SAMPLE: STUDENT PROCESS PAPER (2021)

I became interested in doing a National History Day project about wartime propaganda after seeing some WWI propaganda posters. The eye-catching graphics, bright colors, and sharp design of these posters intrigued me. I did some research and found an article about the organization that created them, the Committee on Public Information (CPI). I learned that the CPI's work was much more than just posters— they used many new and effective communications tactics to convince a reluctant American public to support America's involvement in WWI. I wanted to learn more.

My research began on the internet with sources like *History.com*, *Smithsonian.com* and *Britannica.com*. I then looked for more focused information on subjects like Liberty Bonds and the CPI's specialized public speaking force, the Four Minute Men. Databases like *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* were extremely helpful for finding primary source news articles, and *Library of Congress* was a key resource for posters, images, and audio. I used many primary source books in my research, including two written by George Creel, the Chairman of the CPI. I used *YouTube* to find video footage of CPI movies and audio of wartime music. My secondary sources included many books, articles, websites, and mini documentaries about the CPI.

I chose a website for my project because I really enjoy working with technology, and it seemed like the format I would feel most comfortable with. I also felt it was a good medium to show photos, posters, video clips, and display the information in an organized way. In my research I found a lot of compelling quotes, and a website allowed me to showcase these, so I could tell the CPI's story more fully. To improve flow and context, I added the most relevant short credit information at the end of each quote, then added more complete official credits at the bottom of each page as footnotes. I did have challenges learning how to use the website builder software, but over time I was able to do it well and use many of the features to enhance my story. I also learned how color wheels work, so I could choose a color palette that suited my story and images, while also being easy to read. I enjoyed working with iMovie in order to make the two short videos on my website.

My topic relates to the national theme because the CPI was an extremely effective communications model that changed how Americans consume media and arguably created the field of public relations. Using every available media, the CPI shaped public opinion to gain support for US involvement in WWI. It created and spread positive publicity for the war domestically and internationally, and censored anti-war messages. This was the US' first large-scale propaganda effort, employing effective new mass communications tactics that are still used today. However, it also serves as a warning to guard our First Amendments rights, protect a free press, and carefully consider our news sources.