

The Abolitionists and their Propaganda

Lesson 2

Quotation Analysis and Creation

Objective:

Some of the documents within the MHS collection include quotes or slogans that are well suited for student analysis. As students analyze the written text, they will increase their knowledge of propaganda techniques aimed at influencing the opinions and/or the behavior of people in respect to ending slavery and the abolitionist movement.

Lesson Plan:

1. Introduce students to the types of propaganda
2. Review historical context and background of selected quotes on textual analysis sheet.
3. Students work in pairs or teams to analyze slogans and quotes from MHS collection for propaganda technique(s) used.
4. Student pairs or teams are each assigned one propaganda technique from the handout and challenged to create their own slogan or quote in support of abolition.
5. Class discussion on effectiveness of each technique at influencing opinions or behavior of people.

For additional images, or historical background, visit the *Online Resources* page of the Massachusetts Historical Society website. (<http://www.masshist.org/collections/online?bmode=topics>)

Propaganda Techniques

1. **Bandwagon:** This technique attempts to encourage the acceptance of an idea in order to join the crowd. It plays on peoples' desire to fit in and not be left out - peer pressure.
2. **Euphemism:** Downplaying the negative aspects of a person or idea by using words that are bland or neutral. This technique attempts to gain acceptance for something unpalatable by packaging it in a less objectionable form.
3. **Fear:** This technique plays on peoples' fear and discourages critical thinking by saying that something horrible will happen if specific actions aren't taken.
4. **Glittering Generalities:** Linking the idea to words associated with virtue (liberty, democracy, good). , The virtue words may be understood differently by different people, so this technique avoids defining the words so that people will accept the connection without probing deeper.
5. **Name Calling:** This technique connects a person or an idea with words that evoke fear or hatred in the viewer. It hopes that people will reject the person or idea based on the negative connection and not investigate further.
6. **Testimonial:** The use of well known, respected people to endorse a product or service that they are not qualified to recommend.
7. **Transfer:** The act of relating the importance, power or approval of something or someone we respect with a person or an idea. Symbols (Santa Claus, the Red Cross) are frequently used in this technique.

Directions: Analyze each quote or slogan and indicate which type of propaganda is being used (Bandwagon, Euphemism, Fear, Glittering Generalities, Name Calling, Testimonial, Transfer).

Technique Used

1. Sweet to the slave is the season of rest,
Something far sweeter he looks for tonight,
His heart lies awake in the depths of his breast,
And listens till God shall say, "Let there be light."
(*Liberty's Song*, Boston: Kidder and Wright, 1839
<http://www.masshist.org/database/1666>)

2. God Himself is with Us for Our Captain
II Chronicles XIII: 12
(Cotton banner, 1840s. <http://www.masshist.org/database/1693>)

3. "I am in earnest! I will not equivocate! I will not excuse!
I will not retreat a single inch!
And *I will be heard!*" (*The Liberator*, Volume 1, Number 1,
1 January 1831, Boston, Mass.: William Lloyd Garrison
and Isaac Knapp. <http://www.masshist.org/database/1698>)

4. "As a nation, we began by declaring that *all men are
created equal*. We now practically read it "all men are
created equal, except negroes."
(Letter from Abraham Lincoln to Joshua Fry Speed, August 24, 1855.
<http://www.masshist.org/database/456>)

5. Your Southern Brethren incurred this curse by no act
of their own, they are endeavouring by degrees, &
consistently with their safety, & even existence, to remove
it. Suffer them to do what they know to be best, & let their
Eastern, & Northern Brethren from a false principle of
Philanthropy, make the blacks miserable, discontented, &
rebellious, & force the whites to exterminate them.
(Letter from Ellen "Nellie" Custis Lewis to Harrison Gray Otis,
17 October 1831. <http://www.masshist.org/database/2459>)

6. The Numerousness of Slaves at this day in the Province,
and the Uneasiness of them under their Slavery,
hath put many upon thinking whether the Foundation
of it be firmly and well laid; so as to sustain the Vast
Weight that is built upon it. It is most certain that all Men,
as they are the Sons of *Adam*, are Coheirs; and have equal
Right unto Liberty, and all other outward Comforts of Life.
(Samuel Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph: A Memorial*. Boston:
printed by Bartholomew Green and John Allen, 1700.
<http://www.masshist.org/database/53>)

7. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and
independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is
shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought
light and healing to you, has brought stripes and death
to me. This Fourth July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice,
I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand
illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join
you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and
sacrilegious irony.
(Frederick Douglass, "The Meaning of July Forth
for the Negro." <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2927t.html>)

8. In the centre of a hollow square formed of volunteers,
about 200, all the worst blacklegs and pimps of the city,
walked the slave, a good looking fellow. Each one of
these men had a drawn sword, or knife. Several companies
of soldiers marched before and behind, and the Artillery
had a six pound cannon all loaded. This procession was
witnessed by thousands of spectators, and was every where
greeted with hisses and shouts. Many of the buildings
were draped with black, and the Common-wealth building
put out a black coffin with the word Liberty upon it.
(Letter from Mary E. Blanchard to Benjamin Seaver,
June 4, June 4, 1854, describing fugitive slave Anthony Burns's
forced departure from Boston.
<http://www.masshist.org/database/1999>)

9. YE wives, and ye mothers, your influence extend—
Ye sisters, ye daughters, the helpless defend—
These strong ties are severed for one crime alone,
Possessing a colour less fair than your own.
Ah! why must the tints of complexion be made
A plea for the wrongs which poor Afric invade?
Alike are his children in his holy sight,
Who formed and redeems both the black and the white.
(*The Negro Woman's Appeal to Her White Sisters*,
[London]: Richard Barrett, [1850].
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.06500800>)
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10. Should you, my lord, while you peruse my song,
Wonder from whence my love of *Freedom* sprung,
Whence flow the wishes for the common good,
By feeling hearts alone best understood,
I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate
Was snatch'd from *Afric's* fancy'd happy seat:
What pangs excruciating must molest,
What sorrows labor in my parents' breast?
Steel'd was that soul, and by no misery mov'd,
That from a father seiz'd his babe below'd:
Such, such my case. And can I then but pray
Others may never feel tyrannic sway?
(Phillis Wheatley, "To the Right and Honorable William,
Earl of Dartmouth..." *Poems on Various Subjects,
Religious and Moral*. London: printed for A. Bell, 1773.
<http://www.masshist.org/database/821>)
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