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### Obscure Figure

7:47 AM, December 7, 1941. This was a perfect, beautiful day in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii at the time. Mostly every soldier was sound asleep. The hospitals were vacant of soldiers and full of cheerful nurses. 7:48 AM, December 7, 1941, the first air attack by the Japanese begins on Pearl Harbor. Peace turns to chaos; calmness of the soldiers turns to fear; the cheerful nurses are now turned frantic because they know what is about to come. According to a report issued by the Congress's Senate Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, over 2,400 Americans were killed in this one surprise attack (64). Operation Z, as declared by the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters, is what finally launched the United States of America into World War II. This war would result in what most historians agree upon, around 50 million deaths. Allies were pitted against the Axis for the purpose of destroying the Nazi's Third Reich.

After America was attacked in Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, essentially every American was up in arms about the matter and felt one hundred percent ready to go to war with the Axis. Our consumerist country made a complete conversion into becoming a war production country. Factories intended for toys, car parts, or anything, you name it, turned into factories for making tanks, planes, bullets, boats, and anything having to do with the war effort. Every American chipped in to the war effort. Many even donated their metal scraps to scrap yards so more resources became available for production. Women were also an integral part of the war effort. While the military drafted the men and trained them for war, women took on the responsibility of building the tools necessary to defeat the Axis.

Not all believed that going to war was the best path for America to embark upon. We risked a lot and put many lives at stake for a cause that we did not have much to do with. The government, however, thought differently. They wanted every single American possible to be for the war-effort with not one in opposition.

One of the most famous ways to persuade a body throughout history is through the use of propaganda. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines propaganda as, “the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person.” The American bureaucracy intended to engage in this exact practice.

Starting in 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Office of War Information. The OWI employed the most clever psychologists, artists, and marketers to create works of “art” for the purpose of being viewed and heard all across America in newspapers, on shop windows, on the radio, in movies, and in the mail. The subjects of the propaganda ranged from not disseminating troop information, not having sex with prostitutes, donating scraps to make more bombs, and buying war bonds to fund the war effort. They targeted every audience including children, young teens, adults, and the elderly. Most of the time, the artists designed these propaganda to instill fear into the American public. They accomplished this through, for example, the use of demonic depictions of Nazis and Japanese soldiers terrorizing the land of the United States. These “artists” knew exactly how to get inside the mind of an American. This penetration of the mind was successfully executed through the clever use of the means of persuasion.

One piece of propaganda really stood out to me and just struck me to the ground (see fig. 1). Lawrence B. Smith completed this work in 1942 for the U.S. Government Printing Office. This work is a successful piece of propaganda because in one poster, it exemplifies an excellent

use of rhetoric used to persuade the American public through the use of rhetorical situation and the three means of persuasion (*ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*) as well.



Fig. 1. *Don't Let That Shadow Touch Them* by Lawrence B. Smith, 1942.

Let's first examine what we see here. At first sight, there is nothing too abstract about this picture. But for some reason it just automatically captivates us. How in the world does something of a printed medium possess the ability to put us into a state of such peril so easily? At the most primal level, Lawrence Smith's job required him to create this haunting effect. The first thing

that catches the audience's eye is the children. All three of these kids appear to be the representation of a typical American kid; one with the country's flag, one with a toy plane, and one with a doll. But these children are not so typical and in fact, atypical. They are children of war.

War is terrifying to children and Smith makes sure that we see that in their faces. For identification purposes, let's give these three children names. The older boy is Big Billy while the younger is Little Tommy, and the girl, Little Sally. This picture seems to be frozen in time as each character is stuck in an incomplete motion. Little Sally is looking off to the distance away from her brothers. The audience can see that she just looked aside in a swift motion because her hair is still swaying in the air from what could only be a quick movement. Did you notice that her doll was face down in the grass? A doll was a girl's toy of choice and she would never want to damage it under any circumstance. But the fear of what is about to come haunts her so much that the doll is now in that position. Little Tommy is wearing a red and white striped shirt with blue pants. What is presented here to the audience is a very patriotic boy. With his homemade flag pole and underneath his newspaper hat, the audience can still sense the fear in his face. Tommy looks to his brother for hope and a way out of this fear. But there is an underlying problem here: Big Billy, in all of his grandeur and maturity, is at a stand still holding his little brother Tommy back. As with all of the other children, he does not know what is going on in this former green pasture of bliss and naivety.

This brings the audience to what their eye moves its focus onto to next. That is, what every American identifies with Nazi Germany, the swastika casting a shadow onto the pasture from above the children in the sky. The swastika acted as the official emblem of the Nazi party and displayed itself on the flag of Germany during the Third Reich led by Adolph Hitler. Fear

was touched upon in the last paragraph but I did not point out what the root of this fear was. It is easy to see that this shadow is where all this fear grotesquely manifested from. The Nazis were a force to be reckoned with and every American knew this as well as the children. The sheer thought of a Nazi invasion in the States sent shivers down the spines of young children. More importantly, these spine spasms were experienced by the parents. If Nazis or Japanese invaded America, the lives of these parents' children would be threatened and possibly changed forever. That is why this piece of propaganda provides the parents with an assured way out. The cop out to this dilemma is in big, bold, yellow letters; "WAR BONDS." And right next to it, the word "Buy" in neat, cursive writing. If one just stares at this picture, he can clearly see WAR BONDS without even focusing on it.

Why would any government in its right mind want to scare their constituents? There is a perfectly sound reason for this and it can be said in one word: "purpose." The purpose of the United States in its propaganda campaigns was simple. They planned to effectively scare the living hell out of the Americans. By doing so, the government profited heavily when people would buy bonds in order to protect the country. The basis of a bond is pretty simple. When one buys a bond, he is essentially giving the United States Treasury a loan that they will pay back to him over time with interest. This gave substantial sums of money to the treasury that would in other circumstances, be impossible to obtain unless the treasury printed more money; but that would just cause inflation and no one wants that. The audience of this piece is strongly directed at anyone able to buy a bond. More specifically, the target audience could be narrowed down to the average American parent.

This is where *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* come into play. World renowned Greek philosopher Aristotle saw that the means of persuasion in a text could be subdivided into three

categories. The first, *ethos*, is the ethical appeal. If a population respects someone's views and morals, they are more likely to accept a proposal as opposed to someone who makes bad decisions resulting in a rejection of the proposal. *Pathos* is the appeal to emotions (Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz 49). If a text is able to really reach deep down into one's emotions and make him feel something for the text, then the presenter of the text can easily persuade agreement to the argument being presented. *Logos* is the logical appeal that the presenter brings to the text (Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz 49). Basically, if a presenter of an argument wants someone to be with him on a point he is trying to make, one of the best ways is to present a logically sound argument. If an argument is sound, some people have no reason to disagree with it. These three means are an excellent way to persuade the receiver of the text.

The *ethos* of this piece of propaganda is very easy to understand. The true author of this image is the United States Office of War Information because in reality they commissioned Lawrence Smith to create the image. Americans today, live in the glorious country known as the United States of America. They all pay their taxes; well, most of them do. Every citizen believes in the greater good of their country and that they have the ability to be number one at everything they set their minds to. As citizens of the country, Americans are brought up to trust in every decision made by the government. This trust can be backed up by the fact that they are provided, gratis, with public schools, hospitals, transportation, and security. This gives them reason to believe that they should fully and wholly trust their government. With trust comes persuasion. In this piece of propaganda, it tells the audience, "Don't Let That Shadow Touch Them. Buy WAR BONDS." At first, the audience knows that this is a poster created by the government so they already have that preconceived notion of trust. If the image is telling Americans to buy war bonds in order to protect their precious children from the Nazis, then they shall because

Americans trust what the government is saying to them. Why would they want to deceive loyal citizens?

*Pathos* is what really drives this image into a successful use of rhetoric. As explained prior to this, there is so much to this picture that the audience can see illustrated in the picture. The three children in this picture are in utter fear for the safety of their lives. The audience can see this through the fear in all of their faces. Each child has no one to look to here; there is no parenting figure and all we can see is the impending doom of the Nazi regime approaching. This strikes emotion in any American today and in 1942. One automatically becomes empathetic for the children. The audience can feel the despair of the children and not one thing makes them happy about the situation. In order to mend these torn feelings of the children, bonds must be purchased. That is exactly what happened back in World War II. The socially engineered propaganda, using emotion as the tool, persuaded the average American or parent into buying bonds.

The message in this illustration is pure logic which comes from the *logos* appeal being used. “Don’t let that shadow touch them.” This is the first part of a logical argument, also known as the premise. The shadow is that of the Nazis expressed through the swastika casting a shadow. Any logical person agrees with this and does not want to let the shadow touch them being the children. The conclusion is then presented: “Buy WAR BONDS.” This presents a logical situation to the receiving audience: If one wants to protect the children from the Nazis, then buy war bonds. Displayed here is a simple if-then conditional statement and a sound argument that is hard to reject because of its concrete and straight to the point nature.

The visual rhetoric Smith employs in this frightening piece of propaganda is of the highest tier. Without analysis, anyone can be sucked into this piece and be influenced to act upon

its proposal. The audience is universal in terms of Americans. It expresses such vivid emotion that makes any citizen want to do something for the poor children. And with that emotion then comes the logic which gives them the way to solve the problem. Every aspect, from audience, context, purpose, *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, is carried out flawlessly. I am confident in saying that this here is a successful use of propaganda and surely convinced many Americans back in 1942 to buy war bonds from the treasury in order to support the war effort.



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