



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2014 Volume I: Understanding History and Society through Images, 1776-1914

---

## **Reading Art in Language Arts: Characterizing Human Atrocities from the Slave Trade to the Second World War**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 14.01.12, published September 2014

by Alveda M. Zahn

In this unit, students will explore the implied and subtle inhumanities of humans by analyzing paintings, photos, caricatures, and propaganda to learn how others were treated in other eras. They will see babies taken from mothers, families ripped apart by slavery, slaves disguised as soldiers, and soldiers who thought they were doing right by their country only to be exploited during American atrocities of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries—The American Revolution to World War II. They will also discover and evaluate the life these atrocities left behind.

With a focus on reading skills, students will analyze paintings and photographs to understand the main idea of a piece. Their analyses will include the collection of evidence based on what they see in a painting or photograph to support their understanding of the main idea. They will create narratives of their perception of the gist of the piece. Moving through the unit, students will turn their focus to art that persuades—propaganda. They will study the effects this type of art has on the targeted populations. This will lead them to the culminating project to create their own propaganda in an attempt to end the violence that plagues their own neighborhood.

(Developed for Reading in Language Arts, grade 9; recommended for Reading, grades 7-12, and English, grades 9-12)

---

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit [https://teachers.yale.edu/terms\\_of\\_use](https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use)