Exploring Recruiting Posters

GRADES 6-12

Overview

This activity is geared toward participants in grades 6-12. The estimated amount of time to deliver this lesson is 75 minutes.

The U.S. Navy's need for personnel constantly changes. In the 20th century, certain groups traditionally excluded from the U.S. Navy were included in times of need for military personnel/support. In this lesson, participants will explore Navy recruitment posters targeting different audiences and discuss tactics used to get these groups on board.

Objective

Participants will be able to describe the use of posters in Navy recruitment practice and their relationship to different audiences.

Materials

- ☐ Recruiting African Americans in the 1970s Packet
- ☐ Recruiting Women in World War II Packet
- ☐ Recruiting African Americans and Mexican Americans in World War II Packet
- ☐ Legal or Ledger Size Paper
- ☐ Coloring Materials

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Inquiry

Ask participants the following:
- What is an advertisement you have seen lately that stands out to you?
- What about that advertisement is effective?
- Why does a company or person create an advertisement? What might their goals be?

Investigation

Navy Personnel Strength

Throughout its history, Navy policies and practices limited the participation of individuals of certain groups or identities. However, during war time, the need for personnel, both in the armed forces and support roles on the home front, led the Navy to recruit more individuals from groups they excluded in the past.

Have participants look through Navy Personnel Strength 1938-1995. Discuss the following questions:

Suggested questions for grades 6-8:
- When is the demand for Navy personnel the highest?
- What reasons might people have to join the Navy during this time?
- What could potentially convince them to join?

Suggested questions for grades 9-12:
- Who might the Navy have been looking for to fill these positions at that time?
- Why might people be reluctant to join the Navy during this time?
- What could potentially convince them to join?

Poster Exploration

Participants will look at various posters produced by the United States government in order to encourage audiences to enlist in the Navy and Navy Reserve to meet demands for personnel.

Share "Honored as a Navy Nurse" poster from 1965 or "American Traditions U.S. Navy" from 1974. In 1965, the U.S. was ramping up its involvement in the Vietnam War. By 1974, the U.S. was in the process of winding down its involvement. During this period, the Navy was also looking at its

history of discrimination and working toward equal opportunity for sailors. Model how you might look through the poster to answer the questions below:

- What do you notice?
- Who is the intended audience? How would they have seen it?
- Why might the Navy need this audience at this time?
- Who is distributing this poster? What might their goal for the image be?
- How does the image wield credibility, argument and/or emotion?
- What is persuasive about this poster?

Separate participants into small groups. Hand each group a packet of posters (Recruiting African Americans in the 1970s, Recruiting Women in World War II, Recruiting African Americans and Mexican Americans in World War II). Have them answer the questions on their "Analyzing Recruitment Posters" worksheet.

Have participants share what persuasive tactics are being used in the posters.

- What did you notice looking at the posters?
- What persuasive tactics were being used? How could they be effective at the time the poster was released?

Activity

Create a Persuasive Poster

Have participants share an action they would like to see more participants in their school do more of. (Potential actions: Recycle, eat healthier, end bullying, etc.)

Participants will create their own posters to convince their peers to do the action. Place posters around the room and have participants take part in a gallery walk in which they can look at all the posters made by their peers.

- What posters stood out to you?
- What persuasive tactics were effective?

Create a Recruitment Poster

Have each group create a recruitment poster for the Navy highlighting the reason they discussed in their small group. The poster should contain imagery and a slogan that might convince someone to join.

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Lesson Connection

For first hand accounts on why sailors chose to join the Navy, please see our lesson: **Hearing from Crew Members: Why Join the Navy?**

Additional Resources/References

U.S Navy Personnel Strength over Time
https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/u/usn-personnel-strength.html

Recruiting Posters for African Americans in the Navy
https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/art/exhibits/communities/artwork-of-african-americans-in-the-us-navy0/recruiting-posters-for-african-americans-in-the-navy.html

Recruiting Posters for Women in World War II
https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/art/exhibits/conflicts-and-operations/wwii/recruiting-posters-for-women.html

Navy Recruiting Posters of the Atomic Age
https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/art/exhibits/conflicts-and-operations/navy-recruiting-posters-of-the-atomic-age.html

Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art of World War II
https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/united_we_win/united_we_win.html

Documents and Images

Navy Personnel Strength 1938-1995

Year	Officers	Nurses	Enlisted	Officer Candidates	Total
1938	10,312	427	105,599	2,750	119,088
1939	11,585	438	110,872	2,307	125,202
1940	17,723	504	192,173	4,873	215,273
1941	38,601	823	332,274	1,452	383,150
1942	118,038	2,907	1,102,218	6,004	1,259,167
1943	219,279	7,022	2,034,343	120,472	2,381,116
1944	300,101	8,893	2,808,134	84,627	3,201,755
1945	323,755	11,025	3,005,534	65,211	3,405,525
1946	233,035	9,077	1,832,896	30,459	2,105,467
1947	58,689	2,263	464,501	4,166	529,619
1948	45,298	2,008	396,204	5,722	449,232
1949	46,158	1,975	397,655	5,488	451,276
1950	54,423	2,426	498,954	4,951	560,754
1951	72,157	3,333	705,997	5,962	787,449
1952	79,166	3,081	735,753	6,265	824,265
1953	78,574	2,724	721,638	6,452	809,388
1954	77,889	2,403	674,580	6,514	761,386
1955	72,444	2,165	617,296	6,599	698,504
1956	70,419	2,065	596,741	8,512	677,737
1957	71,775	2,077	604,804	6,883	685,539
1958	71,144	6,181	569,890	6,181	647,215
1959	70,221	2,045	558,750	6,236	635,207
1960	68,587	2,140	555,946	5,778	630,311
1961	71,703	2,076	582,305	6,880	660,888
1962	71,593	2,098	577,677	6,694	655,964
1963	74,033	2,084	582,866	6,657	663,556
1964	75,371	2,028	583,218	6,717	665,306
1965	77,196	1,936	584,683	6,929	668,808
1966	78,100	1,943	630,767	6,725	715,592
1967	80,683	2,238	660,795	6,387	748,045
1968	81,961	2,225	663,797	6,589	752,347
1969	85,687	2,408	666,700	6,605	758,992
1970	82,565	2,283	643,164	6,048	731,777
1971	77,442	2,202	572,338	5,843	655,623
1972	74,208	2,254	524,205	5,774	604,187
1973	71,448	2,197	502,777	5,407	579,672

1974	68,250	2,527	483,257	5,021	556,528
1975	66,036	2,668	474,596	5,093	545,725
1976	64,110	2,570	460,161	4,938	529,209
1977	63,337	2,633	459,780	4,616	527,733
1978	62,890	2,606	458,710	4,915	526,515
1979	62,161	2,542	458,431	4,863	525,455
1980	62,648	2,640	457,459	4,989	525,096
1981	64,580	2,713	466,388	5,541	536,509
1982	66,579	2,661	475,147	5,582	547,308
1983	68,764	2,744	489,495	5,361	563,620
1984	70,382	2,896	497,837	5,298	573,517
1985	71,079	2,951	503,072	5,443	579,594
1986	72,890	3,029	510,713	5,662	589,265
1987	74,064	3,078	523,071	5,608	602,743
1988	74,115	3,055	523,106	5,395	602,616
1989	74,374	2,989	526,018	5,410	605,802
1990	74,557	3,020	525,159	5,707	605,423
1991	74,001	3,108	525,130	5,425	604,556
1992	72,126	3,205	498,769	5,152	576,047
1993	66,346	3,341	469,420	4,922	540,688
1994	61,750	3,251	402,626	4,286	480,224
1995	58,778	3,319	371,670	4,159	437,926

Credit: Naval History and Heritage Command

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"Honored as a Navy Nurse," 1965

Credit: Accession #: 69-274-S, Naval History and Heritage Command

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"American Traditions U.S. Navy," 1974

Credit: Naval History and Heritage Command

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Packet 1: Recruiting African Americans in the 1970s

The last draft call of the Vietnam War was on December 7, 1972. The end of the draft, alongside negative public opinion of the Vietnam War, led to fewer people enlisting in the Navy. This created a need to recruit more personnel, including those whom the Navy did not traditionally recruit in the past. The Navy faced challenges recruiting Black service members due to the history of Black personnel being categorically put into positions of servitude in the 1940s and beyond. During this period, the Navy was also working on policies and practices to eliminate discrimination and provide equal opportunity for all sailors.
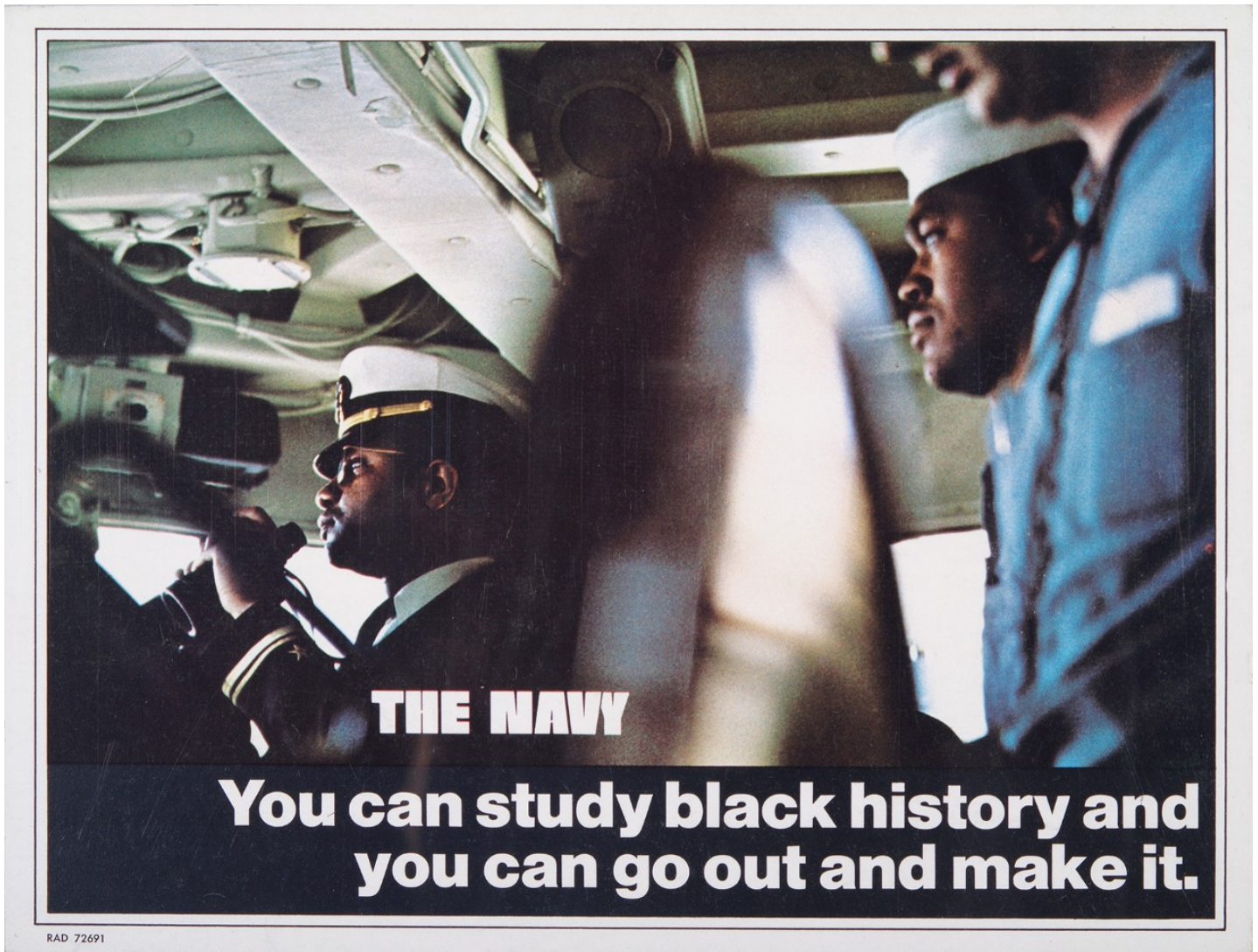
Credit: Accession #: 72-014-C, Naval History and Heritage Command

Credit: Naval History and Heritage Command

Credit: Accession #: 2014-012-01, Naval History and Heritage Command

Packet 2: Recruiting Women in World War II

The high demand for workers across a range of roles in World War II led to the need for women to fill jobs previously held by men on the home front. In the military, more men were needed to fill combat roles, leaving a need for support roles and non-combat positions in the military. The United States military created military volunteer reserves for women, such as WACs, WAVES, and SPARS, to fill these roles.

Credit: Accession #: 81-156-N, Naval History and Heritage Command

Approximately 40,000 posters and 45,000 window cards were created of this image to encourage women to join the WAVES.

Credit: Accession #: 81-156-AR, Naval History and Heritage Command

Credit: Accession #: 81-156-AB, Naval History and Heritage Command

Credit: Accession #: 70-623-H, Naval History and Heritage Command

Packet 3: Recruiting African Americans and Mexican Americans In World War II

Prior to World War II, the Navy periodically barred the recruitment of African Americans. Due to the need for personnel in World War II, the Navy had to actively recruit Black sailors despite segregation and racial discrimination existing both at home and within the Navy. This need for personnel can also be seen in the defense industries, which needed a more qualified workforce to continue swift production of supplies for the war effort. In 1942, the United States wanted to gain the support and cooperation of neighbors in the Western Hemisphere, leading the Office of War Information (OWI) and the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA) to commission work from artists, including Leon Helguera, with the goal of gaining support from Latino Americans. While these posters were not made specifically for the Navy, they were used to recruit people into all military branches.

United We Win

Photograph by Alexander Liberman, 1943, Printed by the Government, Printing Office for the War Manpower Commission

Credit: NARA Still Picture Branch (NWDNS-44-PA-370)

Above and Beyond the Call of Duty by David Stone Martin

Printed by the Government, Printing Office for the Office of War Information

Credit: NARA Still Picture Branch (NWDNS-208-PMP-68)

Credit: NARA Still Picture Branch (NWDNS-44-PA-87)

Joe Louis was a famous heavyweight boxing champion who was the reigning world champion from 1937 to 1949. At the start of World War II, Joe Louis enlisted in the Army. At a Navy charity dinner in 1942, Louis stated "We're going to do our part . . . and we'll win because we're on God's side." The U.S. Office of War Information (OWI) later created this poster to encourage African American enlistment in all branches of the military.

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Credit: National Archives and Records Administration

Credit: National Archives and Records Administration; Record Group 208: Records of the Office of War Information, 1926 - 1951