CURRICULUM GUIDE

The Effect of World War I on German Americans

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for the Indiana Historical Society Indiana Experience

You Are There 1914
The Violin Maker Upstairs

INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Cover Image: "Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Conrath in the Violin Shop " (Indiana Historicl Society, Digital Image Collections, Item ID: P0404_FOLDER1_MR_AND_MRS_CONRATH)

Introduction

This lesson coordinates with the You Are There 1914: *The Violin Maker Upstairs* component of the *Indiana Experience* at the Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center in Indianapolis. In this experience, visitors are invited to step back in time to 1914 to visit the re-created workshop of stringed instrument maker Joseph Conrath. In his shop, located at 39 Virginia Avenue in Indianapolis, Conrath repaired and crafted stringed instruments, such as violins, violas, guitars, mandolins, banjoes, and cellos. As a luthier, or stringed instrument maker, Conrath served the many musicians who participated in Indianapolis's vibrant cultural scene of the early 1900s. New instruments and instrument repair were in demand due to the number of orchestras and musical societies that called Indianapolis home at the time. Though Conrath could not play any of the instruments he made, his skills as a carpenter and singer helped him produce instruments that looked and sounded beautiful.

Conrath was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, to immigrant parents. His mother was German and his father came from Alsace-Lorraine, a region that had passed between Germany and France for many years. In 1914 Alsace-Lorraine was once again a battleground between French and German soldiers. The Conrath family moved to Indianapolis around 1887 and on June 11, 1896, Conrath married Amelia Bush, whose family was also German. Being a part of the city's large German American population, the Conraths might have participated in German cultural societies, such as the Turnverein (a gymnastics and cultural society) or the Mannerchor (a music society). They may have read German-language newspapers or attended one of the city's German churches.

As Hoosiers with close ties to Germany, the Conraths and other German Americans kept tabs on the events in Europe. World War I erupted in Europe after the June 28, 1914, assassination by a Serbian nationalist of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Germany, an ally of Austria-Hungary, declared war on Serbia and its allies. President Woodrow Wilson kept America out of the war until April 1917, when the United States joined the Allied powers of Serbia, Russia, France, and Great Britain in declaring war on the Central powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Leading up to and after America's entry into the war, there was growing anti-German sentiment in the United States.

This curriculum is intended to provide historical context for German American life and culture in Indianapolis in the 1910s. The materials may be used to prepare students for a visit to You Are There 1914: *The Violin Maker Upstairs* or as a follow-up lesson. The historical context and themes are relevant to classroom instruction even if a History Center visit is not possible. The You Are There 1914: *The Violin Maker Upstairs* experience will remain open through September 3, 2011.

Overview/Description

In this lesson students will analyze World War I-era propaganda posters and consider how German Americans would have reacted to them during that time. Students will also reflect on cultural bias and its effect on ethnic groups in the United States.

Grade Level

High School

Academic Standards for the Social Studies

- Indiana Standards (as of March 2010)
    - High School, U.S. History, Standard 3, Emergence of the Modern United States: 1897 to 1920, USH 3.2.1—Identify the events and people central to the transformation of the United States into a world power, and Standard 9, Historical Thinking, USH.9.2—Locate and analyze primary sources and secondary sources related to an event or issue of the past.
    - High School, Sociology, Standard 4, Social Groups, S 4.10—Distinguish the degree of assimilation that ethnic, cultural, and social groups achieve within the United States.

- National Standards
  National Council for the Social Studies, *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Washington D.C.: National Coucil for the Social Studies, 1994)
    - I Culture
      - Predict how data and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.
    - VI Power, Authority, and Governance
      - Analyze and explain ideas and mechanisms to meet needs and wants of citizens, regulate territory, manage conflict, establish order and security, and balance competing conceptions of a just society.
      - Evaluate the role of technology in communications, transportation, information processing, weapons development, or other areas as it contributes to or helps resolve conflicts.
      - Evaluate the extent to which governments achieve their stated ideals and policies at home and abroad.

Social Studies/Historical Concepts

World War I and propaganda

Learning/Instructional Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze and interpret World War I propaganda posters.
- Identify the effects that propaganda materials had on people of difference ethnic backgrounds, especially German Americans, during World War I.

Time Required

Two class periods of fifty minutes each.

Materials Required

- Paper
- Pencil, pens, and markers
- Newsprint or posterboard
- World War I posters from the Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections or other source. Copies of posters from the IHS collection are provided on pages six through eleven of this lesson.
    - "Halt the Hun Buy U.S. Government Bonds, Third Liberty Loan" (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID: P0131_FF2C-9_THIRD_LIBERTY_LOANS)
    - "Hun or Home -- Buy More Liberty Bonds" (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID: P0131_FF2C-F10_HUN_OR_HOME)
    - "Must Children Die and Mothers Plead in Vain? Buy More Liberty Bonds" (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID: P0131_FF21C-F12_BUY_MORE_LIBERTY_BONDS)
    - "Remember Belgium Buy Bonds Fourth Liberty Loan" (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID: P0131_FF2C-14_REMEMBER_BELGIUM)
    - "The Hun-His Mark-- Blot it Out with Liberty Bonds" (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID: P0131_FF21E-F19_BLOT_IT_OUT)
    - "The Snake - Every Liberty Bond Bought by You Helps Uncle Sam Uncover the Reptile Which is Hiding Under Old Glory in Our Own Front Yard. God Pity the SPIES, the TRAITORS, the PROFITEERS, the SLACKERS, the SNAKES, Who are Filling their Pockets with American Gold at the Cost of American Blood—"WOE BE UNTO YOU!" BUY LIBERTY BONDS"

(Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID: P0131_FF2D-F20_SNAJE_LIBERTY_LOANS)

- "Poster Analysis Worksheet"
  - Designed and developed by the Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Accessed December 1, 2010, at http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/poster.html.

Background/Historical Context

World War I was a pivotal time for people of German heritage in America. When a Serbian nationalist assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, a system of alliances among European nations was set into motion, eventually resulting in war. One month later, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Germany and Turkey joined Austria-Hungary, fulfilling their alliance agreements. Russia, France, and Great Britain, in turn, joined Serbia in its fight.

Germany came into the war having been united in 1871. According to historian Bernd Huppauf, Germany was a latecomer on the European scene: "The world had been carved up before they had arrived. The world in terms of the colonies, the world in terms of power politics had been finalized, and the Germans came late. Yet, they felt they deserved a position within this world, according to their self-esteem, according to their size, according to their grandiose history leading back into the Middle Ages. There was the fear that with German unification, the power structure had changed to a degree, that now war had to be waged. That war had become inevitable."[1] It appeared that Germany felt it had something to prove and as a result was seen as an aggressor nation.

President Woodrow Wilson quickly proclaimed America to be neutral in the conflict, a decision supported by the vast majority of Americans. For German Americans, however, the war evoked strong feelings. "With the outbreak of war, many local German Americans rallied to support their homeland," according to one study by the POLIS Center.[2] The Indiana German American Alliance, led by businessman Joseph H. Keller, supported the German cause by lobbying Congress against unfavorable actions toward Germany.[3] In addition, the Germanistic Society of Indianapolis encouraged the study of German society and culture beginning in 1916.[4] This display of German patriotism exacerbated an existing cultural division between Germans and "nativist" or anti-immigrant Americans.

As the war proceeded and Germany attempted to blockade the British Isles, American opinion turned against the Germans. As the United States was one of Britain's biggest trading partners, its ships were in danger as they attempted to cross the Atlantic Ocean. American neutrality ended after German mines and submarines damaged or sunk several U.S. ships traveling to Great Britain.

By the time the United States entered the war in 1918, anti-German sentiment was prevalent, making the environment uncomfortable for German Americans in Indianapolis and throughout the country. "As the war progressed, the local German American population and their institutions became targets of verbal and physical attacks. Civil service reformer Lucius Swift spoke out strongly against German aggression. Local women's groups used the German argument to support their temperance activities in opposition to German beer gardens," noted the POLIS Center.[5] In January 1918, the Indianapolis Board of School Commissioners passed a resolution declaring that public schools "should not assist

1. Public Broadcasting Service, "Germany Before the War," by Bernd Huppauf, in *The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century,* accessed November 9, 2009, http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/historian/hist_huppauf_01_before.html.

2. Polis Center, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, "World War I, 1914–1920," in *Religion and American Community*, accessed September 25, 2009, http://www.polis.iupui.edu/ruc/rac/47/82/137/Indianapolis.asp.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

in perpetuating the language of an alien enemy in our homes and enemy viewpoints in the community," effectively ending German-language instruction in the city.[6] As a result of this persecution, Indianapolis German Americans tried to blend in with their neighbors by Americanizing their surnames, street names, and the names of some of their vereins (clubs). For example, the German cultural center, Das Deutsche Haus, became the Athenaeum; German churches stopped giving sermons in German; German newspapers ceased publication; and schools stopped teaching the German language.

Widespread anti-German propaganda encouraged persecution of Americans with a German heritage. U.S. government-produced movies, posters, and literature demonized Germans and characterized them as evil and subhuman. Propaganda, information spread for the purpose of furthering a cause, often promotes fear, distrust, and anger towards an individual or group labeled as the enemy. In wartime, propaganda promotes support for an action or movement against the enemy and is a common tool used to garner support for the government and its military forces.

During World War I, German Americans who may have felt threatened by growing anti-German sentiment chose to display their patriotism in several ways. By changing their name, discontinuing the use of their native language outside their homes, altering instruction and services offered in schools and community organizations, or in other ways, German Americans may have lost a part of their ethnic identity as well.

Teacher's Instructional Objective

Introduction

In this lesson students will study six posters from the Indiana Historical Society collection that illustrate World War I-era propaganda. Students will complete a student handout for each of the posters and then meet as a class to discuss their answers and interpretations of the posters.

If this lesson is introduced early in the study of World War I, explain to students that the war was often perceived in the United States as a European war and Americans were reluctant to get involved. Both the Allies (Britain, France, Belgium, Russia, and others) and the Central powers (the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria) tried desperately to gain support from the United States. Propaganda was used by both sides in an attempt to sway public opinion and gain the support of the U.S. government. As the posters used in this lesson show, the Allies successfully used propaganda to portray Germany as a brutal aggressor.

Activity

Procedure

- Conduct a brief class discussion to define propaganda and gather student ideas and examples of what propaganda materials might say. Questions to ask students might include: What would a wartime message say? What point of view would it reflect? Who is the intended audience? Who is the message intended to attack? Write student examples on the board.
- Place color copies of the propaganda posters at different locations around the room so that each work area has a complete set of the posters.
- Divide the class into small groups (the number and group size will depend on overall class size) and provide each student with six copies of the "Poster Analysis Worksheet," one for each poster to be reviewed.
- Explain to the students that they will be looking at propaganda posters from World War I. Their assignment is to read the instructions on the handout and respond to the questions. Allow students time to review each poster and respond to questions on the handout.

6. Ibid.

- After students have completed the poster analysis, facilitate a class discussion of their observations. Consider asking the following questions: What examples of propaganda do you see? How do you feel looking at the poster(s)? Does it make you feel one side is good and the other is bad? What do you think German Americans would feel if they saw these posters? What do you think they did? How do you think other Americans might treat German Americans? What might happen? Students should use reason and logic to support their answer.
- To conclude the activity, distribute newsprint, pencils, pens, and markers to each group. Explain that they are to create a propaganda poster to persuade the American public to support a particular topic. (Teachers may select a specific topic or if this is an individual student assignment, have student topics approved by the teacher in advance.)
- Have students display their work and, as time permits, make brief presentations to the class.

Evaluation and Assessment

At the conclusion of the lesson, students should recognize that propaganda is used to sway opinion and the information presented is not necessarily accurate. It is also used to make people behave in a specific way. These facts should appear to some degree in student responses, either in writing assignments, in class discussions, or in their poster design.

Suggested Modifications

Ask students to review magazines, newspapers, television, and Web sites to find contemporary examples of propaganda materials. Teachers may want to select a few examples for class discussion.

Conduct a student debate to consider if advertisements are a form of propaganda and if they are accurate representations of the products, services, issues, or causes they are promoting.

Bring in a recent newspaper and ask students to review it to identify examples of propaganda, such as advertisements, editorial cartoons, headlines, and editorial pages.

Additional Resources

Publications

Hoyt, Giles R. "Germans." In *Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience.* Robert M. Taylor Jr. and Connie A. McBirney, eds. 1996. Reprint, Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 2009.

Web Sites

Firstworldwar.com/. A Multimedia History of World War One. "Propaganda Posters-Introduction." Accessed December 1, 2010. http://www.firstworldwar.com/posters/index.htm.

A commercial site that provides links to World War I propaganda posters.

Library of Congress. "World War I Posters." Accessed December 1, 2010. http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/wwipos/.

The Library of Congress makes available online approximately 1,900 posters created between 1914 and 1920.

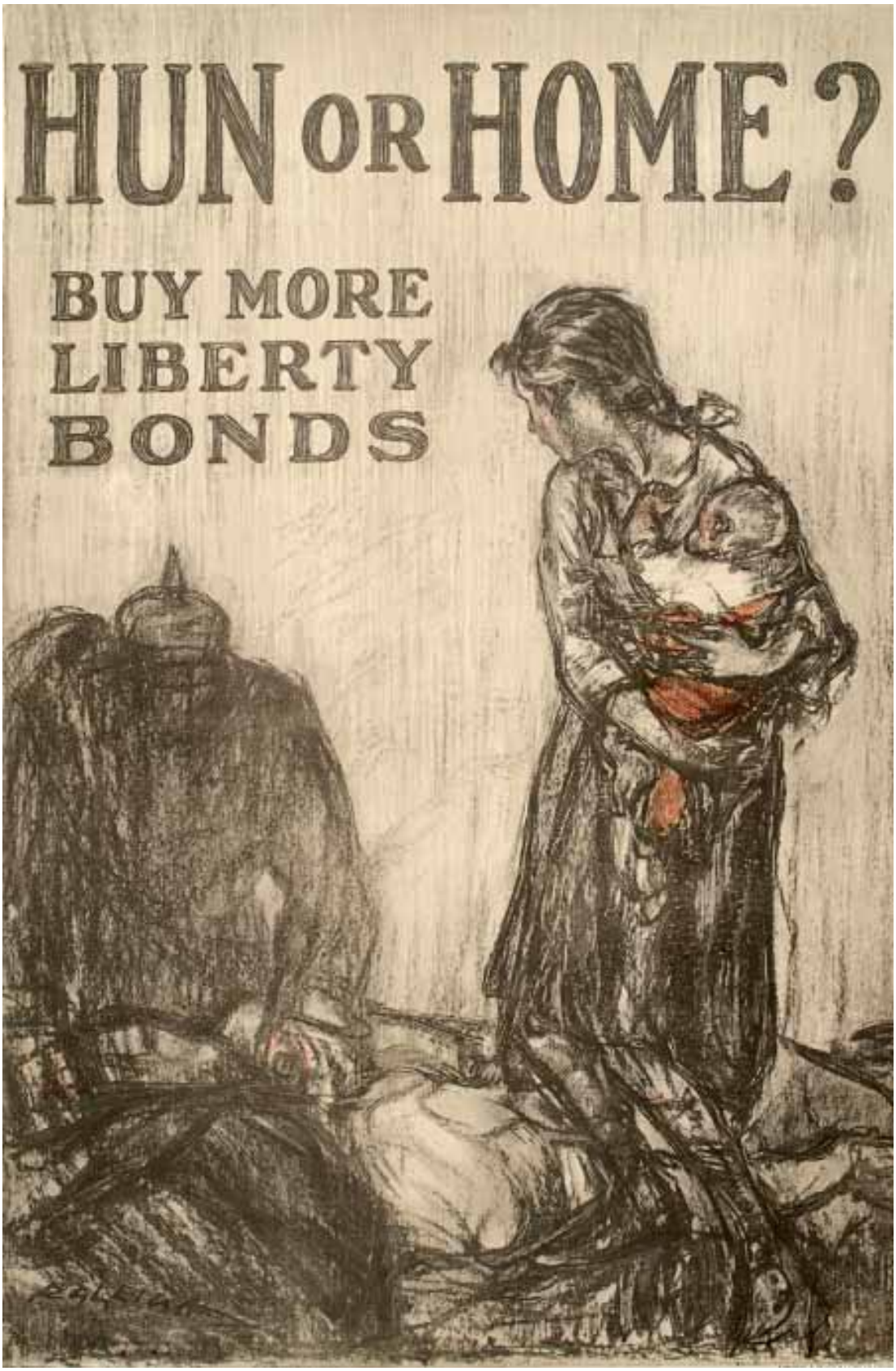
UNC School of Education, Learn NC Multimedia: K–12 Teaching and Learning. "World War I, Propaganda Posters." Accessed December 1, 2010. http://www.learnnc.org/editions/ww1posters.

An excellent site providing examples of World War I propaganda posters.

World War I: Trenches on the Web. "USA Great War Poster Reproductions." Accessed December 1, 2010. http://www.worldwar1.com/rep0002.html.

This commercial site has several examples of World War I propaganda posters.

"Halt the Hun Buy U.S. Government Bonds, Third Liberty Loan" (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID: P0131_FF2C-9_THIRD_LIBERTY_LOANS)



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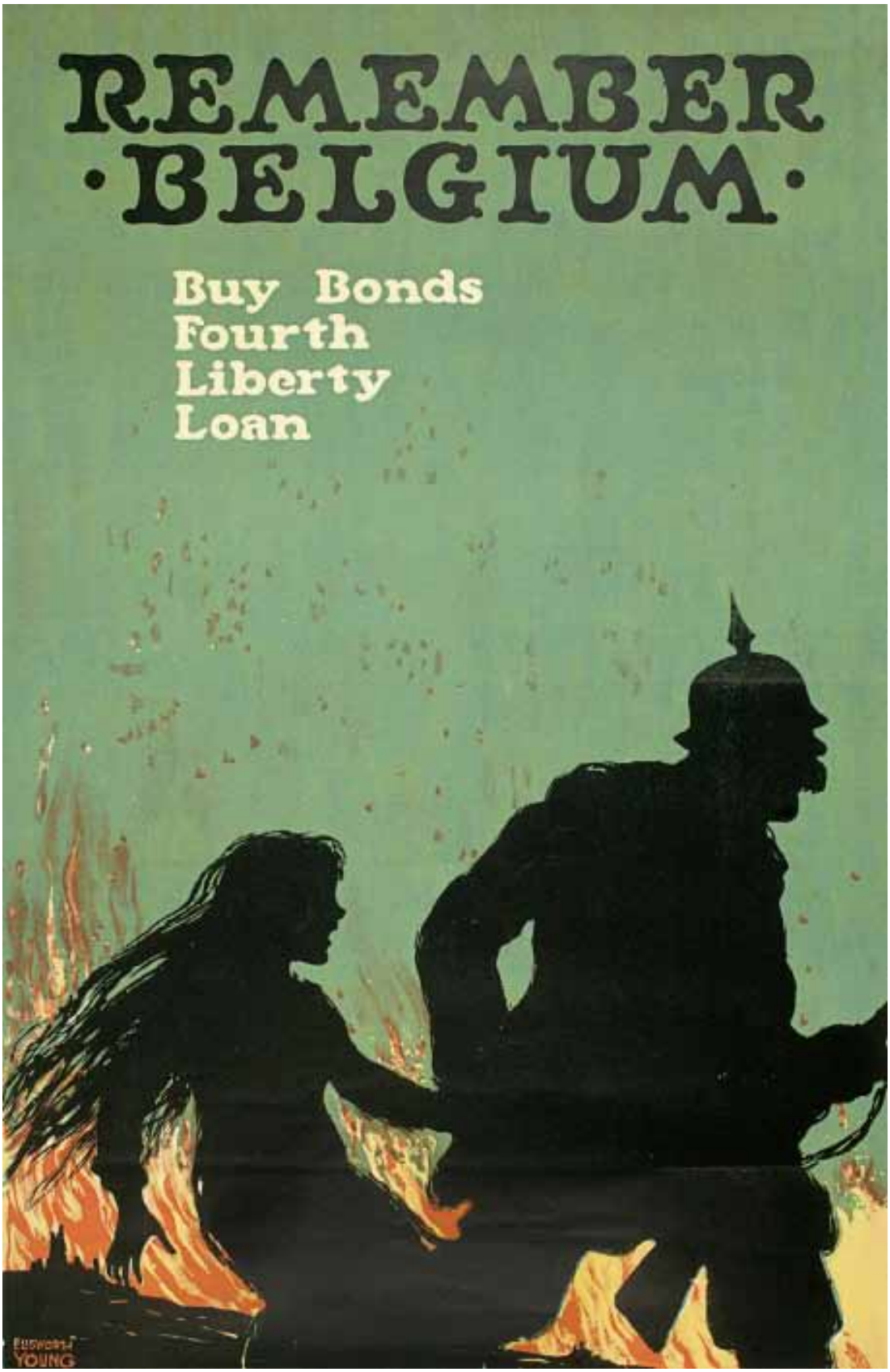
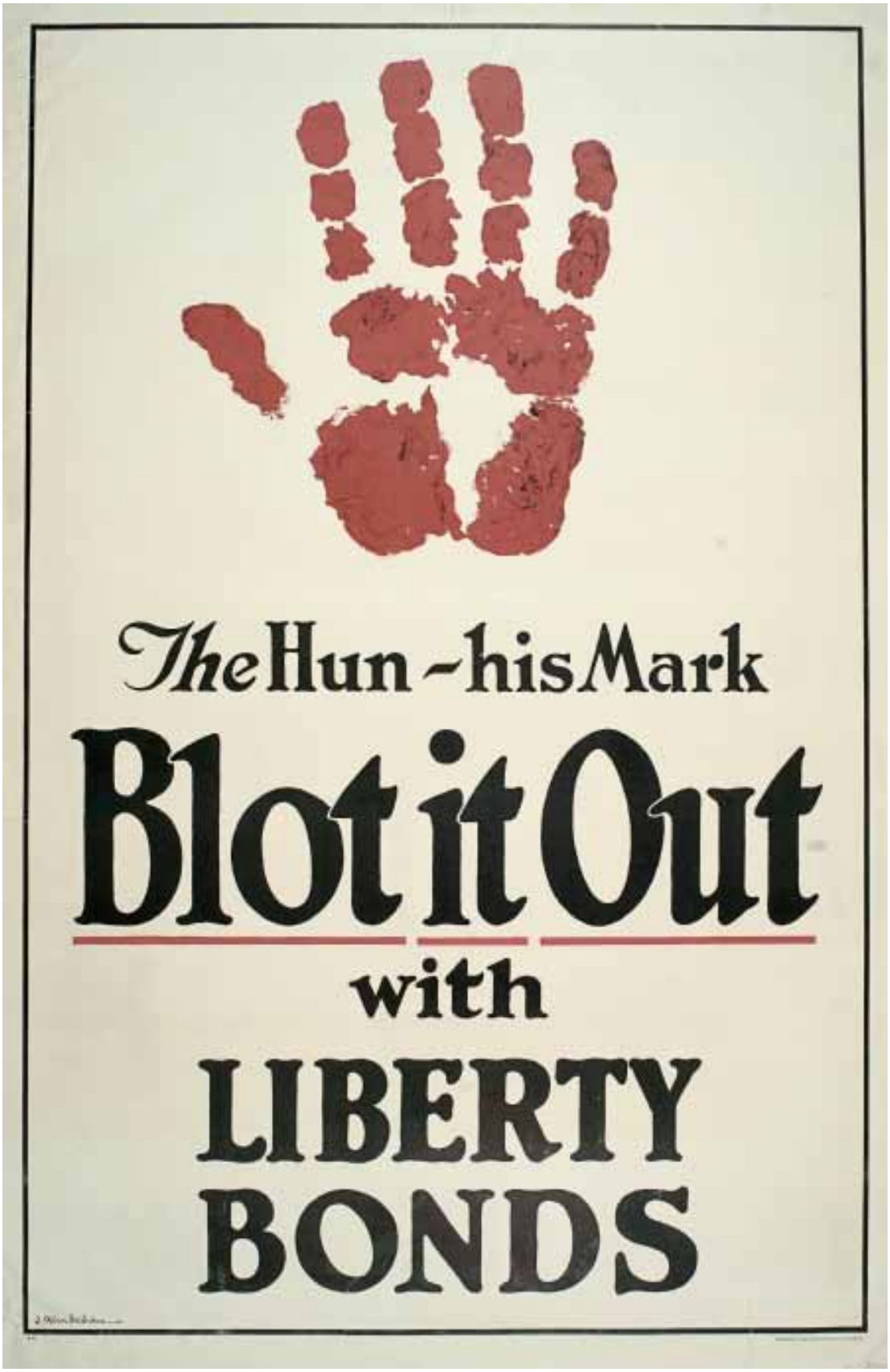


"Remember Belgium Buy Bonds Fourth Liberty Loan")Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID: P0131_FF2C-14_REMEMBER_BELGIUM)



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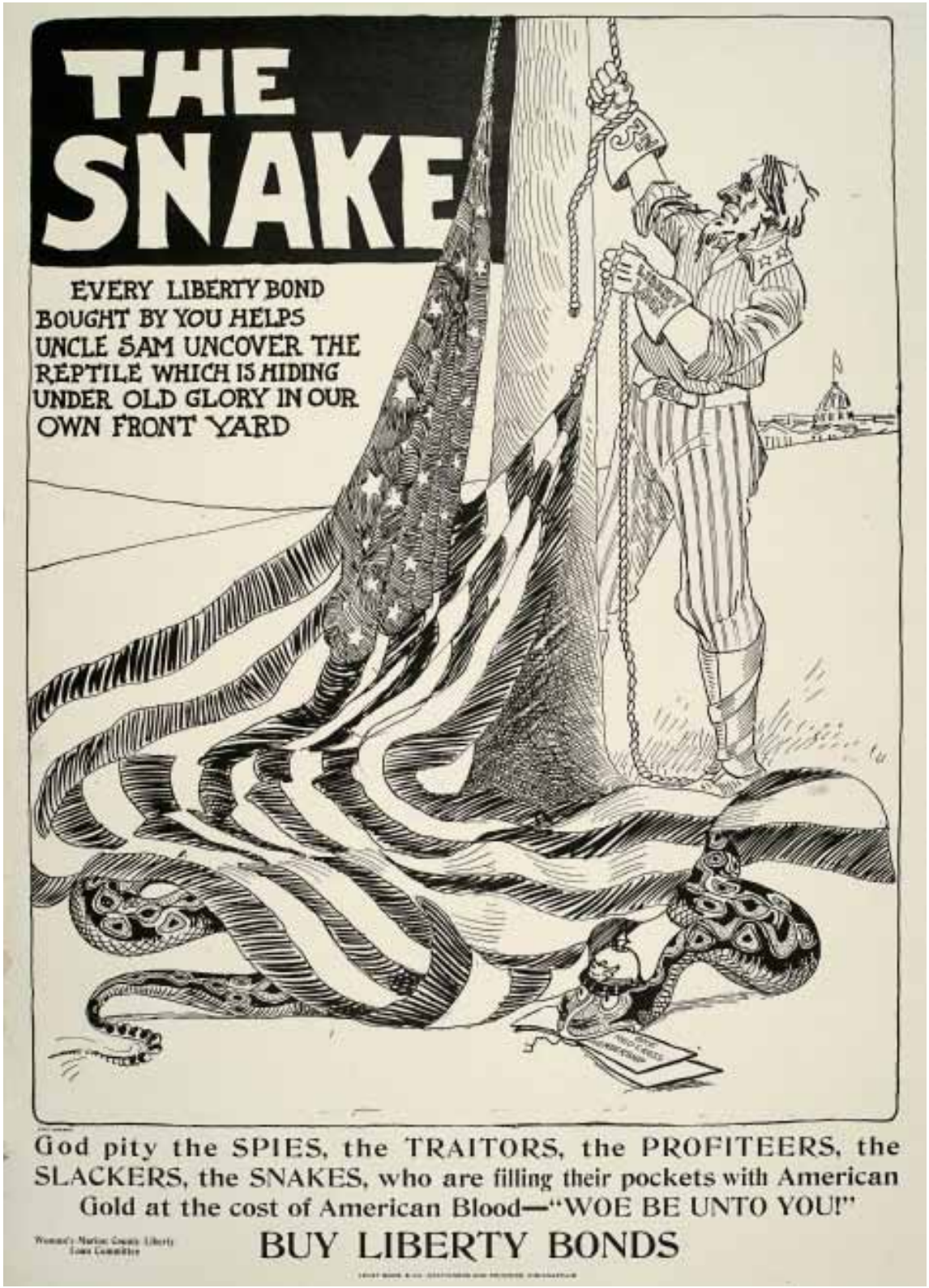

"The Snake - Every Liberty Bond Bought by You Helps Uncle Sam Uncover the Reptile Which is Hiding Under Old Glory in Our Own Front Yard. God Pity the SPIES, the TRAITORS, the PROFITEERS, the SLACKERS, the SNAKES, Who are Filling their Pockets with American Gold at the Cost of American Blood—"WOE BE UNTO YOU!" BUY LIBERTY BONDS" (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID: P0131_FF2D-F20_SNAJE_LIBERTY_LOANS)