



What can art tell us about the experience of soldiers and communities during war?

There are three main visual ways of representing war — through photographs, paintings or sketches, and posters.

- 1 Look at the collection of non-photographic images below (photographs are looked at on a separate worksheet) and decide what they tell us about the war. Apply these questions to each image to help you analyse it. You might like to divide this up into a group task.

Analysing visual art

ANALYTICAL QUESTIONS	MY ANSWERS
What does it show?	
What aspect of war is being depicted?	
How is the subject depicted (e.g. realistic, caricatured)?	
What is the message about this aspect of war?	
Is it effective?	
Is it a primary (first hand experience) or secondary (based on other accounts) source?	
Is it truth or propaganda?	

- 2 At the end, discuss what art does that photographs cannot.
- 3 What do the ones you decide are propaganda all have in common — that is, those characteristics that make them propaganda rather than information?



click to enlarge



A government poster at the start of the war

State Library of Victoria)



A government recruiting poster

The trumpet calls

FRENCH TRANSLATION NEEDED

(Library of Congress)

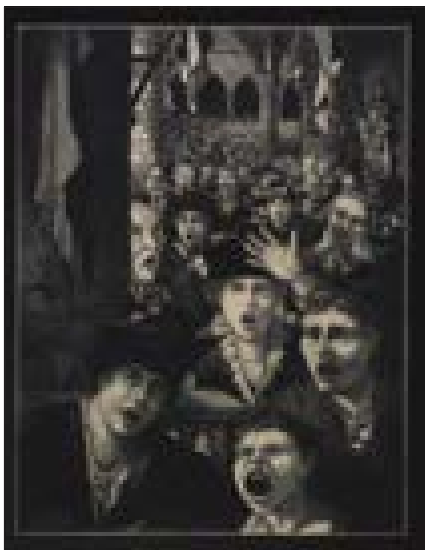


A government recruiting poster

Were YOU there then?

FRENCH TRANSLATION NEEDED

(Library of Congress)



A 1916 drawing by Belgian artist Gisbert Combaz,

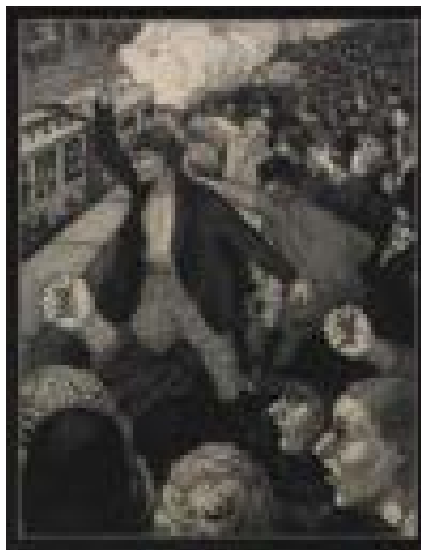
FRENCH TITLE NEEDED

The drawing shows a crowd of Belgian civilians on their national day of 21 July.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

'Long live Belgium!'

<http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/historiography-atrocities-the-long-shadow#>



A 1916 drawing by Belgian artist Gisbert Combaz

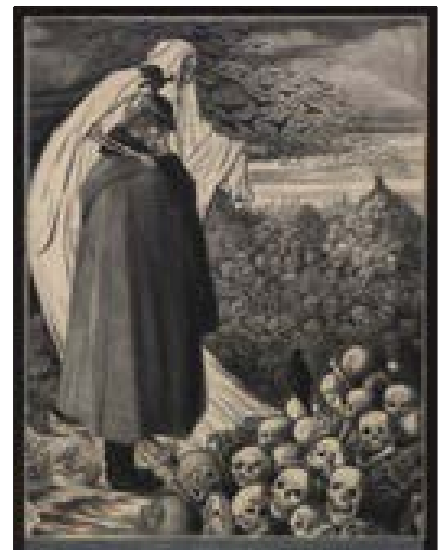
FRENCH TITLE NEEDED

The drawing refers to Belgian workers being conscripted and transported to Germany as forced labour.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

'The barbarians take the slaves.'

<http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/historiography-atrocities-the-long-shadow#>



A 1916 drawing by Belgian artist Gisbert Combaz,

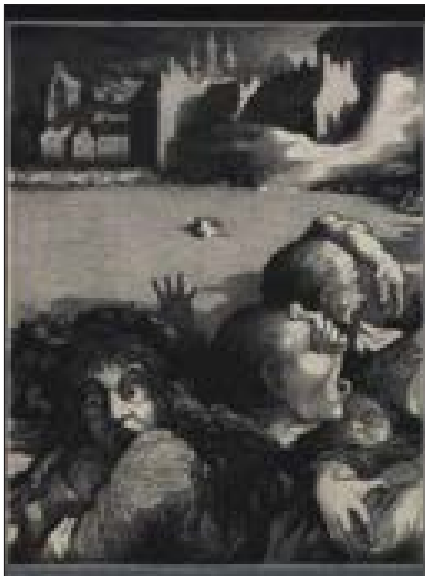
'Bandit! Voilà ton oeuvre!'

It shows Death and German Emperor William II.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Villain, this is your work!

(Bibliotheque Royale de Belgique)



A 1916 drawing by Belgian artist
Gisbert Combaz, Louvain

It shows the people of the Belgian city of Leuven (Louvain) fleeing the city on 25 August 1914 as invading German troops killed hundreds of civilians and burned down the mediaeval library building and its priceless collection of manuscripts.

<http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/historiography-atrocities-the-long-shadow#>



An anti-conscription leaflet

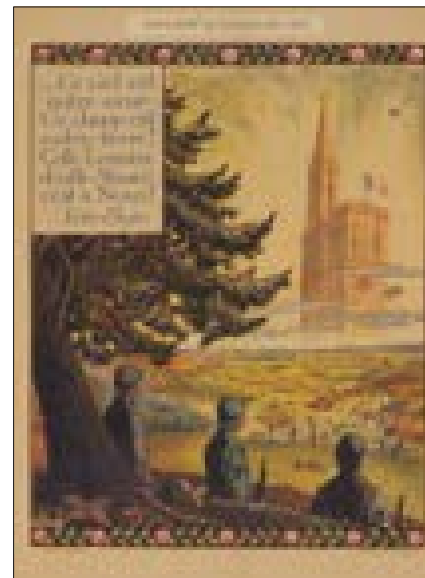
The seated figure is the Australian Prime Minister William Morris Hughes who called for the vote to introduce conscription. The cabinet in the background contains the names of men who will be eligible to be conscripted if the law is voted for.

The Death Ballot. Polling Day, December 20.

Vote 'No'

FRENCH TRANSLATION NEEDED

(State Library of Victoria)



A French poster at the start of the war.

'Debout! Nos morts pour La Patrie ... voici La France!

The woman and children are wearing traditional Alsatian national costumes. Both France and Germany claimed Alsace-Lorraine, and the Germans had taken control there after the 1871 Franco-German war.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Stand up! Those who have died for our country ... This is France!

(Library of Congress)



Poster for a French-made film

The Frenchwoman in war-time

FRENCH TITLE

(Library of Congress)



'Zero Hour (8th August 1918)

a 1935 sculpture by Australian artist Leslie Bowes

FRENCH TRANSLATION

(AWM ART12504)



'On the Messines Road' by Australian war artist Charles Bryant

FRENCH TRANSLATION

(AWM ART000182)



A 1915 painting by French artist Paul Leroux.

Aux Eparges, soldats enterrant leurs camarades au clair de lune

One of the soldiers is checking the dead soldier's identity papers.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

At Eparges, soldiers bury their comrades by the light of the moon.

(Musée National du Château de Versailles)



A pro-conscription leaflet

Australian Nationalists

Married men are exempt if the government Proposals are carried, but if they are rejected, all men will have to go.

'Vote Yes mum or else they'll take dad.'

Vote Yes

FRENCH TRANSLATION NEEDED

(State Library of Victoria)



A postcard by Belgian artist James Thiriar painted during the war.

Belges êtes vous prêt?

It shows a rooster (symbol of Wallonia, the southern French-speaking region of Belgium) and an eagle (symbol of Germany). The Flemish symbol (a lion) is not depicted. The caption reads:

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Belgians are you ready?

Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België (Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique)

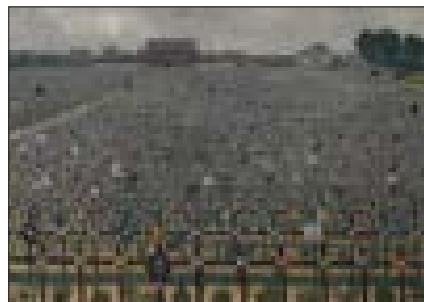


'L'enfer,' painted in 1921 by French soldier and artist George Leroux

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Hell

(Imperial War Museum)



A 1917 painting by official French war artist Felix Vallotton

Cimetière militaire de Châlons-sur-Marne.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Military Cemetery at Châlons-sur-Marne

(Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire de Strasbourg)



A French poster calling for contributions to a war loan.

Souscrivez au 4e Emprunt National

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Subscribe to the 4th National Loan

(Library of Congress)

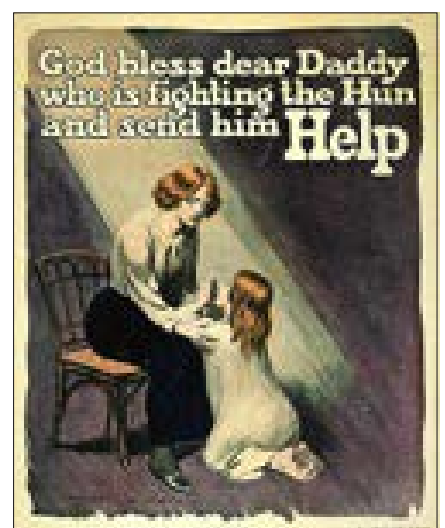


A drawing by Belgian artist Franz Gaillard 1918

Woman (widow of a soldier from the 1914-1918 war) shows the portraits to three children, 1918.

FRENCH TRANSLATION NEEDED

(Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique)



A government recruiting poster

God bless dear daddy who is fighting the Hun and send him help.

FRENCH TRANSLATION NEEDED

(AWM ARTV05469)