



SECTION 5

PROPAGANDA AND CRITICAL THINKING



“When I first got here, there was discord and discontent. And where I come from, everyone knows: the best way to bring folks together, is to give them a really good enemy.”- The Wizard

ACTIVITY

◆ SCAPEGOAT ◆

“If you make it discouraging enough, you can keep anyone silent.” – Doctor Dillamond

In WICKED, we see how Animals are targeted and used as scapegoats. The Wizard employs powerful propaganda to ensure he can get away with stopping Animals from speaking and going about their lives. Doctor Dillamond describes examples of fellow Animals who have lost their rights in Oz, beginning the song *Something Bad* by sharing:

“I’ve heard of an ox, a professor from Quox, no longer permitted to teach, who has lost all powers of speech...”
Doctor Dillamond, himself, becomes a target of this treatment of Animals in Oz.

**Show your students an image of Doctor Dillamond’s blackboard with the graffiti saying –
“Animals should be seen and not heard”.**

Ask your students who they think would paint such a message and why? How would this message make Animals feel? How does this image make the students feel? Ask your students what they could do to help Doctor Dillamond. Use their answers to stand up for the Animals of Oz. Students may prepare posters, letters to the editor and even TV advertisements in support of the Animals’ rights.

The Oxford Dictionary of English defines propaganda as “information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view”. There are several moments in the musical that demonstrate the Wizard’s use of propaganda. One such example is the scene in which the students at Shiz University are shown the lion cub in a cage.

SCENE EXCERPT

Official: More and more everyday, with each tick of the Time Dragon Clock, in every corner of Our Great Oz, one hears the Silence of Progress. For example: This is called a “cage”. You’ll be seeing more and more of them in the future. This remarkable innovation is actually for the Animals’ own good, and—

Elphaba: If it’s so good for him, why is he trembling?

Official: He’s excited to be here, that’s all. As I was saying - one of the benefits of caging a lion cub this young is that he will never, in fact, learn how to speak!

Elphaba: Oh no!

Official: That’s right, gather ‘round...

Elphaba: Can you imagine a world where animals are kept in cages? And they never speak?

Official: He does seem a bit agitated. But that’s easily remedied... (he takes out a syringe)

Elphaba: What are we going to do?!

Fiyero: We?!

Elphaba: Well, somebody has to do something!

Have your students rehearse an alternative ending to this scene, showing what they would do after the Official’s first line. Would they question the information being presented to them? Would they be an ‘upstander’ or a bystander? Use the students’ performances to prompt a discussion about the importance of critical analysis. Ask them if they can think of any examples of propaganda that they have seen either from history or from today. How did it make them feel?