became a powerful tool of persuasion in part, because of its ability to communicate stirring messages visually.

While many scholars study the First World War, most of the research focuses on the causes of the war, the political views of the countries involved in the war, and the impact of the war. Also, the Wilson Administration’s views and politics have been analyzed extensively. Few scholars have emphasized the importance of the posters produced for the war. Yet, the knowledge of today’s graphic design and color theory makes it possible for scholars to assess which posters were well designed and were potentially the most influential as propaganda. By applying today’s graphic design and color theory to the posters of World War I, this paper will analyze which posters would have possibly been the most persuasive by design.
Posters were used during the First World War to persuade Americans to conserve food; to send their sons and husbands off to defend the allies and protect the United States from the “Hun”; to contribute to all four Liberty Loan campaigns to financially support the war; and, ultimately, to persuade Americans that their patriotism and support of the troops would win the battle against the evil enemy Germany. Victor Margolin wrote in “Rebellion, Reform, and Revolution: American Graphic Design for Social Change:” “Since the founding of the American colonies, visual images have played a role in the nation’s political process, particularly by their representation of impulses for change.”¹ This would also be true for the images of World War I.

In order to better understand the posters that were designed for the war, one needs to understand the Wilson administration’s policies during this era. The United States had set forth a foreign policy whereby, if there was no interference with America’s destiny to dominate the new world, then America guaranteed that it would not take sides in any struggle that erupted in the old world as long as the seas remained open to pursue foreign trade. When war broke out in Europe in 1914, Wilson declared that the United States would remain neutral. By the time the United States had joined the war in April 1917, the Wilson administration had the huge task of persuading the American public that the former stance of neutrality and pacifism was no longer appropriate. The poster played an integral role in this, America’s first all-out propaganda campaign.

1917. Although described by Creel as a means of sharing war information with the public and protecting the First Amendment, the CPI was a propaganda organization. Harwood L. Childs wrote in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* that, “the successful conduct of a war depends upon the creation of a state of public opinion characterized by hatred and enmity toward other nations.” Ultimately, the CPI achieved this. The poster’s visual imagery stimulated the hatred of the Germans, as well as other strong emotions.

George Creel’s own book, *How We Advertised America*, was a particularly interesting and personal examination of the Committee on Public Information. Harold Laswell also wrote a number of books and articles examining the role of propaganda during the war. In *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information* Stephen Vaughn examined the CPI and its role in promoting nationalization. He too discussed the propagandist nature of the posters as they were used to persuade the American public that joining the war was both necessary and just.

A few scholars have examined the graphic design and color theory of the posters of World War I. The history of the poster and its role as art and collectible along with art as a social and political tool has also been discussed in many articles and books along with collecting posters. In *Wake Up, America! World War I and the American Poster* by Walton Rawls, the posters are examined in the context of the war. He chose to “examine the American poster as a dramatic and representative icon of its period: to examine the various patriotic and informational chores it undertook in the war efforts, to tell how its

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creation and production were developed into a fine art, who many of the artists were, and also give some background information on the several matters the poster served.”

However, Rawls underplays the significance of these works and their ability to persuade by design.

The First World War marks a turning point in history because of the advances in warfare. It can also be said that the birth of modern war propaganda came in the form of posters. F.C. Bartlett defines propaganda as: “an attempt to influence opinion and conduct, especially social opinion and conduct, in such manner that the persons who adopt the opinions and behavior indicated do so without themselves making any definite search for reasons.” As Bartlett would have predicted, Americans adopted the ideas presented in the posters rather uncritically. There were more than twenty million copies of two thousand five-hundred posters designed to encourage support for the war. They were used to communicate important information quickly and efficiently. Bartlett writes that: “People in general accept without much question what they read in newspaper articles and books. Published pictorial art – the poster, the photograph, film – has a similar wide and for the most part unquestioned authority.”

While no definitive way exists to prove how influential the posters truly were, the vast amount of monies donated to the four Liberty Loan campaigns and the Victory Loan campaign indicates strongly the influence of posters on the public. For instance, the House Ways and Means Committee estimated the cost of the war to Americans at over thirty-billion dollars (at the conclusion of the war), with two-thirds of that sum being raised by the four Liberty Loan campaigns.

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5 Ibid, 54.
The United States Bureau of Printing and Engraving produced more than one-hundred billion separate bond certificates of all denominations, from the first Liberty Loan in May, 1917, through the Victory Loan in 1919.

The first Liberty Loan drive featured three posters, all containing the Statue of Liberty representing freedom from European autocracy. As many as two-million posters may have been printed for the first Liberty Loan drive, and eleven-thousand billboards were covered. James Montgomery Flagg’s image of Uncle Sam was also used for this campaign. The second Liberty Loan drive utilized a quote from McAdoo: “Shall we be more tender with our dollars than with the lives of our Sons?” Two versions of this poster existed, one with Uncle Sam, hand-extended in friendship as if he were going to shake yours; (Figure 1) a second with two young men, one from the Army holding an American flag, one from the Navy, holding a dagger and a note that says “We depend on you.”(Figure 2) The second Liberty Loan drive is also where the ethnic slur of “Hun,” the German savage, was introduced. The first poster utilizing this characterization was of a lone, bloody handprint (Figure 18). The female figure of Columbia was utilized for the third Liberty Loan drive. She first made an appearance in the late eighteenth-century and is the personification of America. The Stars and Stripes, Abraham Lincoln, Independence Hall, and the Liberty Bell were also used. Possibly one of the most striking posters to come out of the Liberty Loan drives is the Fourth Liberty Loan poster by Joseph Pennell *That Liberty Shall Not Perish from the Earth. Buy Liberty Bonds* (Figure 17). The title of this poster was a direct reference to the last line in Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address: “...and
that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." It is possible that two-million prints of the poster were produced.\(^6\)

The posters were more adept at relaying information than print alone, because for the latter people had to be both literate and able to take the time to read a newspaper or a pamphlet. A poster, on the other hand, only had to be seen. A compelling image, combined with key wording, and placed where people can look at it, is very effective. The question of "what is a poster" needs to be asked and answered. This study uses the definition given by O.W. Reigel in the book *Posters of World War I and World War II in the George C. Marshall Research Foundation*. Reigel defines a poster as "a form of graphic presentation in which all of the following elements are present: 1.) it is cheaply produced in multiple copies, usually on paper, and usually in combination of text and picture; 2.) it is intended for public display (posters are for posting); and 3.) it contains a message that is intended to move or to persuade the viewer."\(^7\) Posters provide images and stereotypes that help define world leaders, political groups, armed forces, or criminals. Posters have the ability to shape what citizens think and do politically.

This was the first American war in which colorful, patriotic posters were used to help rally public support for war. So why did the posters have such an important role in the First World War? It's fairly simple. Not everyone was literate or would necessarily read everything that was published. Nor would every individual choose to attend a meeting or motion picture. In *Propaganda and Democracy*, J. Michael Sproule said: "because crowds were impressed only by images, they made up their minds on the basis of superficial impressions and tended to accept or reject ideas as a whole. Mass opinion

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\(^6\) The poster had such a huge impact that Pennell later wrote a book about how he created the image.  
was the product of a simple reasoning by association and sentiment, even when the members of a crowd were highly educated. By putting a poster in a public space, the chances of it being ignored were slim. With the vast numbers of posters displayed by the CPI, the odds of at least one design catching a by-passer’s attention were good. The poster played important roles as both announcement and publicity during the First World War.

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CHAPTER I

THE UNITED STATES ENTERS THE WAR

When we look back at the history of the First World War, the question arises why the United States waited so long to join the war. England's Wellington House, the home of British propaganda for World War I, had gone to unbelievable lengths to create stories and propaganda to persuade the world that Germany was the United States' most evil enemy. Many events had taken place during warfare that endangered American lives on the ocean, and the warring countries expressed no desire to work with President Wilson at brokering a peace deal. Yet, the United States would not join the side of the Allies until April 6, 1917.

When war broke out between England, France, Germany, and Russia in August, 1914, Woodrow Wilson proclaimed neutrality. He said, "No person within the territory and jurisdiction of the United States shall take part, directly or indirectly in the war, but shall maintain a strict and impartial neutrality." \(^9\) Wilson's statement fit in with the United States' attitude because prior to the First World War, United States' foreign relations were governed by three principles: freedom of the seas; no permanent or entangling foreign alliances; and elimination and prohibition of European authority in the New World. All of these had been put forth long ago in the Monroe doctrine of 1823.

Even though Wilson hoped to be the great peace mediator, he understood that the war could change world politics drastically. In talking with his friend Colonel House in

\(^9\) Rawls, 83.
August, 1914, Wilson remarked: “that if Germany won, it would change the course of our civilization and make the United States a military nation.” Little doubt exists that this played a major part in Wilson’s decision to declare war on Germany in 1917. However, as Stanley K. Hornbeck pointed out in his 1917 article “Cause and Occasion of Our Entry into the World War,” “in the United States, where the issue of war or peace hung in the balance longer than in Great Britain, the disagreement over which group of belligerent powers was the enemy drew forth an unparalleled mass of rationalizations, suitable for circulation by the protagonists of either set.”

Britain further delayed America’s entrance into the war by placing American companies she believed had supplied Central Powers with munitions and food on a “black list” until the end of 1916.

As war was breaking out in August of 1914, Wilson said he was willing to act as a mediator in helping France, Germany, England, and Russia to solve their differences peaceably. Subsequently, Wilson’s offer was rejected, with each nation pleading self-defense and national honor. Since the end of the Civil war to about the time the Spanish-American War started, America did not pay much attention to the issues that were happening in the rest of the world. America was the new world and Europe was the old world. Therefore, this was a European crisis, so they maintained. From August to November of 1914, Wilson reiterated that America would remain neutral.

On May 7, 1915, ten months after the outbreak of the war, the Lusitania was fired upon by the Germans and sank off the coast of Ireland. At first, the sinking was thought to be intentional by the American government because the German Embassy had placed warnings in American newspapers. However, years later it was shown to be a chance

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11 Lasswell, Propaganda Technique in World War I (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1927), 53.
12 Ibid., 71.
13 Ibid., 50
happening. Today, conjecture exists that high ranking British officials may have
dismissed the armed naval escort, hoping that if the Lusitania was sunk with the loss of
American lives the United States would enter the war on the side of the Allies. Of the
two thousand passengers and crew members, twelve hundred drowned, including 128
Americans.

The American public was horrified by this news. They expected Wilson to adhere
to his warning of "strict accountability," thinking America would enter the war. Ray
Stannard Baker, a journalist, wrote in his personal journal: "it is a very ticklish situation;
the country wants Mr. Wilson to be firm and yet almost no one wants war. How both
these desires can be satisfied it is difficult to see ... But the people have great confidence
in Mr. Wilson; and are waiting for real leadership. He can do almost anything within
reason and be supported." Wilson knew that if he did not react strongly, he risked
sacrificing his prestigious national honor. He also knew that if he reacted too fiercely, his
dream of being a peacemaker would never come to fruition because he would be
considered a belligerent.

On May 13, 1915, Wilson responded to the sinking by demanding that Germany
stop unrestricted submarine warfare and pay reparations. The Germans denied any illegal
wrong doing because the Lusitania was armed. However, they did express sympathy for
the 128 Americans who died and agreed to pay compensation. Afraid of gaining a new
enemy in the United States, the German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg
(1856-1921), promised that no passenger liner would be attacked without warning or

14 Ibid., 79.
concessions to protect human life. Wilson said this response was not acceptable. Still America did not enter the war.

The war began with the Battle of Marne in 1914. Soon after, the war came to a standstill. 1915 had a huge loss of life in small battles, and 1916 was characterized by larger losses of lives and big offenses with insignificant territorial changes. In the summer of 1915, the first American training camp for soldiers was established in Plattsburg, New York. By January 1916, Wilson was moving towards “reasonable preparedness,” and on June 3, 1916, Congress passed the National Defense Act, expanding the Army from 75,000 to 175,000 men, and then to 223,000 men over five years. The National Guard would also be expanded to 450,000 men. On October 5, 1916 Wilson gave a speech in Omaha, Nebraska, saying: “We are holding off, not because we do not feel concerned, but because when we exert the force of this nation we want to know what we are exerting it for.”

Wilson encouraged the belligerents to compromise and accept “peace without victory” again on January 22, 1917. However, none of the belligerents were interested in this and the British were particularly upset with this notion because it indicated that Wilson did not see any difference between what Britain considered to be Germany’s evil war aims and Britain’s own crusade to rid the world of Prussian militarism.

Nevertheless, the President and most of the nation were still seeking a more definitive need for the United States to enter the war.

The table was set for America to join the war on January 31, 1917. On that date, Germany announced that she would resume unrestricted submarine warfare, sinking any ship in the war zone without warning. Wilson was forced to sever diplomatic relations with Germany when the U.S.S. Housatonic was sunk by a German U-boat on February 3,

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16 *Annals*, 60
17 Rawls, 108.
1917, in order to retain credibility with the American public as well as with Germany. He
sent the German Ambassador, Count Johann von Bernstorff, back to Berlin the same day.
Again, he did not ask Congress to declare war because of his continued hopes of
mediating peace. Wilson's idealistic goal of being the peace mediator was shattered
shortly after when on February 23, 1917 the British intercepted a telegram from Alfred
Zimmermann to Germany's ambassador in Mexico, known today as the Zimmermann
Telegram (Figure 3). The text of the telegram read:

> We intend to begin unrestricted submarine warfare on the first of February. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support, and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you."  

With no reason to doubt the authenticity of the telegram, Wilson released it to the press. Pandemonium ensued. It would have been dismissed as a forgery except that the Germans admitted to sending the telegram. Americans finally felt that they had received a direct threat from the European conflict, and on February 26, 1917, Wilson went before Congress to ask that it allow merchant vessels to arm themselves.

The resolution to go to war was passed by the House of Representatives 403 votes
to 13. However, when the resolution reached the Senate, Robert Marion LaFollette and
other senators felt if it passed it would throw the United States directly into the war. The Senate failed to pass the resolution. Through a statute passed in 1819, the administration found the authority to allow merchant ships to arm themselves. On March 12, 1917, United States armed vessels were permitted to leave American ports and instructed that they were to fire on all submarines sighted. Four American ships were sunk the week of March 18, 1917, by German submarines. On April 2, 1917, the President addressed Congress, asking that the actions of the German government be considered an act of war.

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On April 6, 1917, Congress passed a joint resolution declaring that the United States would enter the war on the side of the Allies. The President and the nation finally had its rationale for entering the war. Alarmingly, victory appeared to be within reach of the Central Powers, and Germany seemed willing to do whatever was necessary to win. Because most Americans were still in favor of neutrality, Wilson would later say, "It is not an army that we must shape and train for war, it is a nation."19

Many factors pushed America into the war. The Eastern seaboard’s upper-class that had immigrated to America from Europe was decidedly pro-British. Those who felt an immediate need to join the conflict had already volunteered for British and French forces. Wellington House, the British propaganda agency, had managed to intensify the American anti-German feelings with atrocity stories, although most were later disproved.20 Despite these factors, many Americans still believed the United States should remain neutral. Wilson now faced the reality that it would take the involvement of American troops to end the war. Further, he faced the daunting task of mobilizing the American public to support America’s entrance into the war on the side of the Allies. To accomplish this, Wilson would be persuaded to create a propaganda arm. Similar to Britain’s Wellington House, it was called the Committee on Public Information (CPI). Although Wilson believed the public should be encouraged to distinguish truth from lies in order to preserve the notion of democracy, all information for newspaper articles, movies, minute man speeches,21 pamphlets, and posters was filtered through the CPI to keep American public opinion in support of the war.

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20 Smith, 522.
21 Four minute speeches given at movie theaters to promote patriotism and support for the war.
CHAPTER 2

FORMATION OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION

The biggest problem the Wilson Administration faced after declaring war on Germany was persuading the American public, especially those who whole-heartedly agreed with Wilson’s earlier stance of neutrality and pacifism, that joining the allies and sending American men off to war was the right thing to do. To change public opinion, Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker believed it was important to have someone involved who understood why we were at war, and in saying that I speak not of a man who could comprehend merely the difficult international problems with regard to it, but the spirit that made us go into this war, and the things we were fighting for. Wars are sometimes fought for land, sometimes for dynastic aspirations, and sometimes for ideas and ideals. We were fighting for ideas and ideals, and somebody who realized that, and knew it, had to say it and keep saying it until it was believed.22

The best way to achieve this would be to create a Committee to help advertise the new position of the administration. The Committee on Public Information (CPI) was created with the sole purpose to persuade the American people that direct participation in this overseas entanglement was now necessary and right.23 Hundreds of men and women would volunteer their efforts as writers, artists, and speakers under the notion that has been used in almost every war since the First World War: “that the world must be made safe for democracy.” These volunteers would use their talents to express the ideas and ideals of the administration.

23 Rawls, 133.
Wilson created the Committee on Public Information with Executive Order 2594 on April 13, 1917. He named George Creel as the chairman. Creel knew well what he was up against, however. In his memoir Creel described American public opinion as: “The sentiment in the west was still isolationist; the northwest buzzed with talk of a ‘rich man’s war’, waged to salvage Wall Street loans, men and women of Irish stock were ‘neutral,’ not caring who whipped England, and in every state demagogues raved against ‘war mongers.’”24 George Creel had grown up in Missouri and started his career as a journalist in Kansas City. Wilson is said to have described him as “man with a passion for adjectives.”25 He worked as a reporter on several newspapers and even started his own, *The Kansas City Independent*, in 1899. He wrote his memoir about the CPI, *How We Advertised America* in 1920 and 14 other books during his life. And in 1934 he ran as a Democrat in the California race for Governor. Other head members were the Secretary of State, Robert L. Lansing; Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels; and the Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker. Creel held one meeting with these men to go over key points and never met with them again. Creel would later say about the Committee, that “in all things, from the first to the last, without halt or change, it was a plain publicity proposition, a vast enterprise in salesmanship, the world’s greatest adventure in advertising. There was no part of the great war machinery that we did not touch, no medium of appeal that we did not employ.”26 A fellow newspaper reporter, Mark

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25 Ibid., 21.
26 Rawls, 135.
Sullivan, described the CPI as being “all George Creel” even when 150,000 people were involved in its workings.\textsuperscript{27}

At the time the Committee on Public Information was formed, President Wilson favored a particular piece of censorship legislation that would prohibit any information about the war being published or broadcast. However, with encouragement from Creel, Wilson was persuaded that “all-out publicity to communicate our war and peace aims to every American, neutral country, and ally”\textsuperscript{28} would better than simply silencing news sources. Creel assured the President that “voluntary censorship” was achievable. No medium of communication went unutilized by the CPI. Divisions of the agency placed articles, advertisements, and ads in newspapers. Public speakers, nicknamed the Four Minute Men, were organized to go out and give short speeches to rally support for the war. Films were used, as well as telegraphs, cables, and wireless. The artists and advertising professionals were largely responsible for mobilizing public support. They produced some of the most eye-catching products of the CPI, including the sign board and the poster. These were placed in public places, in store fronts, on billboards, and used as subway cards. As J. Michael Sproule points out in his book \textit{Propaganda and Democracy}: “Wilson’s war pervasively enveloped American citizens at every venue in their personal lives. For those traveling to work, there were trolley posters illustrating all manner of ways that the ordinary citizen personally could help win the war.”\textsuperscript{29} It is possibly one of the most successful advertising campaigns to have ever been launched.

\textsuperscript{27} Creel, 4
\textsuperscript{28} Thomas Flemming, \textit{The Illusion of Victory: American in World War I} (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 94
\textsuperscript{29} Sproule, 10.
CHAPTER 3

THE CREATION OF THE DIVISION OF PICTORIAL PUBLICITY

The Society of Illustrators, founded in 1901, originally consisted of nine artists and one businessman whose goal was to encourage the art of illustration. In late April, 1917, they met in New York City to look for ways to help promote America’s reasons for entering the war. Many illustrators were already supporters of preparedness. Some were members of groups such as the Vigilantes, a patriotic, anti-pacifist organization. George Creel sent America’s most highly paid illustrator and artist, Charles Dana Gibson, President of the Society of Illustrators, a telegram. Creel asked Gibson’s assistance with artwork for the government. Initially, the CPI was supposed to function as a clearing house for information pertaining to the war but, as Creel gained confidence, he increased the scope of the CPI’s activities. He created a Division of Pictorial Publicity, which drew on the multitude of talents from painters, illustrators, cartoonists, and sculptors.  

Stephen Vaughn discusses in *Holding Fast the Inner Lines* Gibson’s knowledge about the task of mobilizing and nationalizing the American public when he said: “Gibson believed that America, separated from Europe, was far too removed to understand the war. Until Americans were made to feel the war’s horrors, they would not be aroused.”  

On April 22, 1917 the Division of Pictorial Publicity was officially made a part of the CPI with Charles Dana Gibson head of the department.

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30 Cashman, 506.
31 Vaughn, 150.
Gibson (1867-1944) began to organize the Division of Pictorial Publicity (DPP). He utilized the group of artists known as the Vigilantes\(^{32}\) who would be instrumental in the success of this division. This department was made up of artists and illustrators who believed in the war and offered their talents to the American government for free. In the first nineteen months of American involvement in the war, the division produced around seven hundred posters. The total number of original posters created from all the American civilian and government agencies is estimated to be between two and three thousand. Among some of the famous artists who designed war posters were Howard Chandler Christy, Edward Hopper, and James Montgomery Flagg. Flagg designed the most well-known poster in history; Uncle Sam (Figure 10) pointing his finger and saying “I Want You.” It is estimated that some form of this poster has been printed five-million times. George Creel commented on the effectiveness of the DPP in his book *How We Advertised America* saying that “in some respects they were the most remarkable of the many forces called into being by the CPI. America had more posters than any other belligerent, and what is more to the point, they were the best. They called to our own people from every hoarding like great clarions, and they went through the world, captioned in every language, carrying a message that thrilled and inspired.”\(^{33}\) These posters created by the DPP have left a colorful, visual history of America’s involvement in the war.

Charles Dana Gibson chose F. De Sales Casey as his Vice Chairman. Headquarters were in New York with H. Devittwelsh responsible for going to branches of the war department for a list of poster needs. Gibson would be sent the list of needs and

\(^{32}\) An organization of authors and artists around 1917.
\(^{33}\) Creel, 133.
would then assign an artist a specific poster concept. After completion, the poster was sent to Washington, D.C., for approval by the CPI and upon approval would be sent to press. Weekly meetings were held with all the artists for constructive criticism and to foster a creative environment to get the ideas flowing and create catch phrases that would stick in the public’s mind. More offices of the DPP were later created in Chicago, with Oliver Dennett Grove as chairman; Boston, with chairman E. Tarbel; and San Francisco, with F. Matthews as chairman. Overall, there were 279 artists and 33 cartoonists members of the DPP.

Later the CPI created the Advertising Division (AD) to purchase advertising space in newspapers and magazines, as well as a National War Service Committee on Window Displays which utilized the services of the National Association of Display Men to create patriotic window displays across the country to coincide with the other advertising from the CPI. Creel described the mobilization of the DPP and AD as swift when he said “almost overnight the poster and signboard people swung into action and plastered the dead walls and boards of the nation with stirring appeals. Added to this, more than 37,000 registration posters were displayed in the store windows of some 600 cities.”

The Advertising Division offered suggestions to the DPP on both content and layout. In *Holding Fast the Inner Lines* Stephen Vaughn described the CPI as:

...spectacularly successful in mobilizing public opinion behind the country’s participation in the World War of 1917-1918, popularizing the notion that the struggle was a great crusade to save Democracy. In retrospect, there must be little doubt that its appeal promoted national unity, but there has been considerable skepticism as to whether the CPI strengthened democracy, which, in the United States, has been associated with individual liberty and human equality under the law.”

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34 Ibid., 162.
35 Vaughn, xi.
The CPI was very successful in strengthening national unity, but ultimately little
difference existed between the CPI and England’s Wellington House. Both created a
national unity by filtering information and reframing information. Little emphasis was
placed on the loss of life, battle conditions, or antiwar messages.

On June 30, 1919, Congress dissolved the CPI at a dinner given to honor George
Creel and his efforts. Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War spoke at this dinner saying: “I
am obliged to believe that the sword is mightier than the pen. But this war wasn’t won by
the sword alone. It was won by the pen as well as the sword, and I am not speaking now
of a purely military victory, because victory is simply a point in time.”36 His words are a
testament as to how powerful images can be. In order to understand the effect the posters
had on our nation, we must also discuss the history of the poster and graphic design
theory.

36 Creel, xv.
Before the Industrial Revolution the work of printers, typographers, engravers, illustrators, and compositors was considered craft, and engraved wood blocks were the only way to combine text and images. Newspapers, magazines, and posters created a need for illustrators. The most successful periodicals that utilized this technique were Harper's Magazine, Frank Leslie's Illustrated News paper, Harper's Weekly, and Scribner's Monthly. With the invention of lithography in 1796, by the Austrian actor and play-write Alois Senefelder, the door for graphic design was opened and the poster revolution began. American artists and businessmen started to use lithography commercially in 1828. Color lithography was invented in 1837, first appearing in Boston in 1840. The majority of posters initially created were trade card advertisements made into an enlarged format for window or wall display. The poster became so popular in the late nineteenth-century that a major exhibition was held in Paris in 1884. By 1885 most posters were printed by lithography, and production was monopolized by a few firms in the United States. According to Anthony Crawford in Posters of World War I and World War II in the George C. Marshall Research Foundation collection: “By the middle of the nineteenth century the modern poster emerged as a new medium of communication and as literally, a visual addition to the landscape. Along with other technological inventions and advances, the poster took its place as a characteristic sight,
product, and function of the new mass-production, consuming societies.” Posters remained the most effective means of communication into the middle of the twentieth-century, until radio and subsequently television eclipsed them. The poster industry reached its pinnacle between 1894 and 1896. During that period a large number of poster exhibitions were held.

Lithography is the printing technique in which an image (positive) is drawn on a plate or stone with oil, fat, and gum arabic, which attracts oil based ink. Because the plates are “flat” surfaces, lithography printing can produce a large quantity of prints from a single plate. Continued printing advances in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made it easier to combine print and image as well as print on larger sheets of paper. Before 1905 posters would have been made by combining three sheets, eight sheets, or 12 sheets of paper together to form the image. After 1905 billboards also called “twenty-four sheet posters,” had become an effective way to draw attention and were highly visible from trains, trolleys, and cars. Prior to the invention of lithography, a poster designer was limited by the strict horizontal-vertical grid imposed by a printing method that required individual pieces of type to be set in lines and locked into a rigid rectangular case. Lithography allowed a designer to work directly on a metal sheet with no limits to size, shape, or placement. Publishing firms were more apt to utilize artists’ posters, while commercial firms would produce anonymous works.

Combining words with images to make a “unified whole” is no easy task. Yet, a well designed poster can persuade a consumer to buy a product whether or not it is needed or a nation to go to war. According to Alan Gowans: “The issue of persuasion is

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38 Posters of WWI and WWII, 2.
central in any consideration of poster design.” In order to create persuasion a poster must be subject-specific; if the image has a universal theme, then it is more a work of fine art than poster art. When used as a public announcement, the poster is a way to inform quickly a large number of people. The entertainment poster fell under the concept of public announcement having been utilized by theater companies, vaudevilles, and circuses. Posters have to be eye-catching to be most effective. By 1890, poster art had become a way to educate the masses. According to Ellen Mazure Thomas in *The origins of Graphic Design in America*: “Posters brought art into the street, to the people who would never go to a museum. They functioned as a liberal education in art and as a stimulator of good taste. The city itself would become the poor man’s picture gallery, and posters could share the sacred calling of the fine arts by elevating public morality.”

While magazines and newspaper ads had become the dominant mode of advertising by 1905, when the United States entered the First World War the poster went back to its original purpose as a powerful medium of persuasion.

The beginning of the twentieth-century marked a wide gap between the fine arts and popular graphics. The Amory Show of 1913 and World War I helped to change this. The Amory show introduced American artists to the European avant garde. This was not the realistic art they were accustomed to, but a modern art that was often characterized by abstraction. This marked the beginning of a relationship between the fine and advertising arts from which graphic design emerged. World War I helped to create prestige for the advertising arts and created a visual means of communication that is more accessible than text alone to a larger number of people. This visual communication could also at times be

41 Ibid., 123.
42 Ibid., 14.
highly engaging or pleasurable. Upon entering World War I, America was faced with unprecedented needs for money, conservation, troops, patriotism, and materials for munitions. The poster was the perfect medium to create awareness of these needs among a large number of people because it could be mass produced inexpensively.

A poster from any country during a time of war will convey a similar message: promote eagerness for the war, patriot duty, keep the morale of the forces high, persuade the public that the enemy does not have a chance at winning, and persuade the nation that every single sacrifice made is in the best interest of winning the war. As discussed by Anthony Crawford in *Posters of World War I and World War II*, each nation has noble warriors, kindhearted and honorable women, and erroneous enemies. Translate the language of a war poster and change the national symbols and costume and it becomes difficult to decipher from which nation the poster came. The United States was no exception. The Division of Pictorial Publicity created posters that encouraged Americans to donate money to fund the war, conserve food and energy, keep a high morale, encourage labor that was directly related to the war, and extend a helping hand to foreign victims of the war. Prior to the declaration of war, posters helped encourage preparedness for war and for military recruiting. When the United States declared war on April 6, 1917, the rate of poster production dramatically increased. The posters of World War I are important because they mark the first American use of the medium for political purposes on a large-scale.

The main purpose of the First World War posters were to influence the American public's morality and patriotism. To be successful, they needed to appear to have a

43 Ibid., 132.
44 Anthony Crawford, *Posters of World War I and World War II*, 5.
45 Daylight savings time was established.
"modern" design, and use familiar ideas and images, conventional wisdom, and visual depictions of war as a simplified perception of right versus wrong through effective design.\textsuperscript{46} According to the George C. Marshall Research Foundation, war posters need to employ six methods to be successful.

1.) Use images of national leaders past and present, or quotations from those leaders, or both, to make the leader an icon because the people should be unified behind him and his cause in the spirit of obedience and faith.

2.) Use symbols. Every nation has its own vocabulary of images and words that evokes feelings of patriotism or sympathy. Successful symbols stand for complex abstractions and they defy rational explanation.

3.) Use slogans. They become part of our memory.

4.) Use myths, allegories, and metaphors. These are forms of symbols, evoking a familiar folk story, a classical myth, a national memory, an idealized personification, or cause and effect relationships standardized by education or habitual and orthodox ways of thinking.

5.) Use semiotic illustration. An idea is reinforced in a picture by stance and gesture, facial expression, costume, and appropriate action. Design itself may be semiotic, as between dynamic diagonals and passive horizontals, or between aspiring verticals and serene ovals. Words should also be designed and integrated for the total effect.

6.) Use a counter means. All the devices previous can also be used in reverse to vilify and degrade the enemy and to combat sabotage, non-cooperation, and apathy. The enemy would be portrayed as monstrous, the enemy soldier as villainous or pathetic. Caricature and ridicule may be used. During the First World War the Americans and the British were more likely to use this kind of malevolent propaganda than the French.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{46} Crawford, 7.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 7-8.
These were exactly the methods the artists and illustrators of the CPI used in creating posters for the First World War. American political and military leaders were portrayed as selfless, intelligent protectors of the nation, above criticism. American soldiers were moral, unselfish humanitarians fighting for a good cause. Women and children were used to portray refugees. It was rare that a soldier was portrayed being killed on the battlefield. Images of women were used to represent grace, beauty, defenselessness, and moral virtue. These proved effective at gaining attention for a good cause. The Division of Pictorial Publicity created posters that now serve as a window into the past, giving us a sense of the hopes and fears of early twentieth-century Americans. They also provide a chronology for changing ideas about the war. They reflect the popular culture of the time and established the poster as a political tool. They were also propaganda. The posters were designed to promote a public opinion the Wilson Administration believed it needed to defeat Germany. The posters utilized peer-pressure to encourage citizens to donate to the Liberty and Victory Loans or conserve food. Stereotypes were used in the way the German soldiers were portrayed as “Huns” or the devil, both powerful. They capitalized on the inner fears of Americans that the war would eventually be fought on American soil.

48 Ibid., 8-9.
49 Hun – a derogatory nickname used by the British and Americans during the First World War to describe the German Army. The term dates to the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1900) when Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany sent troops to China. He told the troops in his speech said to behave like the Huns in past history and wreak vengeance.
CHAPTER 5

PERSUASION BY DESIGN

Graphic design is a large part of American culture. Today the average person is bombarded on a daily basis with visual imagery. People are likely to see more examples of graphic design before they get to work than they see examples of fine art in a year, yet it passes unnoticed because it blends in with our visual culture. Graphic design is used to communicate visually by combining text and images. It's used for advertisement, business identity, and entertainment, and seen on food packaging, the company truck, and in store advertisements. A poster or photograph can still be worth a thousand words yet, how often does a twenty-first century citizen really look at something and notice the design concepts?

Today's society also believes that they are far advanced from eighteenth and nineteenth-century society, and visual media is often associated with our culture. However, according to Balance and Heller in Graphic Design History: "America's first official graphic designer could be considered Benjamin Franklin, who created an emblem for the Pennsylvania Gazette called "Join, or Die."(Figure 4) The emblem depicted "a snake divided into eight parts that symbolized the need for the feuding American colonies

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to unite in the face of war with France and her Indian allies." The Pine Tree Shilling Stamp (Figure 5) issued by Massachusetts in 1652 is considered to be the earliest colonial emblem. And as Edgar Breitenback pointed out in the article "American Graphics and Painting in the Late Nineteenth Century": "The nineteenth century saw the enormous growth of lithography, the flourishing of steel engraving, the discovery and wide spread use of photography, great technical advances in wood engraving and, finally the advent of mechanical or near-mechanical processes, the photogravure and the half-tone." Graphic design, along with the professional graphic designer, came into being during the last three decades of the nineteenth-century in America. It was a response to the communication needs created by the Industrial Revolution. The poster successfully satisfied the need to communicate effectively with a mass audience. The mass production of American and international posters during the First World War is now seen as the beginning of modern graphic design.

Five basic elements of design consist of: line, shape, texture, color/value, and space. Line direction creates mood and value (how dark or light an object looks). Shape is two-dimensional and creates positive and negative space and can appear 3-D; text and images contribute to the creation of positive and negative space. Texture is created when you vary the pattern of light and dark areas of an object.

The use of color in graphic design is based on aspects of color theory relating to color mixing and the impact that colors and combinations have on an individual person, both visually and symbolically. Color depends on light. Primary colors are red, yellow,
and blue and can be combined to produce secondary colors of orange, green, and violet. When a primary color is combined with a secondary color or two secondary colors are combined, tertiary colors result. A secondary color complements the primary color that was not used to produce it; that is, orange is complementary to blue. A color can communicate an impression to the mind. Yellow suggests luminosity or brightness. Blue gives the impression of coldness but can also represent spiritual, heavenly, or maternal love and dignity. Purple is associated with masculine domination and red induces a feeling of warmth. Reds and yellows can also seem closer, while blues and greens appear to recede.54 Red-yellows are perceived as the warmest colors, while blue-greens are the coldest. Blue-red and red-blue also signify resignation. According to Paul Renner, the famous German typeface designer; “Warm colors press forward and crowd in on us; they have something masculine and hard about them, they are active. The cool colors retreat from us; they have something soft, feminine; they are passive. Perfect red that is neither yellowish nor bluish, loses hardly any of its strength, but takes on the calm and dignity of unquestioned recognized power.”55 Yellow-red or scarlet red is perceived as the most violent and loud color. Color helps create the mood and character of a work.

Humans have a tendency to view colors of familiar objects as unchanging. According to George Ayoston in Color Theory and its Application in Art and Design:

“Even if snow is viewed at night under the illumination of a red lamp, it continues to be white for us. This visual phenomenon is called color constancy.”56 Color perception can

also be influenced by the colors of surrounding areas; an abutting color can reflect some of its complementary color. Despite the concept of color theory, color is highly subjective and color perception can vary greatly from one person to the next. In general, though, "the paler, darker or more clouded a color becomes, the less its emotional accent is apparent." The emotional accent of a color can thus be increased, weakened, or distorted. Blue’s melancholy accent, for example, is increased when darkened. If each color creates a separate internal perception then why can color combinations appear harmonious? The best explanation comes from Goethe who believed that, when the human eye sees any single color, it craves to see its complementary color.

Four principles are incorporated into graphic design theory. They are movement/rhythm, balance, emphasis, and unity; these refer to broader aspects of composition. Unity refers to the cohesiveness of a design; that is, all the images and text of the design must look as if they belong together. Emphasis is where the eye is drawn first, hopefully to the most important piece of information. The movement/rhythm of a design takes the eye to the secondary information. Balance would refer to the placement of images and text overall, and the creation of positive and negative space. Does the design appear balanced, or are there too many elements in one portion? Designers must take into account the ease of visual communication, usability, and sometimes even sociology and linguistics to achieve a successful design.

What is known as Modern Design began in the early twentieth century. It was mainly a rebellion against nineteenth-century design beginning with the design of “sans-serif” fonts. This is typeface that does not contain the marks at the end strokes of letters. Sans-serif fonts are generally used in print material as headlines rather than body text, as

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57 Renner, 39.
serifs help guide the eye through large bodies of text. Sans-serif fonts tend to display cleaner on computer screens and televisions and are the dominant choice for those mediums today. Typographers from the Bauhaus, a school of art, architecture, and design in Weimar, Germany, were the fathers of today’s graphic design theory. The establishment of the New Bauhaus school of design in Chicago (1937) helped establish the New European typography in the United States.

In the mid 1980s, the computer changed everything about graphic design with software applications that were capable of image manipulation and 3D image creation. It was now possible to see instantly how changing layout or typography affected the design. Today’s graphic design theory is more complex than that of 1980s or 1990s because some believe we have become more of a visual society since the advent of the internet. Web pages have required us to view information as a series of images and videos with very little text. Software programs like Adobe PhotoShop, Illustrator, InDesign, and Quark Express are industry standards and are considered to be indispensable and more effective than the traditional methods of sketching (hand rendering), and paste-up on paper, although not all graphic designers use them.

One approach to our visual world is still the same as that of one-hundred years ago. Images are functional and represent reality while illustrating claims made by text. Each reader cognitively perceives images the same way; therefore, designing visually means adhering to a universal set of principles for coordinating images with text. Design theories are most concerned with combining verbal and visual information. Images usually play a supporting role to text and, in some cases, text supports the image.

Poster art is the perfect medium to reach a large number of people in the most effective manner. Images communicate to literate and illiterate alike. Graphic design communicates through a visual vocabulary and is ideally suited to address large problems and social issues. Steven Heller wrote in *Polemics and Politics, American Style*:

"Neither art nor graphic design can appreciably change the world. Only those persons who wield political (and military) power have the capacity to alter events and history." People with political power use visual media to motivate citizenry to support change. The Wilson Administration accomplished precisely this with the formation of the CPI and the Department of Pictorial Publicity. The medium of the poster helped persuade an apprehensive American public to abandon an attitude of neutrality and support involvement in a war on the side of the Allies. These posters have also left us with a visual record of the political propaganda of the First World War and a better understanding of social attitudes at the time of the war.

The best rule for effective graphic design in any medium (magazine, poster, advertisement) is “keep it simple.” A design that is simple and direct is most effective. When a design can play on ideas that are broad and current and elicit emotions such as patriotism, hatred, or sacrifice, it is more likely to be believed. This is especially true in poster design. Generally the busier a design, the more difficult it is for people to understand the message. Attention should be given to the positive (“white”) and negative (“black” or another color) space being created; color choice and combination used should enhance the message; and limited use of no more than three fonts in a design (one or two fonts being more effective). The eye should be drawn to the most important piece of

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information first. Positive and negative space along with other design elements should filter the eye to secondary information in order of importance. Therese Hayman of the Smithsonian American Art Museum said:

Posters have long been considered an obvious vehicle to spread ideas, arguments, or allegations and to promote causes. These posters that intend to sway public opinion and spread propaganda must communicate strongly and effectively. They must speak from a position of authority, and aim to unite us in a common cause. Since World War I, such posters have been used to motivate us by appealing to our sense of patriotism or to our darker emotions of anger at the human cost of war. The effectiveness arises from a complex layering of words, symbols, systems, and design. Sometimes just one word can get the message across by building on a broadly shared social imperative.\(^{61}\)

However, it is the simplicity of the broadly shared social imperative that makes for the most effective poster communication. Generally an image and a few words get the message across loud and clear.

CHAPTER 6

WORLD WAR I POSTERS

The majority of designers for the DPP were not experienced poster designers. Most of the members of the DPP were traditionally trained artists and illustrators. Modernist design, form simplification, and flat patterning influenced by abstract art and valued by some poster historians is a rare find in the posters designed by the DPP. The artwork is mostly derived from the American tradition of narrative, documentary, and historical genre painting. The posters more closely resemble works of fine art rather than what we consider poster art today. According to Walton Rawls in *Wake Up America*, J. C. Leyendecker's (1874-1951) "Order Coal Now" (Figure 6) is arguably the most beautiful of them all. One could not easily pass by without making a note to check the coal bin well before winter sets in. The posters produced for the CPI during the First World War covered a vast array of subject matters. Posters existed for support in areas such as food conservation, Liberty Loan and Stamp, YMCA, YWCA, Red Cross, community service, and day light savings time. Support of the troops was encouraged with book donations and enlistment. Some posters encouraged patriotism and, of course, hatred of the enemy.

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62 Form simplification and flat patterning use symbolic character and omit secondary features while retaining only essential features.
63 Rawls, 23.
64 Ibid., 23-25.
In order to understand more fully the dynamics of effective poster design, let us first look at a couple of examples of ineffective poster design. *Which Will You Wear?* (Figure 7) is a poster encouraging the purchase of Liberty Bonds in the Third Liberty Loan Drive, which had its opening day on April 6, 1918. It is actually three separate advertisements mounted together for the loan drive. Had one of the three designs been used alone, it would have been more effective. Yet, with the combination of these together, the eye doesn’t know what to read first. No clear distinction exists as to which piece of information is most important and which is secondary. The font chosen for the middle section of the poster is difficult to read and was a poor choice for the blocks of text under the German and American buttons. The treasury may have chosen to officially represent the Third Liberty Loan in blue and orange with white, but this color choice does not do much to inspire patriotism. Red, white, and blue evokes thoughts of American patriotism the best. *Enlist Today* (Figure 8) is a call for New York men between the ages of eighteen and forty to register to serve their country. The designer did use the red, white, and blue colors which provoke a sense of patriotism. However, the chosen font along with all capital lettering makes the blocks of text difficult to read. Again, the eye does not know where to go first and is forced to focus on the wording in red. Yet, when the red text is read in succession a stirring message is not obtained. When the blue text is read in succession it makes a little more sense, but the poster should be read from to top to bottom to be understood correctly. To make focusing even more difficult, some of the blue text is also bold causing the reader to focus on those words first. Also, both posters would have had a difficult time getting their message out to the portion of the public that was unable to read.
The American people who stayed behind on the homeland were encouraged to help win the war by working in factories, donating books, and conserving food. One such poster that was effectively designed for food conservation was Howard Chandler Christy's (1873-1952) *In Her Wheatless Kitchen* (Figure 9). Born in Ohio, Christy attended the Art Students League in New York at the age of sixteen and studied under William Merritt Chase. Conscious of the advances being made in publishing, he illustrated his friend Frank Crowninshield’s book, *In Camphor* (1895), and established himself as an illustrator. Patriotically moved by the sinking of the battle ship the *Maine* during the Spanish-American War, he accompanied United States troops and illustrated articles for the magazines *Scribner's, Harper's, The Century, and Leslie's Weekly*. His war illustrations turned him into a celebrity, but it was *Scribner's* publishing of “The Soldiers Dream” that put him on par with Charles Dana Gibson. The girl in that illustration and subsequent illustrations became known as “The Christy Girl.” Christy himself once stated that the "Christy girl" was "high-bred, aristocratic and dainty though not always silken-skirted; a woman with tremendous self-respect." Despite representing a women of higher status, the “Christy Girl” did have a mass appeal because of her soft facial features and the clothing she was depicted in.

The eye is drawn to the “Christy Girl” in the left-center of the poster. She is surrounded by wheatless ingredients in her kitchen: oats, corn meal, barley. She is beautiful and realistic-looking in her blue and white kitchen smock. Her face is appealing, inviting, while her surroundings make it clear that her efforts will help her

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65 Christy illustrated a Richard Harding Davis magazine story in 1898 in which a soldier in the Spanish-American War daydreams of his perfect woman. Christy’s illustration had a soldier smoking a pipe with the woman in the pipe smoke.
soldiers be successful in war. She encourages the viewer to follow in her example. It is a well-designed poster that brings the viewer's eye to the information in the order in which it was intended to be read. The eye is first drawn to the heading “In Her Wheatless Kitchen,” and then it moves down to her and the wording “She is Doing Her Part to Help Win the War.” After we examine her kitchen ingredients the eye is then drawn to the words “Are You Doing Yours?” Compared with other posters such as Save (Figure 10) and Save the Products of the Land (Figure 11) the Christy Girl is significantly more appealing to the viewer. Although this poster would not have been as effective relaying its message to those who could not read as Save the Products of the Land, it would have been effective with women of varying economic status because the “Christy Girl” as depicted here could be almost any woman. She could be a wife, a mother, a daughter, or a sister. Her outfit and the ingredients surrounding her lack reference to any specific social class.

Howard Chandler Christy’s most renowned “Christy Girl” also appears in the Poster Gee!! I Wish I Were A Man (Figure 12), which encourages young men to join the Navy. A simple poster with a young, attractive woman dressed in a man’s Navy uniform with the text “I’d Join the Navy” and “Be A Man and Do It; United States Navy Recruiting Station.” The words “A Man” and “I’d” are underlined for added emphasis. She embodies all the characteristics Christy described her with despite that she is in a man’s Navy uniform. Designed to encourage men to join the Navy, this poster was most likely persuasive to women as well, encouraging them to stand behind the men in their lives and support their decision to join the Navy.\(^\text{67}\)

\(^{67}\) Women were first allowed to join the U.S. Navy in 1948 and now comprise about 15% of the enlistees each year.
Themes of patriotism and enlistment were often visited by the artists in the DPP. America's initial neutrality made it extremely important to encourage a sense of patriotism and support when the country joined on the side of the Allies, in part, because of the large number of foreign-born American citizens. Arguably the most famous American political poster to come from any era is James Montgomery Flagg's (1877-1960) rendition of Uncle Sam for the poster *I Want You For U.S. Army* (Figure 13). Flagg, an American artist who worked as a fine art painter and illustrator, was born in Pelham Manor, New York. By the age of fourteen he was a contributing artist for *Life Magazine* and by fifteen was on the staff of *Judge Magazine*. In his twenties he traveled to London and Paris to study art and then returned home to produce illustrations for magazines, book covers, and also worked as a humorist and political cartoonist. The British recruitment version of Lord Kitchener pointing, designed by Alfred Leete, was what inspired Flagg to create Uncle Sam. Over four million copies were printed from 1917 to 1919. Flagg wrote in his autobiography that he used his own face and added a goatee and age to come up with the likeness of Uncle Sam.

Uncle Sam looks the viewer square in the eye and points at him/her. The main wording is blue with a red outline, except for the "You" which is slightly larger and red with a blue outline. This change in color and size causes the reader to put the most emphasis here. The font is clear and concise. Because there is not a large amount of text, the font works nicely with the image. The use of capital letters in this case does not detract from the message being understood. The poster is in red, white, and blue which evoke America's sense of patriotism. The eye is drawn to Uncle Sam, and then down to

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68 It is estimated that 14.7% of the population in 1910 was foreign-born. U.S. Census, 1910.
the wording. The eye easily finds the focal point of the poster. This poster would evince a sense of duty in any patriotic American. James Montgomery Flagg designed this poster so well that it was later used in World War II. When Uncle Sam is mentioned even today, this image comes to mind almost one-hundred years later. Uncle Sam is now one of America’s national icons.

Another effective design that promoted patriotism and an admiration for America’s past was the 140th Flag Day 1777-1917 poster (Figure 14). The poster depicts a man raising the American flag, a minuteman cheering, and an eagle flying above. The message says “The Birthday of the Stars and the Stripes” in red and “June 14, 1917; ’Tis the Star Spangled Banner, oh, long may it wave, o’er the land of the free and the home of the brave!” in black which incorporates some of George M. Cohen’s song Grand Old Flag written in 1906 for his musical George Washington Jr. The eagle symbolizes America’s freedom, strength, and courage, while the Minuteman symbolizes the Revolutionary War patriotism. The flag represents America’s war for independence and the thirteen colonies that risked everything for that independence. George Washington is said to have explained the symbolism of the flag as: "We take the stars from Heaven, the red from our mother country, separating it by white stripes, thus showing that we have separated from her, and the white stripes shall go down to posterity representing Liberty." No matter how the flag is explained, there is no mistaking that it is the preeminent symbol of America.

The eye is drawn to the flag first, then to the eagle, and lastly to the men. Attention is then brought over to “140th Flag Day 1777-1917.” Finally, the eye is drawn

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to the wording on the right hand side of the poster and then down to the cannon. This poster contains more text than the other posters chosen. This would have made it more difficult for those who could not read English. However, the positive space (white space) creates realism and allows the design to almost jump off the page, and we get the sense that the flag is actually moving in the wind. The buttons on the boots of the minute man are even easily recognized and further add to the realism of the design. Despite some of the fancier aspects of the font, the text is still quite easy to read for those who could read English. The poster brings to mind positive images of patriotism and the struggle that our founding fathers went through to help make America “the land of the free and the home of the brave.” It is a positive reminder of what the country stands for. If used today in association with the Fourth of July celebrations, it would still be an effective poster to bring forth feelings of patriotism and reminders of our past struggles.

H. R. Hopps’ *Destroy This Mad Brute*, (Figure 15), is one of the few posters that depicts the Germans as bestial, evil creatures while trying to encourage men of age to enlist in the armed forces. The “Mad Brute” was most likely based on the French artist Emmanuel Frémiet’s sculptures of a gorilla carrying off a woman done in 1859 and 1887. With destroyed France in the background, Kaiser Wilhelm is portrayed as a savage gorilla wielding a bloodied club inscribed with “Kultur.” His hands are also bloodied, and he is carrying a half naked and faceless Columbia. His helmet is inscribed with the word “Militarism,” and he has crossed the ocean and is stepping onto the shore of America. There is a block of wording just below the left knee of the gorilla; “If this war is not fought to a finish in Europe, it will soon be on the soil of the United States.” “U.S. Army” is at about fifty percent opacity and is placed on top of the word “Enlist”

with a block of text just below it that says: “If You Want to Fight for Your Country and Freedom Enlist To-Day; Army Recruiting Station; 3 Tremont Row, Boston, Mass.” The eye is first drawn to the text at the top of the page and the gorilla with his victim, a faceless Columbia, which implies that the purity and safety of American women and children are at risk. Germans are to be viewed as bestial and subhuman with no moral conscience. After taking in the image of destroyed France and other details, the eye is then focused on reading the text from his knee to the bottom part of the poster.

The visual details on this poster are superb. One can see all the detail in the fur of the gorilla, the blood on his hands and club, and Columbia's dress and hair. Portraying the Kaiser as a gorilla would help the viewer to remember any stories they had read or heard that portrayed Germany in a negative light, and the image of Columbia distressed and ravaged would have also added to the negative message about the Germans. Although, the poster’s true message, “enlist,” is in text, the secondary message, containing the war in Europe by defeating the Germans, is easily understood from the artwork. When comparing this poster with the movie King Kong (1933), you can not help but to conclude the poster might have contributed to the idea of the movie, which is testament to how well designed the poster was.

The most haunting and thought-provoking enlistment poster to come from World War I is entitled Enlist (Figure 16), designed by Fred Spear for the Boston Committee on Public Safety. An eerie scene of a woman and child sink into the depths of the Atlantic Ocean. The sea water is green, making it appear murky and giving the viewer the impression that it is quite cold. The woman and child are wrapped in white, flowing clothing conveying innocence and honor. Spear took his design concept from a tabloid
article describing the fate of the dead passengers from the *Lusitania*, which was sunk off the coast of Ireland in May, 1915. The article describes two bodies pulled from the ocean: "On the Cunard wharf lies a mother with a three-month old child clasped tightly in her arms. Her face wears a half smile. Her baby's head rests against her breast. No one has tried to separate them." According to Therese Hayman, curator for the exhibit, *Posters, American Style*, at the Smithsonian American Art Museum: "The poster translates this news report into an evocative image, pulling the audience into the event. At the same moment, by pointing to the tragedy, the poster elicits an urgent response. Motherhood, loss of life, and revenge suggest a single action: 'Enlist.'" Although the poster does not hold the same meaning today as it did in 1915, it effectively arouses feelings of anger, and a desire to spring to action, because the viewer would have been able to easily associate the poster with the earlier mentioned tabloid story.

The symbolism is clear. Madonna and child in white represent innocence.

According to Sean Dennis Cashman in *America in the Age of the Titans: The Progressive Era and World War I*: "In sculpture and painting the human figure, nude or simply clad, was either used to personify such things as justice, industry, or the state, or a real person imbued with higher virtues. To emphasize the allegorical nature of their works, artists and sculptors lent their subjects classical garments, shields, wreathes, and wings." This appears to be exactly the symbolism Spear was hoping to convey with his design. She is simply clad in a classical garment with bare shoulders. Mother and child have died at the hands of an aggressive enemy and are thus imbued with higher virtues. This gives

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72 Rawls, 81.
74 Cashman, 392
substance to the word “Enlist”; which encourages males to fight the Germans to protect
the innocent. The poster was printed almost two years before America joined the war, but
many men joined the British, French, and Canadian forces, suggesting, along with others,
it was an effective tool.

The fear of being attacked in order to gain financial support for the war are two
more subjects used in World War I poster design. One extremely effective poster that
capitalizes on this fear is Joseph Pennell’s (1857-1926) That Liberty Shall Not Perish
from the Earth (Figure 17). (The first title presented by Pennell was Buy Liberty Bonds or
You Will See This.) Born in Philadelphia but later making his home in London, Pennell
was a writer and illustrator, producing many of his books with his wife Elizabeth. He was
also a noted etcher and lithographer. Pennell’s poster for the Fourth Liberty Loan drive,
launched on September 28, 1918, depicted a scene of New York Harbor being attacked
by foreign aerial and naval forces. The city is in flames and the Statue of Liberty is
partially destroyed with her head and her torch having been blown off. At the bottom of
the illustration are the words “That Liberty Shall Not Perish From This Earth, Buy
Liberty Bonds, Fourth Liberty Loan.”

The illustration is colored in tones of orange and black that help make the scene
more ominous. The font is black on a light brown background and is all capitals. Again,
there is not a large amount of text, so the all capital lettering is easy to read and the text
stands out. The eye focuses on the image of a destroyed Statue of Liberty first, where the
planes to her right and left are noticed. Then the eye goes down to the other destruction
around her and notices her head in the harbor and an eagle with out-spread wings. Eagles,
symbolic of America and her freedom, virtues, courage, strength, spirit, justice, quality,
and excellence – have played a role in American art, music, and literature since it was designated a national emblem in 1872. The Statue of Liberty symbolizes America’s freedom, democracy, and international friendships. To see both depicted in a nearly destroyed state would imply that America is in peril of disappearing. The destruction of New York Harbor, which was the welcoming arms of America for new immigrants, would also symbolize that the American dream of a better life was dead.

This would have been a very effective poster for bringing to mind the worst fears of every American. It would have encouraged people to join and financially support the war. It was later used en masse in an exhibition of Liberty Bond posters after the war had ended in 1918, in New York City’s shopping districts along Broadway, indicating that the demise in the poster had been averted by Liberty Bonds. The color choice, use of light, and artistic execution by Pennell make this poster superior to the other posters designed for the four Liberty Loan drives.

A second poster that was designed to elicit fear was *The Hun – His Mark; Blot it Out with Liberty Bonds* (Figure 18) designed by J. Allen St. John (1875-1957), an American artist, author, and illustrator. At the age of eight he accompanied his mother to Paris where he began studying art, and he later attended at the Art Students League in New York and the Academy Julian in Paris. He taught at the Chase School of Art in Greenwich Village (now known as Parsons the New School for Design), the Chicago Art Institute, and the American Art Academy until his death. He also worked commercially for the *New York Herald* and illustrated magazine covers in Chicago, where he developed a relationship with the publishing house of A.C. McClurg & Co. He is best known for his pulp fiction/fantasy illustrations and his illustrations of Edgar Rice Burrough’s novels.
Used for the Second Liberty Loan Campaign, which opened October 1, 1917 and closed October 28, 1917, the poster consists of a simple image of a bloody hand print used to represent the Hun, with the wording: “The Hun – His Mark; Blot it Out with Liberty Bonds” in black with a red line under “Blot it Out”. The eye is immediately focused on the palm print and then moves down to the words “Blot it Out,” which are larger than the other text on the poster. Then the eye focuses on the wording directly under the palm print, before moving to the wording on the bottom third of the page. The positive space is symmetrical and helps the eye to focus on each piece of information. Two different fonts are used, one looking more like hand-written calligraphy. Neither detracts from the other.

Wellington House had gone to great lengths to portray the Germans as evil and possessing no conscience. The bloody palm print would serve to re-enforce that image. The simplicity of this design is what makes it so effective. The single bloody palm print could represent America being invaded by the “terrible” Germans and allowed for each individual to recall stories of German atrocities and any other fears they may have had, adding to the power of the message.

The final example of effective poster design to come from World War I is a series of Patriotic Cartoons printed by Barron Collier Advertising Agency from 1916 to 1918. They consist of black backgrounds with red, white, and grey text and images which cause the red to almost jump off the posters. There is little text in each poster, but the intended message is very clear. Each poster is designed to bring images from circulating stories into the viewer’s mind. A Toast to Kultur (Figure 19) was designed by Louis Raemaekers (1869-1956), a Dutch painter and cartoonist. His first work was published in 1906 in the
Algemeen Handelsblad, a Dutch weekly magazine in the Netherlands. Disbelieving the reports of atrocities, Raemaekers traveled to Belgium to see for himself if they were true. Becoming outraged with what he saw, Raemaekers started drawing cartoons for the Dutch newspaper Telegraaf when he returned. The cartoons gained rapid recognition and were picked up by British authorities who had them reproduced in paperback books. Germany was outraged by his cartoons and put pressure on the Dutch government to try Raemaekers on the charge of endangering Dutch neutrality. The jury would later clear him of the charges. The German government then put a reward of 12,000 guilders on Raemaekers’s capture, dead or alive, prompting him to seek refuge in Britain. Raemaekers continued to draw cartoons in Britain, producing about one thousand in total during the war. Raemaekers’s cartoons would later be picked up by the United States for syndication. An estimated three-hundred million Americans viewed them during wartime.

_A Toast to Kultur_ was originally the cartoon _To Your Health, Civilization!_ and was drawn for the _Century Magazine_. Death is a skeleton and is cloaked in a grey robe. It is drinking a glass of red blood that has poured down its chin, onto the robe and rocks beneath it. The phrase “A Toast to Kultur” is all that is needed to imply how evil the Germans are. The additional text reads “drawn by Louis Raemaekers for the _Century Magazine_” which is present to give credit to the artist; and “Barron Collier Series of Patriotic Cartoons” indicates that more cartoons are forthcoming. The eye is immediately drawn to the image of death and then reads the phrase to the right of the image. The black background causes the text and image in red, white, and grey to jump off the page. The white border at the edge of the poster also adds more effectiveness to the poster by
framing it and causing the black and the red to stand out more. As it is a simple poster with only two elements, there is no confusion as to the intended message, implying that Kaiser Wilhelm II and the Germans find joy in the death and destruction that they are causing.

Both symbolism and editorializing exist in Raemaekers's cartoon. Death is drinking a goblet of human blood in honor of the current state of "health" of civilization. Raemaekers also commented on the advances that large armies and new weapons had made and the vast increase in the number of people injured or killed that accompanied these advances. He insinuated that this new kind of war was causing civilization to lose its moral compass and was a disgrace to humanity. "A Toast to Kulter" is the only poster in the Patriotic Series to be credited to Raemaekers; however, the following posters in the Patriotic Series are similar in design and may be Raemaekers illustrations also.

*Über Alles* (Figure 20) portrays a German soldier as devil-like creature sitting on a pile of skulls with his head in his hands. He has on the German military helmet and black, shiny boots. The pile of skulls can be interpreted as representing the innocent women, children, and soldiers that the Germans have destroyed on their quest for supremacy. The soldier's pointy tail is sticking out from underneath him, and there is a bloodied sword a little bit away from his feet that has oozed blood over some of the skulls. The cape also has some blood on it and his boots are made to fit cloven hooves instead of feet. To the right of the German soldier in line with his knee in a fancy script font are the words: *Über Alles* which translate into English as "above all else" and is in reference to the song "Deutschland, Deutschland, Über Alles." To the left, about two-thirds of the way down the poster, is the text "Barron Collier" and "Patriotic Series No.
Satan, with his head in his hands looks forlorn and jobless. This indicates that the Germans have done such a good job at creating havoc and devastation that he now has nothing left to do. The image of the German soldier portrayed in red almost jumps off the page along with the sword dripping blood. The skulls are of all different sizes causing the viewer to infer that women and children were murdered. Words are not needed to convey how evil and unethical the German military was. Additionally, by portraying the soldier as devil-like creature the viewer can easily recall stories of German atrocities and think of the Germans as the one true enemy of this war. This poster uses the maximum number of fonts (three) that can be used in a poster effectively because there is so little text. Had there been more text, the use of three fonts may have created competition in what should be read first. Because of good poster design, no confusion exists as to what text is most important and what is secondary information.

The third poster, *A Good Month's Business* (Figure 21) has Kaiser Wilhelm II drawn as a demon in a German combat helmet with a skull and cross bone emblem. He is standing along side Satan who is portrayed with horns. The two characters on the left side of the poster have eerie grins and are reviewing a report. The paper they hold in the middle of the poster reads, “Monthly Report” with a cross bone and skull on either side. Listed below is “Murdered; Babies, 164; Children 178; Women 292; Non-Combatants,” all in the same font; and a German Eagle and seal at the bottom of the report. On the right side of the poster, about halfway down, are the words “A Good Month’s Business” in the same font that was used on the report; just below this is “Barron Collier” and “Patriotic Series No. 2” in the same serif font as other text. This poster has more text than the previous poster but, by keeping the majority of the text in the same font, no confusion is
created. The eye is drawn first to the report which would be to create shock and horror and bring to mind the attacks on Belgium. Then one looks at the characters on the left portion of the poster and recognizes who they are and understand why they would be reviewing such a report with grins. Lastly we read “A Good Month’s Business,” which ties everything together and would encourage an American viewer to support American involvement in stopping any more of these atrocities listed. Again, red is used to cause the images of Satan and Kaiser Wilhelm to jump out from the poster and stimulate a feeling of anger among viewers. Portraying the Kaiser as a demon-like creature similar to Satan is to remind viewers of images of German atrocity stories.

*Let Me Congratulate Your Majesty!* (Figure 22) shows Satan carrying a pitch fork with pointed handle shaking hands with Kaiser Wilhelm II on the left third of the poster. Satan has cloven feet and a pointed tail. Kaiser Wilhelm is again drawn as the devil-like creature wearing a German helmet with skull and cross bones and German war boots for cloven feet. He carries a sword dripping in blood causing him to stand in a pool of blood. Both figures have eerie smiles on their faces, and the figure representing the Kaiser has a stance of accomplishment and power. To the right, taking up about two-thirds of the poster, are the words “Let me congratulate your majesty! You have done more in four years than I have in four thousand.” In the bottom right corner is “Barron Collier” and “Patriotic Series No. 2,” as in previous posters. Again, Germany is portrayed as doing the work of the devil. The red not only jumps out but also causes a sense of anger in the viewer. It is similar in theme to the previous posters and would probably cause the viewer to remember the previous posters if they had viewed them. This is important in helping to establish identity and would have been used to reinforce the identification of Germans
with evil and having no moral compass. As in previous designs, no confusion exists as to where the eye should look first. The eye is drawn to the red images to the left allowing the viewer to associate the red with evil, blood, and death. Then the viewer reads the text, which helps the viewer remember the stories about destruction caused by Germany and the harm done to innocent civilians.

*Times are hard your Majesty – You leave us with nothing to do* (Figure 23) has the devil with two devil-like children making an appeal to Kaiser Wilhelm II, this time in human form on the right half of the poster. The Kaiser is fiddling with his mustache, arms crossed, in full military attire with a bloodied sword protruding from his cape that is dripping blood on his boots. One devil-child has its head down and hand at its forehead making it appear forlorn as it grasps the tail of Satan. The other devil-child looks up expectantly at the Kaiser while holding something under its arm. It looks as if they are moving out of “hell” because the Kaiser has done all their work. On the left half of the poster is a cave labeled “Gehenna Apartments,” with a sign just below that reads “To Let” slightly over the opening. A cob-web covers the cave entrance, while the fire seems to be burning out, causing large puffs of smoke that almost resemble ghost like figures to come out of the cave. Miscellaneous skeleton pieces are on the side of the path leading to the cave opening as well as some mushrooms sprouting up along the side. The text reads: “Times are hard your Majesty – You leave us with nothing to do,” and at the very bottom right corner is “Barron Collier” and “Patriotic Series No. 2”.

In Jewish sacred texts, “Gehenna” refers to fiery place where the impious would be punished after they die or when judgment day arrives. In Christian sacred texts it is the place where sinners are punished after they die. “Gehenna” also appears in Islamic
religious writings. The first time the word appeared was to name a garbage dump in the valley outside the walls of Jerusalem that had constant fires to dispose of trash and help eliminate the odor caused from the trash. In addition, it was the site where bodies of criminals or those denied a proper burial would be disposed of. Historians also believe that this was the site of religious child sacrifices by the Canaanites. In this poster's rendition, its meaning seems to translate as “hell.” With less negative space, this poster is a little “busier” than the other posters in the series. The eye is first drawn to the text, “Times are hard your Majesty – You leave us with nothing to do,” and then over to the image of Satan with the devil-children and Kaiser Wilhelm II. Then the eye goes over to the doorway to the “Gehenna Apartments,” where the viewer can begin to put together the story. The theme of this poster is consistent with the theme of the previous posters, all of which portray the Kaiser as a descendant of Satan who excelled at evil and has left Satan with nothing more to do.

*Chums* (Figure 24) is the last of the series. On the left portion of the poster is Satan with his arm around Kaiser Wilhelm II. The latter is again portrayed as devil-like and dressed in military hat with cross bones and skull with military boots that show his cloven feet. Both are sitting on a rock that has flames, possibly from the fires of hell behind it, and blood outlining the rock. The Kaiser is sitting tall, arms outstretched, left arm crossed over the right one, with his sword in his right hand which is dripping with blood as in previous posters. The blood is pooling beneath his feet and the sword. Their tails are intertwined, and Satan has a sly grin, while the corners of the Kaiser’s mouth seem to be down turned. On the right side of the poster are the words: “Chums; When I really began to admire You, my friend, was when you pulled that Lusitania job. When
You did that, I said to myself – ‘There’s a man after my own heart.’ Underneath this is “Barron Collier Patriot Series No. 2”.

The red images of Satan and the Kaiser on the rock with what appears to be blood, draws the eye first. After taking in the details that the illustrator has incorporated, the eye then moves to the text on the right. Despite the large amount of text, it is easy to read. Although it was designed sometime in 1918, three years after the sinking of the Lusitania, it was obviously created to remind the American people of that tragedy and also bring back memories of the Kaiser’s policy of unrestricted warfare on the seas. The subject matter was meant to evoke contempt for the Germans. Hopefully it would leave no doubt that America did the right thing by joining the war. The red color used for Satan and Kaiser Wilhelm II would only help to intensify the feelings of anger towards the Germans.

The design of these posters is simple and, by keeping the theme and color palette the same in the Barron Collier Patriotic Series No. 2, the artist allows the posters to be easily identified. There would have been no mistake in recognizing each poster was a product of Barron Collier Advertising Agency. The black background allows the white, grey, and particularly the red images to almost jump off the page. The red is also used in these images to evoke feelings of anger at the Germans and, in conjunction with the images of Satan, convey a sense that they are evil. Although not large in size (10.5 inches by 21 inches), the designs would have been easy to see from afar and were most likely placed near public transportation and in store windows. Despite being anonymous, the posters were most likely created by the same artist, by Raemaekers.
Out of the thousands of poster designs created for the Committee on Public Information from 1917 to 1919, these select few truly stand out because of good design. Use of positive and negative space, dynamic colors, font choice, placement of images and text, and artistic skill make these posters more effective when compared with other designs from World War I. Some designs seem timeless, such as James Montgomery Flagg’s *I Want You* and the 140th Flag Day, which could both be used today. Others, although specific to World War I, still have their message clearly communicated, such as *In Her Wheatless Kitchen*, *Destroy This Mad Brute*, and *Enlist* all testament to excellent poster design.

These specific posters also would have been very effective at relaying their message to both the literate and illiterate portions of the American public because most of the designers utilized a small amount of text along with extremely detailed artwork. These designers capitalized on media reports and other information provided to them to design posters that the average American citizen could easily associate with current affairs. Furthermore, as Marion K. Pinsdorf pointed out in her article “Woodrow Wilson’s Public Relations: Wag the Hun,” George Creel sold World War I like today’s aggressive advertising or PR companies sell cereal, Coke, and Pepsi. Creel along with others increased the effectiveness of the DPP’s work and helped to sway public opinion to support America’s war efforts with contributions to the Loan drives, food conservation, and participation in other programs related to the war effort.

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CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

When war broke out between England, France, Germany, and Russia in August 1914, President Wilson was determined to abide by the philosophy of the Monroe Doctrine. He also aspired to be the great mediator who would bring about peace between the warring nations. Britain further delayed America's entrance into the war by not allowing the seas to remain neutral for shipping and placing American companies she believed had supplied Central Powers with munitions and food on a "black list" until the end of 1916. The discovery of the Zimmermann telegram in January 1917 helped to unite American public opinion in favor of joining the war. America was going to enter the war on the side of the Allies despite Britain's interference with neutral seas. The question remained how to best mobilize public opinion quickly and effectively to support this decision.

Wilson created the Committee on Public Information with Executive Order 2594 on April 13, 1917. He also appointed George Creel as the chairman. The CPI was formed to persuade the American public that joining the war was the correct thing to do, and rather than use legal actions to try to mobilize public opinion, it would be more effective to utilize an approach similar to that of an advertising campaign of the day. As Marion Pinsdorf points out, the American public's willingness to bear the war's burden was strengthened by the work of the CPI, and its ability to mobilize opinion encouraged people to put forth efforts far in excess of what the government could have exacted with
Art, movies, and speeches were the new tools to help form and shape public opinion with poster art being able to effectively reach both literate and illiterate portions of the public.

War-time propaganda has been proven as an effective tool to form and control public opinion. As Alan Gowans discussed in “Posters as Persuasive Arts in Society” poster art “deliberately employs all other types of art to create visual metaphors symbolizing values and fundamental beliefs, thereby attacking or defending ideologies, and establishments, reforming or stabilizing social institutions, as circumstances may dictate.”

Prior to the First World War, advertising had already utilized repetitive symbols as a way to persuade the consumer to buy Brand X. This knowledge was used to generate partiality for political candidates and parties, just as it was utilized by the CPI to change from a policy of neutrality to one of support for the First World War. The CPI understood the mass concerns of the time, effectively played upon them, and told the public that support and encouragement for the troops, food and energy conservation, and the defeat of Germany would guarantee that democracy would flourish and the United States would be safe.

While no definitive way exists to prove how influential the posters truly were, or which specific posters had the most impact, the vast amount of monies donated to the four Liberty Loan campaigns and the Victory Loan campaign is testament to the potential influence posters have on the general public and their key role in propaganda. The House Ways and Means Committee estimated the cost of the war to Americans at over thirty-billion dollars, of which it estimated that two-thirds of that sum was raised by the four

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76 Ibid., 325.
77 Gowans, 9.
Liberty Loan campaigns. The United States Bureau of Printing and Engraving produced more than one-hundred billion separate bond certificates of all denominations, from the first Liberty Loan in May, 1917, through the Victory Loan in 1919. With artists and illustrators such as James Montgomery Flagg and Charles Dana Gibson donating their time and talents in the creation of war posters, the DPP was able to produce posters with images that resonated with the American public. The posters used seem to have created an atmosphere of “peer pressure” for people to donate to the campaigns and wear a button or place a card in their window, indicating they had donated.

Today, in the twenty-first century, constant visual stimulation is the norm. With the development of television, computers, and digital video, the average American is bombarded with media on a daily basis. Advertising and media agencies run focus groups to determine which images will be the most appealing before they move forward with a campaign. During the First World War, not only did focus groups not exist, but the CPI and DPP lacked time to run tests to determine which images would be the most appealing. Nor did there exist a graphic design theory such as we have today. The government and the CPI needed to move quickly and efficiently, utilizing the available media to disseminate their call for support in joining the war on the side of the Allies. Using the poster was the most effective way to have their messages heard. Film was in its infancy. And as not all of the Americans could read, images, then as now, could easily be translated into words and thoughts in any language. By utilizing today’s graphic design theory and what has been proven to be effective poster design in reviewing the posters from the First World War, we can analyze the manner in which the posters functioned as visual communication. Color choice, use of images that evoke memories from the past or
recent stories, intelligent use of positive and negative space, and key words rather than large blocks of text, are what set these posters apart from other World War I Posters. They demonstrate that poster art is truly an art of persuasion.
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FIGURES
Figure 1: Shall We Be More Tender with Our Dollars Than with The Lives of Our Sons (Dan SayreGroesbeck), 1917
Figure 2: Shall We Be More Tender with Our Dollar Than with The Lives of Our Sons (Edwards & Deutsch Litho. Co. Chicago), 1917
Figure 3: Zimmerman Telegram
"We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, make Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace. Signed, [Name].

Figure 3: The Zimmerman Telegram Decoded
Figure 4: Benjamin Franklin's *Join or Die*, 1754
Figure 5: Stamp for the Massachusetts Pine Tree Shilling
Figure 6: Order Coal Now (designer: J.C. Leyendecker), 1918
Figure 7: Which Will You Wear? Third Liberty Loan (designer unknown), 1918
ENLIST TO-DAY
IN
THE 69TH INFANTRY
JOIN THE FAMOUS IRISH REGIMENT
THAT FOUGHT IN ALL THE GREAT
BATTLES OF THE CIVIL WAR.
FROM BULL RUN TO APPOMATOX
GO TO THE FRONT
WITH YOUR FRIENDS
DON'T BE DRAFTED INTO SOME REGIMENT
WHERE YOU DON'T KNOW ANYONE
MEN WANTED FROM 18 TO 40
APPLY AT THE ARMORY
LEXINGTON AVENUE and 25th STREET

Figure 8: Enlist Today (designer unknown), 1917
In her Wheatless Kitchen
she is doing her part to help win the war
Are you doing yours?

UNITED STATES FOOD ADMINISTRATION

Figure 9: In Her Wheatless Kitchen (designer: Howard Chandler Christy), 1918
Figure 10: *Save* (The W. F. Powers Co. Litho., N.Y.), 1917
Save the products of the Land
Eat more fish — they feed themselves.

United States Food Administration

Figure 11: Save the Products of the Land (designer: Charles Livingston Bull), 1917
Figure 12: Gee, I Wish I Were A Man (designer: Howard Chandler Christy), 1917
Figure 13: I Want You (designer: James Montgomery Flagg), 1917
Figure 14: 140th Flag Day; 1777-1917 (designer unknown), 1917
Figure 15: *Destroy This Mad Brute* (designer: H.R. Hopps), ca. 1917
Figure 16: *Enlist* (designer: Fred Spear), 1915 or 1916
Figure 17: That Liberty Shall Not Perish From the Earth; Buy Liberty Bonds (designer: Joseph Pennell), 1918
Figure 18: The Hun—His Mark; Blot It Out (designer: J. Allen St. John), 1917
Figure 19: *A Toast to Kultur* (designer: Louis Raemaekers), ca. 1916

Figure 20: *Über Alles* (designer may be Louis Raemaekers), ca. 1917
Figure 21: *A Good Month's Business* (designer may be Louis Raemaekers), ca. 1918

Figure 22: *Let Me Congratulate Your Majesty* (designer may be Louis Raemaekers), ca. 1918
Figure 23: *Times Are Hard Your Majesty* (designer: may be Louis Raemaekers), ca. 1918

Figure 24: *Chums* (designer may be Louis Raemaekers), ca. 1918