OVERVIEW
The Works Projects Administration (WPA) produced over 2,000 posters in the United States between 1936 and 1943. These posters were created to advertise public resources such as libraries, community events, exhibits, and educational programs. The WPA was one of the first U.S. Government programs to support the arts. Using the WPA Poster Collection through the Library of Congress, students will have the opportunity to learn more about these works and create their own posters that address contemporary public issues.

GRADE LEVELS & SUBJECTS
Visual Arts: 6th through 8th grade

MATERIALS
- Printed copies of the fourteen primary sources in this lesson activity (images on each page)
- Computer paper or poster board
- Colored pencils, markers or crayons
- Rulers or straight edges

INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION
- Why are posters effective tools in getting a message across to the public? Are posters as common as they were in the 1940s? Why or why not?

TENNESSEE CURRICULUM STANDARDS
6th—8th grade Visual Arts
- 6.VA.R1.A Analyze how images and cultural associations influence ideas, emotions, and actions.
- 7.VA.R1.A Analyze multiple ways that images influence specific audiences.
- 8.VA.R1.A Compare and contrast contexts and media in which viewers encounter images that influence ideas, emotions, and actions.
- 6.VA.R1.B Identify and interpret works of art that reveal a variety of world cultures and values.
- 7.VA.R1.B Explain how presentation methods and environments influence how art is perceived and valued.
- 8.VA.R1.B Explain how aesthetic choices are influenced by visual and material cultures and can impact perceived meaning of artworks.
**Activity**

1. For each primary source, click on the image to view a larger, higher resolution version of the poster. Download and print out these images, enough sets for each small group to use a copy of each.

2. Provide students with information about the Works Projects Administration and the **WPA Poster Collection** by referencing the overview on **Page 1**.

3. Distribute the printed posters. Using the **primary source analysis teacher’s guide**, instruct students to analyze them individually or in small groups. Remind the students of when the posters were produced. What was the artist’s intention for each poster? What message was he or she trying to convey? Notice that many of these posters fall under themes such as education, travel, health, conservation, and patriotism.

4. Ask students if these themes are still relevant today. As a class, identify four new themes that would be appropriate for today in the United States, such as digital technology, fighting disease, and bullying.

5. Instruct students to create their own poster based on one of the four themes. Explain that the goal of the poster is to convey a clear message about the theme. Remind students that the original posters were displayed publicly, and their posters should be designed with that intention. Provide students with access to computer paper, poster board, markers, colored pencils, and crayons to complete their posters.

6. Instruct students to write a short description of their poster. This should include the theme they chose and the message they conveyed. Is this message clear? Who would benefit from viewing this poster?

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**Extension**

- Provide students with access to the **WPA Poster Collection** on the Library of Congress Web site if they have access to computers. Prompt students to write a short description of their favorite poster on the website and why they think the message conveyed is particularly strong.
Selected Images from the Library of Congress

Visit the aquarium in Fairmount Park [1936-1937]

See America [1936-1939]

Jobs for girls & women. [1936-1941]

WPA women painters, Federal Art Gallery, 50 Beacon St., Boston [1936-1938]

July 4—Independence Day [1936-1939]

Who's who in the zoo Illustrated natural history prepared by the WPA Federal Writers Project [1936-1937]

Let them grow [1938]

For greater knowledge on more subjects use your library more often [1936-1941]

Exhibition—Art by children [1936-1940]