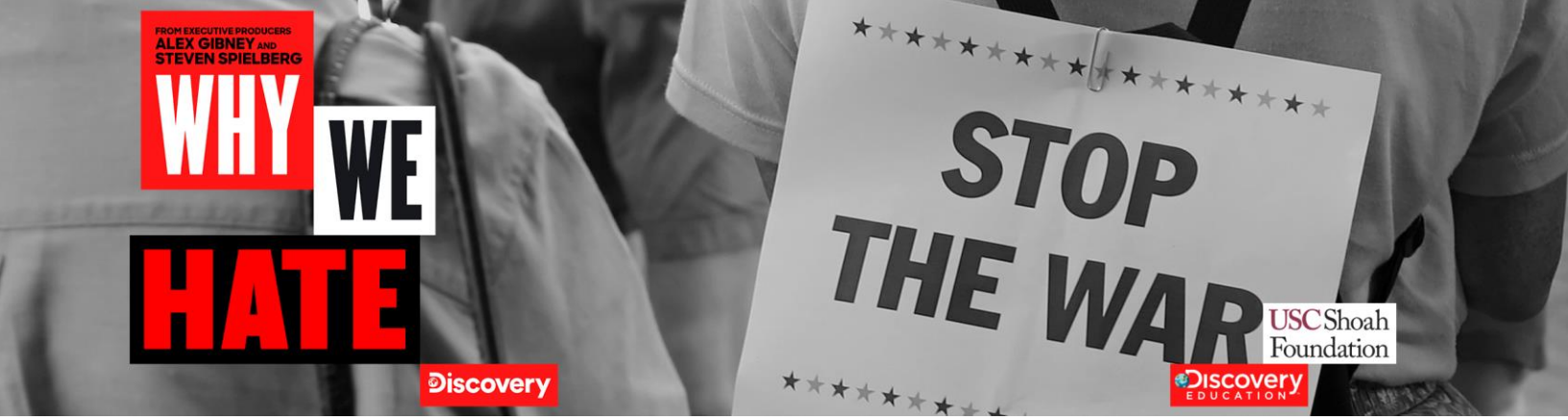


WHY WE HATE:
The Biology of Hate Activity

Overview

In this activity students investigate the biological origins of aggression and hate and consider whether human beings can learn not to hate. They begin by learning about studies in infant cognition to understand how human nature contributes to moral judgements and negative feelings toward others. They then analyze the role that propaganda plays in fueling feelings of aggression and hatred. Next, students examine the brains' capacity to change by exploring the story of an individual who learned not to hate. Finally, students engage in a media literacy activity to think critically about how media messages impact our perceptions and emotions. As an extension, students can investigate the role that propaganda played in fueling the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

Key Learning Objectives

Students will:

- examine the biological origins of aggression and hate.
- investigate the role that propaganda plays in fueling hate.
- consider how the human brain can change.
- analyze media messages using a media literacy framework and critical thinking.

Target Audience

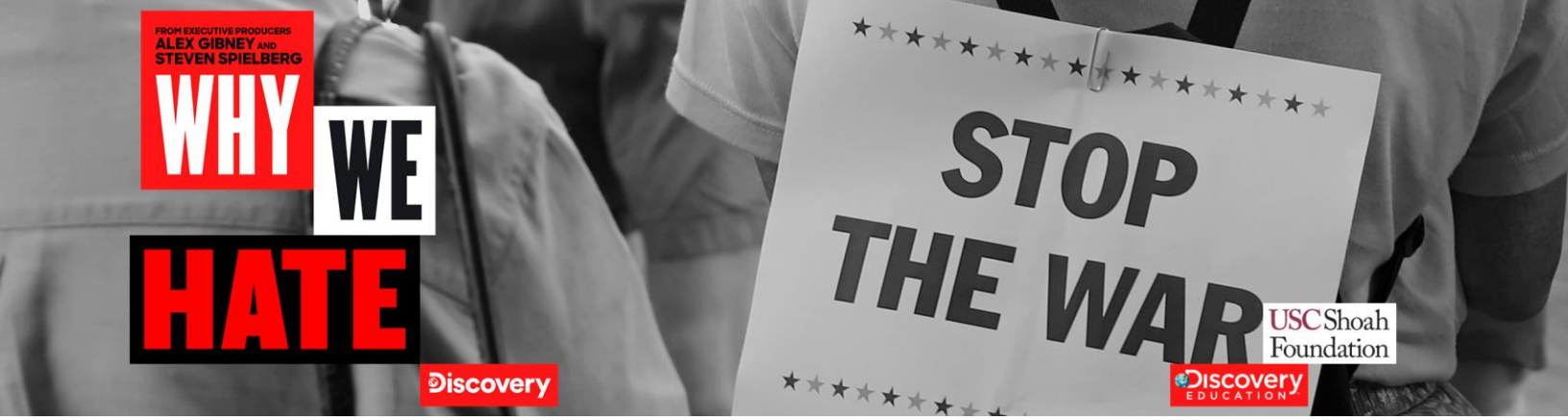
6-8 Social Studies; 9-12 Biology, History, Psychology, Sociology

Activity Duration

Two 45-minute class periods

Materials

- "WHY WE HATE Selects: Biology of Hate" video clip from Discovery Education Experience
- Chart paper and markers
- *Propaganda of Hate* handout (one per student)
- *Changing the Narrative* handout (one per student)
- USC Shoah Foundation's Teaching with Testimony Videos



Enduring Understandings

- Hate is often fueled by a sense of personal threat and the dehumanization of others.
- Propaganda that dehumanizes the "other" has negative psychological and societal impacts.
- Human brains are fundamentally changeable, which means that we can learn not to hate.

Essential Questions

- How does human biology contribute to feelings of aggression and hate?
- How does propaganda fuel feelings of hate?
- Can human beings learn not to hate?

Background Information/Links

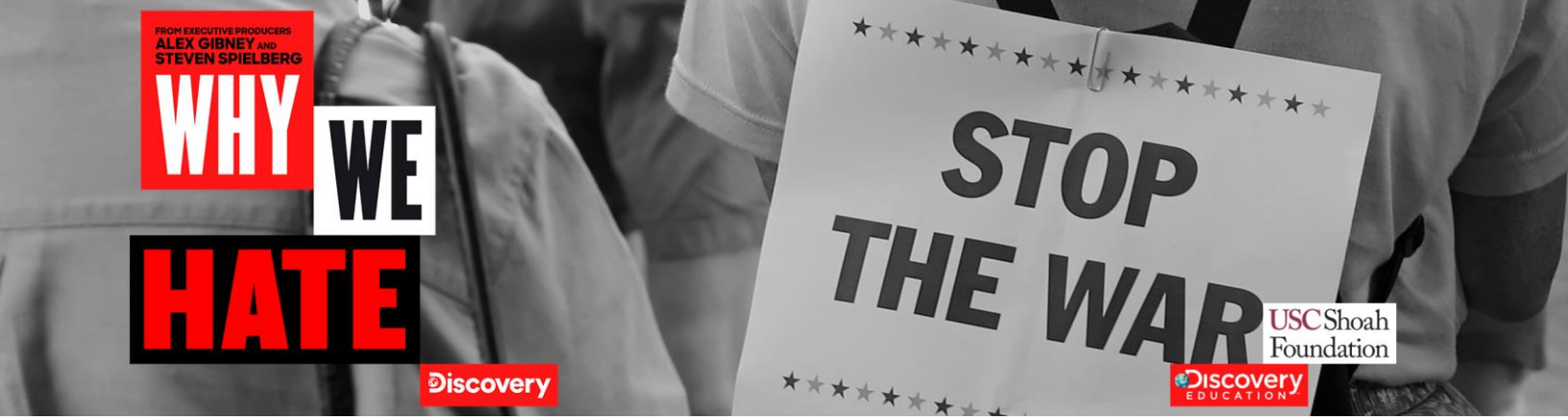
Infant Cognition and Morality

A growing body of evidence suggests that human beings have a fundamental sense of morality – good and bad, right and wrong – at birth. This contradicts long-held beliefs that our morality is the result of nurture rather than nature. Since 1990, researchers at the Infant Cognition Lab at Yale University have been exploring how babies reason and learn about their physical and social worlds. Through a series of studies, they have found that, given a choice, infants prefer helpful characters to ones that are neutral or hindering. They have also found that babies have an appreciation of good and bad behaviors. Their research doesn't suggest that nurture plays no role in shaping morality. Instead, they and many of their colleagues in psychology have come to believe that human morality results from a combination of nature and nurture.

The Brain's Capacity for Change

Scientists once believed that the human brain was a static organ, but advances in neuroscience have radically reshaped our understanding. Scientists now understand that our brains are constantly changing as a result of neuroplasticity: "changes in neural pathways and synapses due to changes in behavior, environment, neural processes, thinking, and emotions – as well as to changes resulting from bodily injury." This new understanding has profound implications for how we learn and how we relate to each other.

André Fenton, a neurobiologist at New York University, studies how our brains store experiences as memories. He explains that our brains are conditioned by experience. Because our experiences are constrained by the circumstances of our birth, we grow up with specific points of view. Yet, our brains –



and, therefore, our viewpoints – can change. Our experiences change who we are and determine our future experiences. In *Why We Hate*, he states, "The human brain is a fundamentally changeable system."

Emile Bruneau, another neuroscientist featured in *Why We Hate,* is also interested in our brains' ability to change. In particular, he is interested in understanding how neuroplasticity can be harnessed to decrease intergroup conflict and foster peace.

Media Literacy: Key Concepts & Questions

The term "media" refers to the communication channels through which news, entertainment, education, and promotional messages are disseminated. Media comprises of publishing (newspapers, magazines, billboards, and direct mail), broadcasting (radio, television, podcasts, and vodcasts), and the Internet.

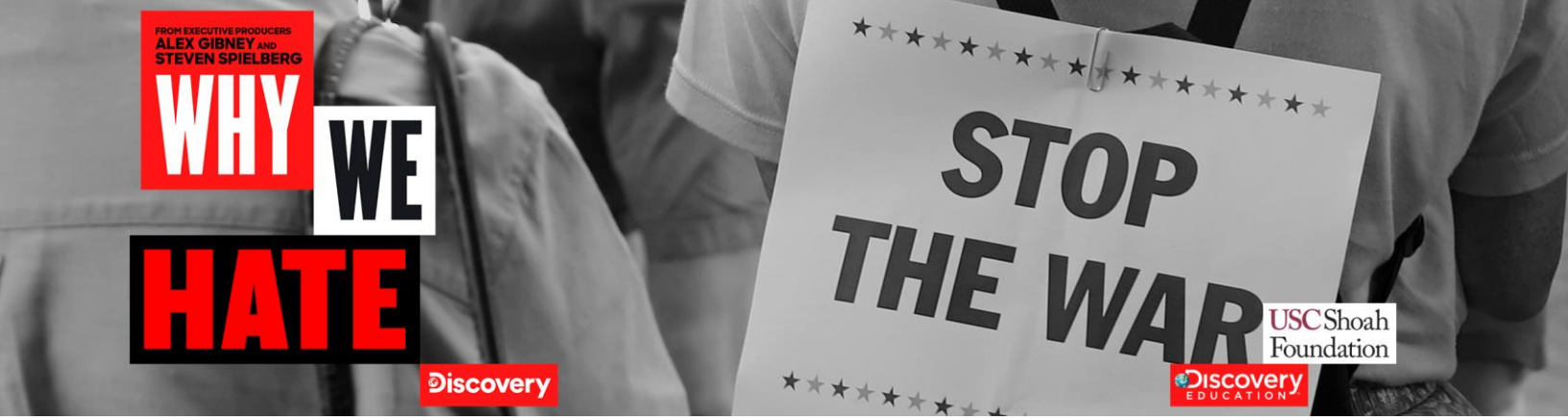
The Center for Media Literacy (CML) is an educational organization that promotes media literacy education by providing leadership, public education, professional development, and evidence-based educational resources. CML has been active nationally and internationally for over 30 years. Its mission is to help citizens, particularly young people, critically evaluate media messages and produce media responsibly.

CML promotes the understanding of 5 Key Concepts in media literacy:

- All media messages are constructed.
- Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
- Different people experience the same media message differently.
- Media have embedded values and points of view.
- Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

CML recommends that individuals ask the following 5 questions, which correspond to the key concepts, when analyzing media messages:

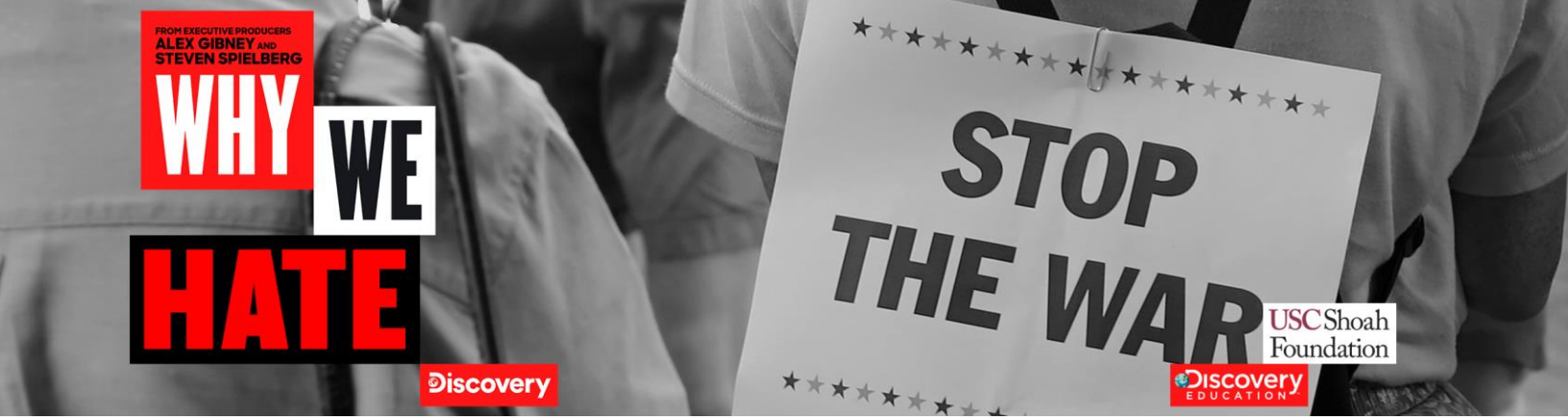
1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?



The first concept and question focus on authorship to help citizens understand that all media is created by individuals who have specific points of view and intentions and who make choices in how to convey the message. The second concept and question focus on the format of media messages and how specific techniques are used to impact the viewer's perceptions and understanding. The third concept and question are designed to help consumers of media messages understand that our differences can lead us to interpret media messages differently just as our similarities can help us develop common interpretations and understandings. The fourth concept and question focus on the values and points of view that are embedded in – and omitted from – media messages. Finally, the fifth concept and question focus on the purpose or motive behind the media message. By considering these concepts and asking these questions, students begin to think more critically about the media they consume and create in order to become informed consumers of information and more active, responsible citizens.

The 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda

Prior to German and Belgian colonialization in the late 1800s, Rwandans shared a culture, language, and monarch. Intermarriage between three groups – Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa – was common. Members of one group could gain or lose wealth and power, and change from one group to another. Colonizers did not understand or respect this dynamic. They favored Tutsis over Hutu and Twa, and created rigid ethnic categories. From that time on, ethnicity was passed from father to child. Decolonialization in the 1950s led to violence against the Tutsi. When Rwanda became an independent republic in 1962, the Hutu established a dictatorship. Ethnic division and violence forced some Tutsi into exile. In October 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a militant group founded by Tutsi refugees, invaded Rwanda. The RPF demanded a safe return to Rwanda and expected a role in the country's government. Rwandan president Juvénal Habyarimana was forced to negotiate a peace agreement with the RPF. Hutu extremists feared they would lose power, and formed militias, called Interahamwe. These militias believed in Hutu supremacy and promoted violence against Tutsis. On the evening of April 6, 1994, a private jet carrying President Habyarimana was shot out of the sky, killing everyone on board. Immediately, extremists within the government and the media blamed the RPF for the attack. Militias set up roadblocks around the capital city of Kigali. Their perceived enemies – Tutsi leaders and Hutu who did not believe in ethnic-based nationalism – were targeted for killing. By the morning of April 7, the genocide had begun. Violence quickly spread throughout the country. The RPF believed the violence violated the ceasefire, and they renewed their campaign against Rwandan government forces.



The Interahamwe – promising land and wealth – recruited able-bodied Hutu (both male and female) to participate in the genocide. Radio and newspapers used propaganda to incite attacks on Tutsi. Tutsi were hunted, tortured, and murdered. Neighbors, friends, and family members turned on one another. Much of the killing was perpetrated with machetes and other farm tools. Tutsi sought refuge in churches, schools, and stadiums. During prior instances of mass violence, churches offered sanctuary, yet, during the genocide, militias attacked them. Schools, stadiums, and churches are now the site of mass graves. Over the course of approximately 100 days, Hutu extremists murdered at least 900,000 Tutsi and Hutu moderates. The genocide in Rwanda is the fastest genocide in modern history.

Despite the presence of United Nations peacekeeping forces in Kigali before and during the genocide, there was no international intervention. The genocide ended in July 1994, when the RPF took control of the country. By that time, more than 900,000 people had been murdered. Several million Rwandans, mostly Hutu, fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In refugee camps along the border, Hutu extremists continued to attack Tutsi. Perpetrators who remained in Rwanda were arrested and jailed in makeshift prisons. In 1994, the United Nations established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. High-level perpetrators were put on trial. Later, a hybrid judicial system, the Gacaca Courts, were established. Over one million suspected perpetrators were tried by the Gacaca. Despite these efforts, many perpetrators have never been put on trial.

Sources:

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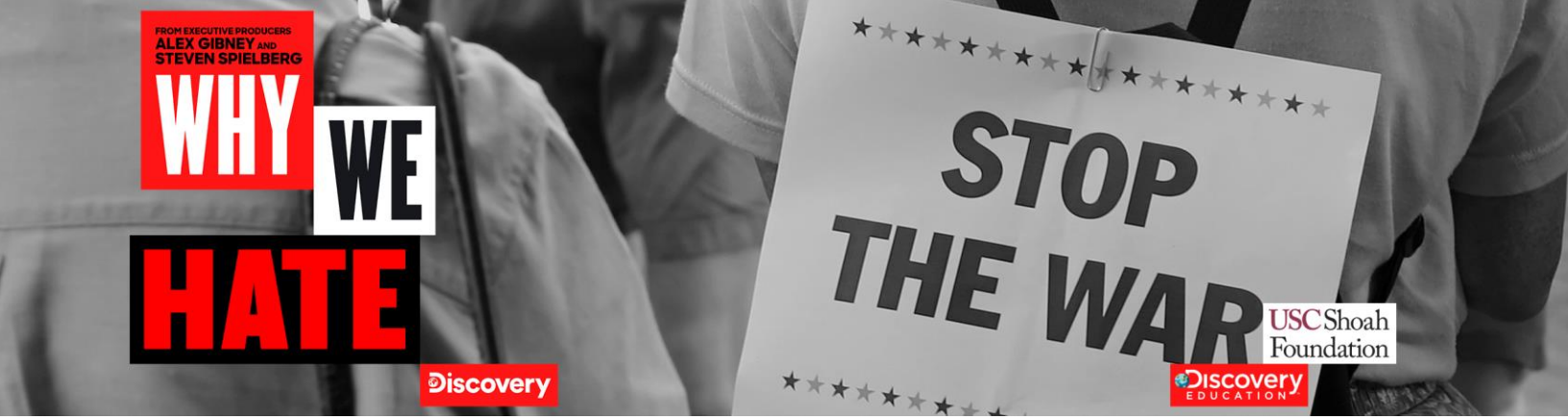


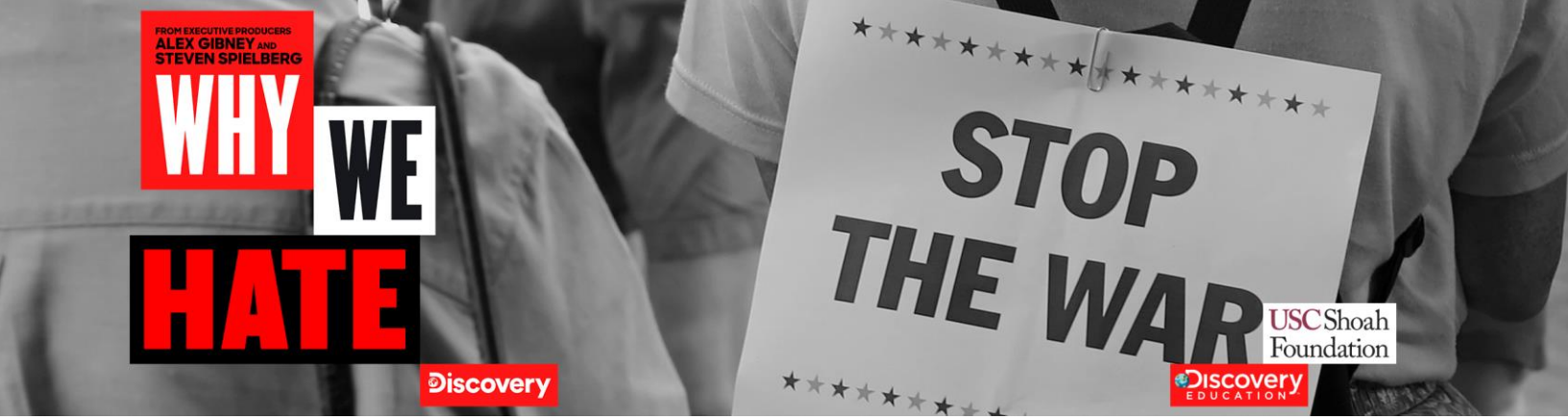
Procedure

Ask

- Write the following prompt on the board or on a piece of flip chart paper: "Is it possible to change how your brain is wired? If so, how? If not, why not? Provide evidence to support your response."
- At the start of class, draw students' attention to the prompt and ask them to silently write down their responses for a couple of minutes.
- When students have finished writing, ask them to pair up with their neighbors to share responses.
- Call on volunteers to share key takeaways with the class from their discussions.
- Introduce the term "neuroplasticity" and its definition "the ability of the brain to form and reorganize synaptic connections, especially in response to learning or experience or following injury."
- Explain that students are going to examine evidence from neuroscience, psychology, history, and individuals' personal experiences to explore how we can change our brains and, specifically, how we learn to hate and whether we can learn not to hate.

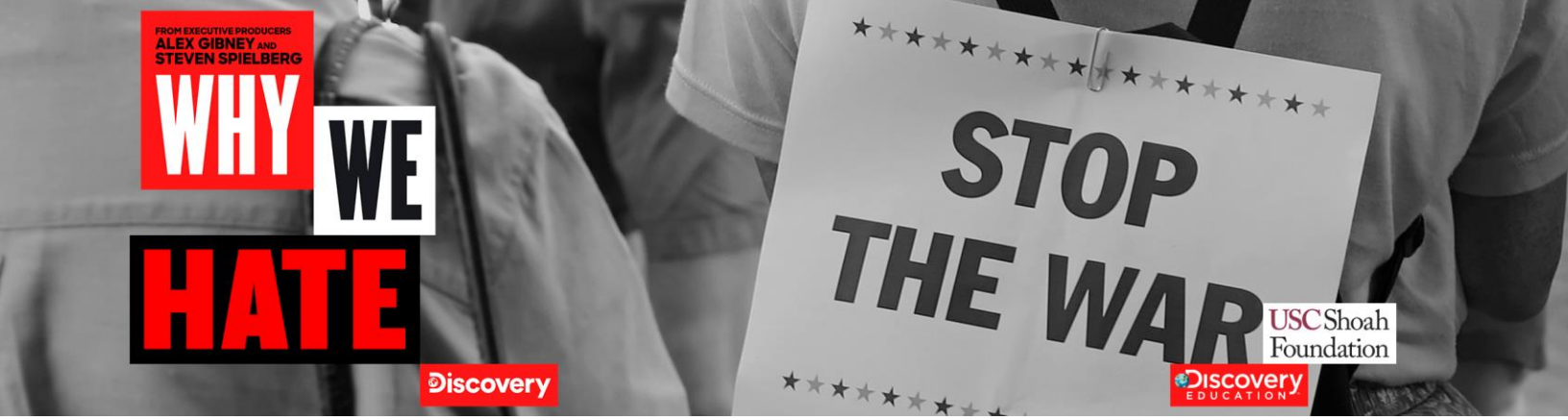
Analyze

- Introduce Part 1 of the video clip by explaining that it explores the origins of human beings' sense of good and bad and right and wrong. Promote active viewing by asking students to consider where this sense comes from and what its effect is.
- After students have finished watching the video, lead a brief discussion summarizing the key takeaways from the video. (Research suggests that our sense of right and wrong develops very early and may be innate, or part of our biology. This sense of right and wrong leads us to see the behaviors of others as good or bad. If humans perceive bad behavior or unfairness, it can lead to aggression.)
- Explain that when people believe we have been treated poorly or unfairly by others, they can feel persecuted or threatened and it can release the darker side of our nature, leading to hate and violence.
- Invite student volunteers to offer examples of this dynamic from history or their own experiences.



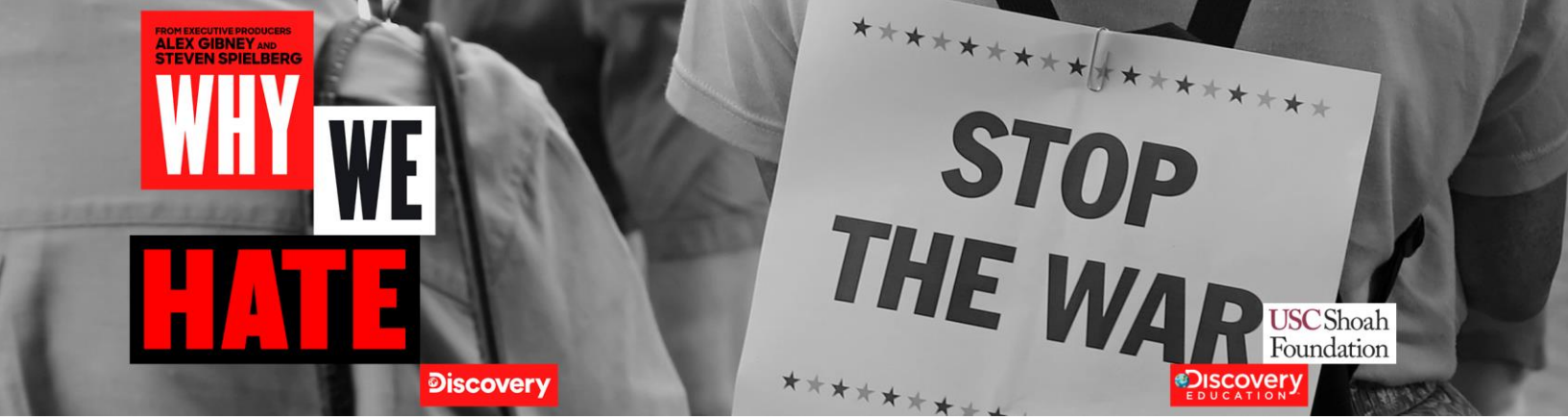
Apply

- Ask students if they know what the term "propaganda" means. Work with students to establish a definition ("Propaganda is the spread of information to influence public opinion. Propaganda may be true, false, or some combination of the two. The goal of spreading propaganda is to gain support, usually for a political view or cause.") Examples of propaganda can be found here.
- Ensure that students have an understanding of the term and then ask them to discuss with an elbow partner what they think the term "dehumanizing propaganda" might mean. You may need to explain that "dehumanization" is "the act of making someone feel less than human and the cruelty and suffering that accompanies that." Invite volunteers to share answers. Explain that dehumanizing propaganda has both psychological and biological effects. Normally when we sympathize with or think about other people, we use a part of our brain called the medial prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for our social cognition. But researchers discovered that when people were thinking about groups that were dehumanized, there was less activity in that region of the brain.
- Distribute the *Propaganda of Hate* handout and review the directions. Assign students to small groups and allow time for student groups to complete the activity.
- Invite one or more volunteers from each group to share the group's key takeaways.
- Explain that while dehumanizing propaganda and other experiences and information can negatively impact how our brains function, some experiences can positively change the way our brains are wired.
- As an example of the latter, distribute the *Changing the Narrative* handout and introduce Part 2 of the video clip by explaining that students will learn about an individual who changed her way of thinking and her personal narrative. Promote active viewing by asking students to write down factors that led Megan Phelps-Roper to hate and factors that led her to stop hating. Encourage student groups to compare answers from the handout and to discuss the lessons they learned from Megan Phelps-Roper's experiences. (Phelps-Roper's hatred was fueled by her family ties, church teachings, her sense of a divine mandate, a desire to belong, and criticism from outsiders, which reinforced the negative view she had of outsiders. She stopped hating when someone showed her compassion and invited her to participate in a dialogue on Twitter; she educated herself and discovered that many of the things she had previously believed weren't based in fact.)



Act

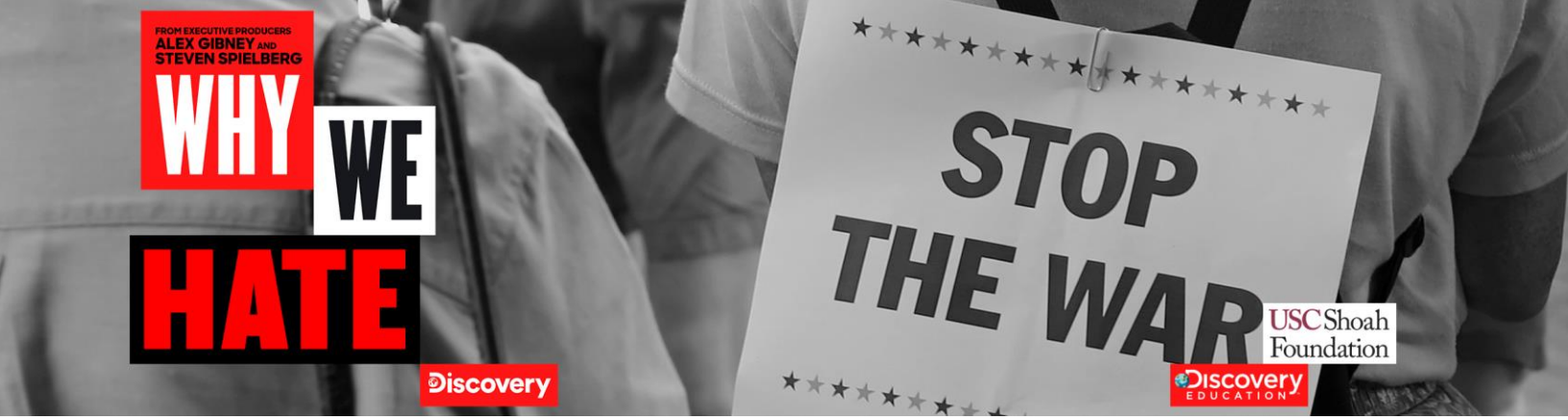
- Emphasize that Megan Phelps-Roper changed her mind and her narrative after critically evaluating the information she consumed and by an experience of what is described in the video as compassionate engagement. Students are now going to have a chance to practice critical literacy skills as they evaluate articles on a topic of their choosing.
- Ask, "How can one recognize the difference between sources that are factual and propaganda? What steps can people take to gather information that confronts or counters stereotypes?" (Answers will vary, but the discussion should focus on ensuring that information comes from reliable, credible sources.)
- Introduce the 5 Core Concepts of Media Literacy from the Center for Media Literacy (see background information):
    - All media messages are constructed.
    - Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
    - Different people experience the same media message differently.
    - Media have embedded values and points of view.
    - Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.
- Discuss the concepts as a class to ensure that students understand them. (Use additional information from the Background Information/Links section, as needed.)
- Introduce the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy:
    1. Who created this message?
    2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
    3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
    4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
    5. Why is this message being sent?
- Explain that students will now work in their small groups to analyze articles on the same topic from different sources. Note: You may want to encourage students to choose articles from newspapers with different political leanings (e.g., the Washington Post and the Washington Times) or to choose different types of articles (e.g., a news report or feature article and an editorial or opinion piece). You may also want to review and approve students' topic and article choices to ensure their appropriateness.



- Provide time for students to choose a topic and read and analyze 2-3 articles about the topic using the 5 Key Questions.
- After students have finished their analysis, invite a volunteer from each group to share its key takeaways with the class, including what they learned about the topic and how the articles were similar and different.
- Remind students of André Fenton's final statement from the video: "The cool thing about the human brain is that fundamentally it's a changeable system. It usually isn't easy, but at the same time, when the circumstances are right, the changes are radical. They don't have to be incremental. In fact, they often are not."

Extend

- Explain that students will deepen their understanding of the role of propaganda by studying the role it played during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.
- Provide a basic overview of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, including its causes and effects. (See Background Information section.)
- Direct students to watch two clips from USC Shoah Foundation's Teaching with Testimony collection to learn how the conflict impacted victims of the genocide:
    - USC Shoah Foundation: Teaching with Testimony – Kizito Kalima
    - USC Shoah Foundation: Teaching with Testimony – Freddy Mutanguha
- Organize students into small groups and assign each group one clip from USC Shoah Foundation's Teaching with Testimony collection about the role anti-Tutsi propaganda played in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda:
    - Alphonse Kabalisa - Tutsi Survivor
    - Kizito Kalima - Tutsi Survivor
    - Yves Kamuronsi - Tutsi Survivor
    - Emmanuel Muhinda - Tutsi Survivor
    - Silas Ntamfurayishyari - Rescuer (1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda)
- Invite a volunteer from each group to summarize its video clip for the larger class.
- Facilitate a whole class discussion about the destructive role propaganda played in Rwanda and its impact in other conflicts, including current ones.
- Encourage students to consider and discuss connections between the behaviors seen in the testimonies and their own experiences of hate, including bullying.



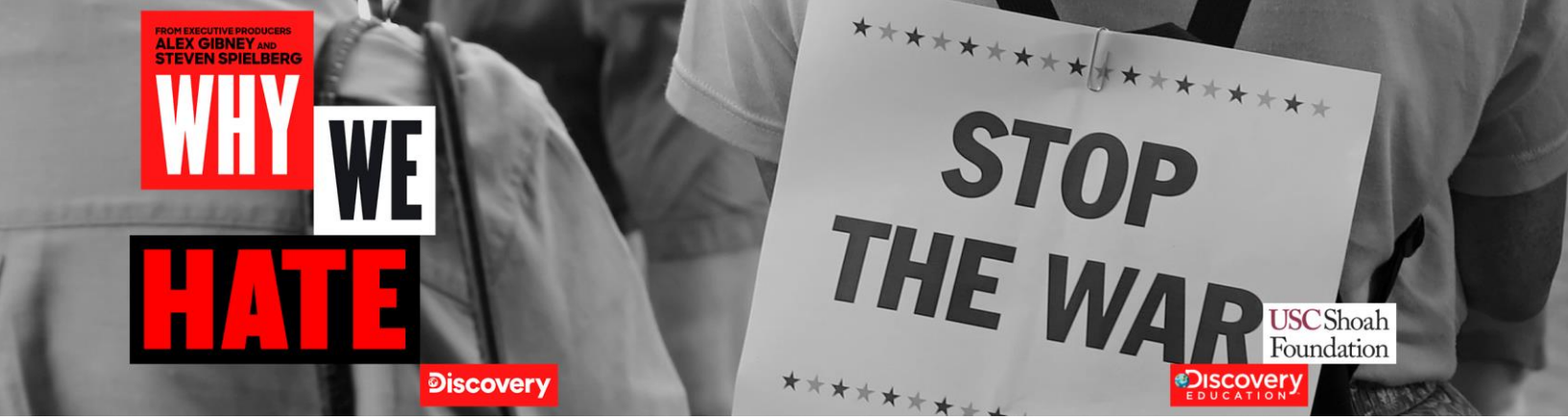
Connections

Connection to student lives	Connection to contemporary events	Connection to the future
Students who are able to recognize how biology and propaganda contribute to hate are better able to respond appropriately. In their personal lives, students can critically evaluate media messages and take positive action when they or others are experiencing feelings of hate.	Students can connect their learning to contemporary events by hearing the story of a person who learned not to hate and analyzing how media messages fuel hate.	As students see examples of hate in their own lives and in society at large, they can recognize the causes and effects of hate and help to draw attention to our capacity to learn not to hate through their discussions or actions.

National Standards

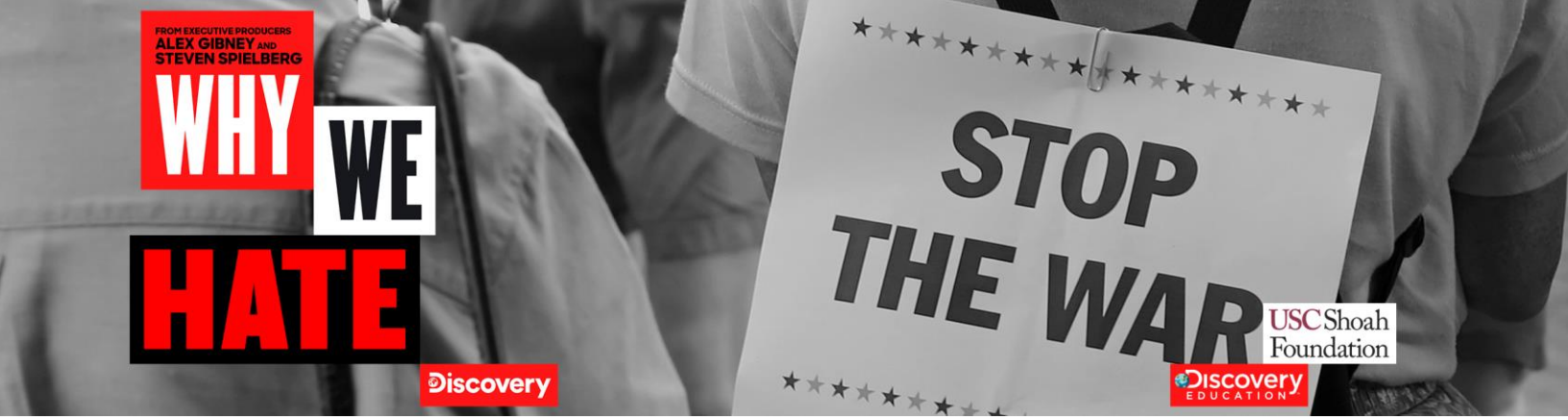
College, Career & Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards

- D2.Civ.7.9-12 Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with other.
- D2.Civ.10.9-12 Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interest and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.
- D2.Civ.14.9-12 Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.
- D2.His.1.9-12 Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
- D4.6.9-12 Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems, instances of such problems in multiple contexts, and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.
- D4.7.9-12 Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy, identification, and complex causal reasoning.



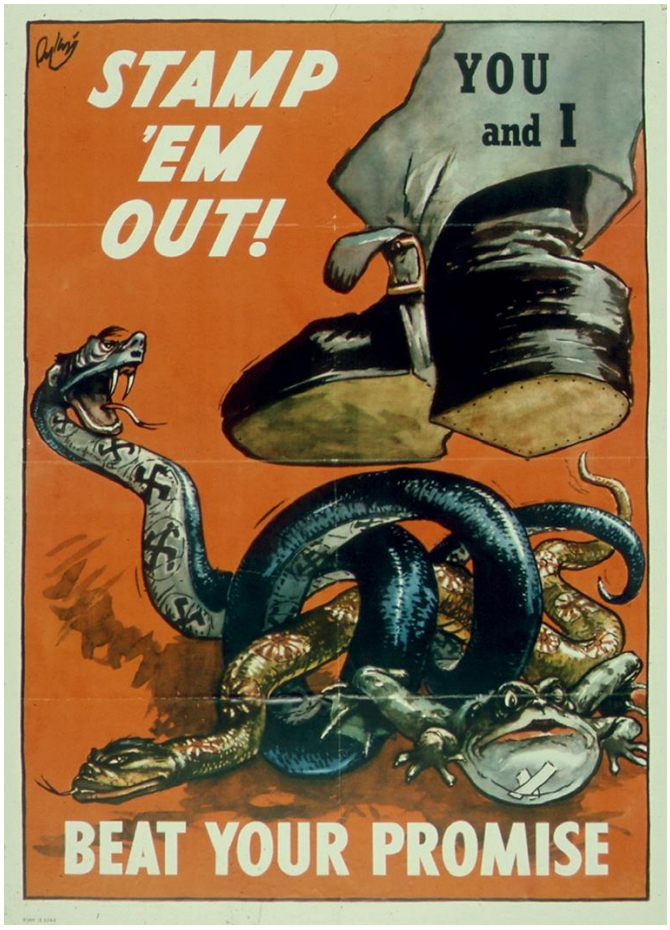
Common Core State Standards/ELA Anchor Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.



Propaganda of Hate

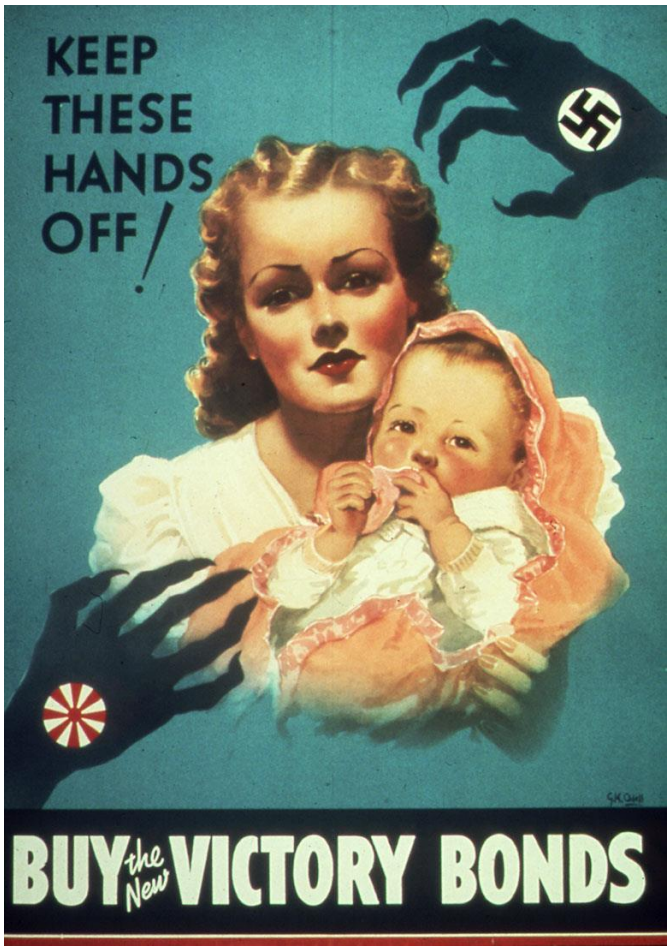
Directions: Analyze the political posters below and answer the questions that follow.



This poster was produced by RCA Manufacturing Company, Inc. for the U.S. government during World War II. *Source:* Records of the Office of Government Reports
https://catalog.archives.gov/id/515473

What message does this poster convey?

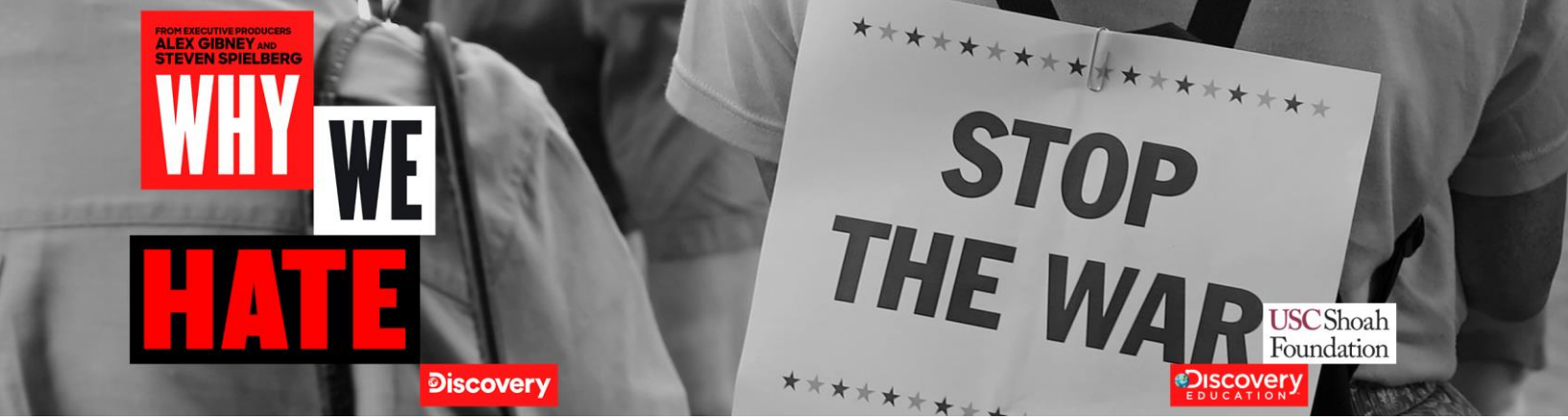
How does it dehumanize a specific group or groups?



This poster was designed by G.K. Odell for the Canadian government and became a model for U.S. posters during World War II. *Source*: Records of the Office of Government Reports
https://catalog.archives.gov/id/513550

What message does this poster convey?

How does it dehumanize a specific group or groups?



Changing the Narrative

"Once you get interested in how you change rather than afraid, then I think everything opens up."

EMILE BRUNEAU
Neuroscientist

Directions: As you watch the video, take notes below in response to the prompts.

1. What caused Megan Phelps-Roper to hate people from student groups?

2. What led Megan Phelps-Roper to stop hating?

3. What lessons can others learn from Megan Phelps-Roper's story?

4. According to André Fenton, how do our brains affect our point of view? What causes our brains to change?