NCSS Notable Trade Book Lesson Plan

*The Giant and How He Humbugged America*

Written by Jim Murphy

Sarah Hartman

College of Coastal Georgia

**Abstract**

In this lesson students investigate hoaxes in history, propaganda resulting from them, and how technology and media helped grow them. Reading *The Giant and How He Humbugged America* by Jim Murphy involves students in examining how hoaxes and propaganda throughout history have affected American life and have changed some people’s thinking.

**Book Title** *The Giant and How he Humbugged America* (2012) by Jim Murphy.

New York, NY: Scholastic Press.

Ages 8-10


Recommended for grades 3-4. This lesson plan will require 30-45 minutes per day over the span of 2-3 days.

| **Book Summary** | An upstate New York farmer unearths a 10-foot-tall “petrified man” in 1869. Within five days of his discovery, thousands of people rush to see the sensational discovery. Scientists, politicians, and ordinary people around the globe, travel to New York to examine the discovery. People speculate this giant to be an ancient Onondaga Indian or perhaps a Biblical giant similar to Goliath. Through the use of media, technology, and propaganda, the Cardiff Giant mystery snowballs into one of America’s biggest moneymaking spectacles and hoaxes of all time. |
| **NCSS Standards** | II. Time, Continuity, and Change

V. Individuals, Groups, & Institutions

VIII. Science, Technology, and Society

IX. Global Connections |
Materials

- *The Giant and How He Humbugged America*
- Chart paper and markers
- Flow charts and pens or pencils
- Computers with internet access
- Technology and media devices such as iPads, tablets, audio recorders, etc.
- Poster board (one per student)
- Magazines
- Scissors
- Glue
- Recyclable materials for artifact creation

Objectives

1. Students will use the text to identify how technology and media endorse a hoax.
2. Students will use the text to examine how varying forms of technology and media affect society by way of propaganda.
3. Students will describe how propaganda affects societal profit and loss.
4. Students will demonstrate how propaganda can promote a hoax.
5. Students will analyze how technology, media, and a society’s ideals and beliefs change over time.

Procedures

**Exploration/Introduction**

1. The teacher will ask students to reflect on, and discuss, past types of technology and media (word of mouth, gathering crowds, radio broadcasts, posters, etc.), used in propaganda. The teacher will record students’ responses on chart paper.
2. The teacher will ask students to discuss current types of technology and media used in propaganda. The teacher will record students’ responses on chart paper.
3. The teacher and students will discuss the differences in the two charts as a whole class. During this discussion, the teacher will identify how much accurate prior knowledge the students have and will fill in the gaps where necessary.

1. The teacher will ensure students know what both a hoax and propaganda are by connecting them to real-life situations. To define
a hoax, the teacher will provide examples of current-day hoaxes such as UFOs, alien sightings, and fallen angels. To define propaganda, the teacher will show varying forms of propaganda through media and technology such as World War I and II posters, radio broadcasts, TV commercials, Facebook ads, etc.

2. The teacher will tell the students, “We are going to read a story about a hoax created through the use of propaganda promoted through technology and media.”

3. The teacher will read *The Giant and How He Humbugged America* by Jim Murphy.

4. The teacher will provide flow charts and, using the text, work with students to outline how technology and media promoted propaganda in the text which promoted the hoax in the story.

5. The teacher will tell the students to use the classroom and media center computers to research other hoaxes throughout history. Students can use specific search engines such as Google, Bing, and Ask and research “current and past examples of real-life hoaxes.”

6. Students will spend individual time researching hoaxes and read about them in depth to determine if their hoaxes are (were) genuine, are (were) further promoted by propaganda, and if so, decide whether media and technology are (were) further promoting the growth of the hoax. Once students have time to individually spend on this task, they should work together in small groups (no more than four per group, if possible) to review their individual findings and agree on one particular hoax of choice for further examination as a group.

7. Groups will examine their hoaxes by researching how they began, how they spread and grew larger as a result of propaganda, how the propaganda was pushed through the use of technology and media, whether or not the hoaxes turned into money-making schemes, and if so, how that affected those societies.

**Closure.**

1. The groups will present all of the information on their hoaxes to the whole class via PowerPoint presentations. (Appendix A) The teacher will review the definitions of hoax and propaganda with the students, via the chart paper from the lesson introduction, and then determine class definitions of both terms.

2. The teacher will have students individually write brief paragraphs inventing their own hoaxes. They will then design small propaganda posters about their hoaxes and then write another brief paragraph about how media and technology affect their hoaxes. From this individual assignment, the teacher will be able to determine if the individual students grasp the concepts of propaganda and hoaxes, and how media and technology affect them.
Closure

1. Students will work in pairs to create a pictorial timeline of the discovery of the Cardiff Giant, people coming to see the giant, and the giant going on national tour as evidence of the development of a hoax. Students can draw their pictures on their timelines or cut out pictures from magazines.

2. Students will present their timelines to the whole class and discuss their results as a means for showing how quickly the hoax spread through propaganda via media and technology. (Appendix B)

3. Students will work in small groups to create their own hoaxes. The groups will demonstrate how propaganda helped grow the hoaxes and how technology and media further promoted the propaganda. The groups will provide the specific types of technology and media use in their scenarios as well as what specific propaganda promoted their hoaxes in their given scenarios.

4. The small groups will role-play their created hoax scenarios for the whole class.

5. After the small groups have created their hoaxes and completed role-plays related to them, the individual students in the class will design and create their own propaganda posters related to the hoax created in their small groups to ensure understanding of the concept of propaganda.

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Expansion

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Assessment

1. Students will research a current-day hoax and utilize various forms of current media and technology to promote it. Students will complete this assessment through a video creation via iPad movie, tablet movie application, cell phone recording, or by filming it via the use of video technology.

2. Students will share their videos of their hoaxes and the promotion of them via current media and technology with the class. (Appendix C)

Suggested Extension Activities

1. Students will create their own model of the Cardiff Giant using recyclable materials.

2. Students will craft physical models of the hoaxes they created in small groups during the expansion stage of the lesson.

Additional References


Additional References and Web links

Classroom Tools. Retrieved from

http://www.classroomtools.com/proppage.htm

How stuff works. Retrieved from


Mental_Floss. Retrieved from

http://mentalfloss.com/article/49674/14-greatest-hoaxes-all-time

Museum of hoaxes. Retrieved from
http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/


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Appendix A

Creating Hoaxes Group Project Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hoaxes</th>
<th>IV—Exemplary</th>
<th>III—Proficient</th>
<th>II—Needs Development</th>
<th>I—Ineffective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How they began</td>
<td>Provides details of how the hoax began, references it on PowerPoint, shows pictures</td>
<td>Provides details of how the hoax began, references it on PowerPoint</td>
<td>Discusses a hoax, gives minor details of how it began</td>
<td>Discusses a hoax and how it began</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How they spread as result of propaganda</td>
<td>References on PowerPoint details as to specific propaganda that</td>
<td>References on PowerPoint details as to specific</td>
<td>Provides some details of the spread via some specific propaganda</td>
<td>Mentions the spread of hoax via propaganda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How propaganda was pushed as result of media and technology

- spread the hoax; shows demonstrations of the propaganda
- References on PowerPoint details as to specific types of media and technology that helped the propaganda spread the hoax; demonstrates the media and technology
- References on PowerPoint details as to specifics of how the money-making schemes affected society; thought put into explanation demonstrates the money-making schemes
- References on PowerPoint details as to specifics of why and how the hoaxes turned into money-making schemes or not; thought put into explanation

Hoaxes turned into money-making schemes or not

- Provides some details of spread of propaganda via some specific media and technology
- Mentions whether or not the hoaxes turned into money-making schemes

Whether the money-making schemes affected society

- Provides some details as to why and how the money-making schemes affected society
- Mentions whether or not the money-making schemes affected society
### Pictorial Timeline of the Cardiff Giant Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pictorial Timeline</th>
<th>IV—Exemplary</th>
<th>III—Proficient</th>
<th>II—Needs Development</th>
<th>I—Ineffective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussed who the Cardiff Giant was, his discovery, his going on tour across the country, and how he developed into a hoax; shows pictures in presentation, references text</td>
<td>Discusses who the Cardiff Giant was, his discovery, his going on tour across the country</td>
<td>References in presentation on specific details as to specific timeline details from the text that correspond to accurately drawn pictures or magazine cut-outs</td>
<td>Discusses who the Cardiff Giant was and his discovery</td>
<td>Discusses who the Cardiff Giant was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed the created timeline as referenced in the text, corresponds to accurately drawn pictures or magazine cut-outs</td>
<td>Demonstrates a timeline of the Cardiff Giant with minimal events and few pictures drawn or magazine cut-outs</td>
<td>Provides some details of spread of propaganda via some specific media and technology</td>
<td>Shows a demonstration of a pre-designed timeline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References in presentation specific details as to specific types of media and technology that helped the propaganda spread the hoax demonstrates the media and technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix B**

**Pictorial Timeline**

The Cardiff Giant, its discovery, and development into a hoax

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline development—drawing pictures or magazine cut-outs</th>
<th>Discussed who the Cardiff Giant was, his discovery, his going on tour across the country, and how he developed into a hoax; shows pictures in presentation, references text</th>
<th>References in presentation on specific details as to specific timeline details from the text that correspond to accurately drawn pictures or magazine cut-outs</th>
<th>Shows a demonstration of a pre-designed timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spread of a hoax through propaganda via media and technology</td>
<td>Discussed who the Cardiff Giant was, his discovery, his going on tour across the country, and how he developed into a hoax; shows pictures in presentation, references text</td>
<td>References in presentation on specific details as to specific timeline details from the text that correspond to accurately drawn pictures or magazine cut-outs</td>
<td>Shows a demonstration of a pre-designed timeline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References in presentation specific details as to specific types of media and technology that helped the propaganda spread the hoax demonstrates the media and technology</td>
<td>Demonstrates a timeline of the Cardiff Giant with minimal events and few pictures drawn or magazine cut-outs</td>
<td>Provides some details of spread of propaganda via some specific media and technology</td>
<td>Mentions the spread of a hoax through propaganda via media and technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Student presentation via oral presentation

Students know content and engage with audience during presentation; make eye content with audience, are not monotone, use visuals and media and technology during presentation

Students know content and engage with audience during presentation

Students make eye contact with audience and are audible

Students read their material word-for-word from notes

### Appendix C

**Current-Day Hoax Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hoaxes</th>
<th>IV—Exemplary</th>
<th>III—Proficient</th>
<th>II—Needs Development</th>
<th>I—Ineffective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current-day hoax</td>
<td>Discusses own current-day hoax, gives details of it, with references, provides pictures, creates a video, webpage, etc. and demonstrates it</td>
<td>Discusses own current-day hoax, gives details of it, with references, provides pictures</td>
<td>Discusses own current-day hoax, gives details with references</td>
<td>Discusses own current-day hoax and how it began</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current media and technology</td>
<td>Discusses and demonstrates varying forms of media and technology used in current-day hoax</td>
<td>Discusses and demonstrates one form of media and/or technology</td>
<td>Provides some details of the use of current media and technology</td>
<td>Mentions their use of current media and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video creation</td>
<td>Video created by students of a current-day hoax they made</td>
<td>Video created by students of a current-day hoax they made</td>
<td>Video created of a current-day hoax but not one students created</td>
<td>Video created but incorrect content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
up and video-ed; and video-ed with
innovative
technology
demonstrates
the video

up and video-ed; and video-ed with
innovative
technology