

Documentary Lens Lesson Plan for *Front of Steel*

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Curriculum Connections

Front of Steel is an 18-minute documentary on Canada's role in World War II steel production. The film, released in 1940, is an example of wartime propaganda. Early on, *Front of Steel* shows footage from a massive German military parade designed to show off the country's mechanized fighting power, the results of new technology and advances in the steel industry. Next, the film moves to the start of the war, highlighting the importance of guns, tanks, ships and planes. Finally, the camera turns to Canadian war industries and to the documentary's main message: the importance of Canadian industry to the war effort and the contributions made by Canadians on the home front.

Lesson Objectives

The lesson is designed for high school students. The following competencies may be developed:

Opportunities to Develop Cross-curricular Competency (Québec Curriculum Focus)

Cross-Curricular Competencies	Method or Approach	Application
1. Methodological	Using information and communications technologies	Use of a wartime propaganda poster Use of a wartime propaganda documentary
2. Personal and social	Realizing one's potential	Understanding the material needs of the war Understanding the impact of media in civic life
	Cooperating with others	Working in groups Holding intelligent discussions, sharing ideas, accepting criticism as well as the ideas of others
3. Communication	Communicating appropriately	Making oneself clearly understood in a group discussion Clearly expressing opinions verbally and in writing
4. Intellectual	Using information	Understanding the social realities of the day by analyzing information Decoding and understanding information
	Exercising critical judgment	Being able to place oneself in a historical context and to draw conclusions relevant to today

Subject-specific competency	Method or approach
1. Examining social phenomena from a historical perspective	Students must interpret information in a historical context and try to understand the implications for contemporary society.
2. Developing civic consciousness through the study of history	By developing critical judgment, students will come to understand the importance of past civic activity and its impact on the present.

Assessment Strategies

- Did the student actively participate in the discussion or brainstorming session?
- Did he or she listen attentively to others?
- Did he or she contribute interesting ideas relevant to the topic?

Materials and Resources

- Canadian War Poster Collection from McGill University's Digital Collections Program
<http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/warposters/english/artistindex.php>

Activities for *Front of Steel*

Introduction

ACTIVITY 1: Prior Knowledge

To assess students' knowledge of the role of Canadians on the home front during World War II, ask:

- How would you define "the war effort"?
- How were Canadians encouraged to support the war effort?

Some of these questions will be explored more deeply later in the lesson. You may want to focus discussion on industry and industrial production, propaganda and citizen involvement.

ACTIVITY 2: Analyzing a Propaganda Poster

To help students understand how important Canadian industry was to the war effort, have students analyze some World War II propaganda posters. Many can be found at McGill University's digital collections program entitled "Canadian War Poster Collection" at <http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/warposters/english/artistindex.php>. These questions can help guide the discussion:

- What is the goal of the poster?
- What is the message?
- How does the artist get the message across?
- What are the most important elements in transmitting the message?
- What impact might this poster have had on Canadians at the time? Why?
- What impact does it have on you? How would today's Canadian public react to this poster?
- Why do reactions vary from one era to another?

Developing Concepts

ACTIVITY 3: Developing Comprehension

Briefly introduce *Front of Steel* to students. Then give everyone a copy of the worksheet appended to this lesson. It is used first as a listening guide and later as a discussion guide. While students watch the film, they should be writing notes in the Answers column.

Applying Concepts

ACTIVITY 4: Discussion and Debate

This activity is designed to help students share information and arrive at conclusions in a group. Go around the classroom to make sure the discussions stay on track.

Divide your class into four groups to discuss the ten questions on the worksheet. They should share their post-viewing impressions and responses. Students will need to use consensus to come up with answers they can all agree on.

Have each group name one representative who, after a certain period of time, will move to another group. The members of the groups share their ideas with the representative who has joined the group. Representatives can be rotated through more than one group, depending on time and the quality of the discussions.

The representatives return to their own groups for one final discussion that incorporates whatever ideas have been shared. Then each group completes its chart and hands it in. You may need to provide extra copies of the worksheet.

Worksheet for *Front of Steel* Viewing/Listening Chart for Students

Student's Name: _____ Group: _____

Title of Documentary: _____ Year Produced: _____

Questions	Answers	Discussion
1. What is the documentary's main message?		
2. What do you think was the filmmaker's goal?		
3. Who is the message for?		
4. What impact might it have had on Canadians at the time?		
5. What is your reaction to the film?		
6. What feelings is the film supposed to encourage?		
7. How does the filmmaker try to evoke that feeling?		
8. What do you think about the sounds and music in the documentary?		
9. What is most striking about the images?		
10. What do you notice about the style of writing and the narrator's tone of voice?		