

# THE GREAT WAR and the Shaping of the 20th Century

## Lesson Plan Three: No One Spared

### Overview

World War I crossed boundaries across the globe, not sparing most in its wake, civilians and military alike. Total war may also best describe the spirit in which nations and their people battled. Nationalism is what drove the fight – people fought in World War I believing that victory for their own country was worth the cost. In this lesson, students will explore the devastation the war inflicted on millions of people around the world.

### Learning Objectives

As a result of completing these activities, students will:

- Identify the many groups of people devastated by WWI
- Describe how the war took its toll on these populations
- Write a first-hand account of the impact of WWI

### Standards

This lesson meets the following standards set by the Mid-Century Research for Education and Learning (<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/search.asp>):

#### **World History**

##### *Standard 39*

Understands the causes and global consequences of World War I

##### *Benchmarks*

Understands events that contributed to the outbreak of World War I (e.g., diverse long-range causes of World War I, such as political and economic rivalries, ethnic and ideological conflicts, militarism, imperialism, and nationalism; how nationalism threatened the balance of power among the Great Powers in Europe, and why it was considered one of the causes of World War I)

Understands the role of the U.S. and other countries in World War I (e.g., how the Russian Revolution and the entry of the United States affected the course and outcome of the war, motivations behind the entrance of the U.S. into the war)

#### **United States History**

##### *Standard 6*

Understands the changing role of the United States in world affairs through World War I

##### *Benchmarks*

Understands the development of World War I (e.g., the influence of industrial research in aviation and chemical warfare on military strategy and the war's

outcome, how technological developments contributed to the war's brutality, the system of alliances through which European nations sought to protect their interests, how nationalism and militarism contributed to the outbreak, how the war expanded to become a world war)

Understands the United States' intervention in World War I (e.g., the impact of U.S. public opinion on the Wilson administration's evolving foreign policy during the period 1914 to 1917, Wilson's leadership during the period of neutrality and his reasons for U.S. intervention)

Understands the causes, course, and impact of World War I prior to U.S. entry (e.g., motivations of leading world powers, the relative success of nations in mobilizing their resources and populations, the relative success of their propaganda campaigns to influence neutral nations, the successes of military strategies, and the general spirit of disillusionment)

### **Materials**

- Computers with Internet access
- WWI primary source documents that reflect the war's impact on humanity
- Print and online WWI resources

### **Estimated Time**

3-4 classroom periods (with some research and writing done at home)

### **Teaching Strategy**

Instruct students to briefly reflect on the impact WWI had on humanity and to offer one sentence that sums up its catastrophic effect on civilians and military members. Briefly review with students how the total war affected different groups of people. Point students to the following Great War links to bolster their understanding of the war's impact:

- The Armenian Genocide  
[http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/historian/hist\\_winter\\_09\\_armenian.html](http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/historian/hist_winter_09_armenian.html)
- Total War: Everyone's a Target  
[http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/historian/hist\\_winter\\_11\\_totalwar.html](http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/historian/hist_winter_11_totalwar.html)
- Women's Contribution to the War Effort  
[http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/historian/hist\\_braybon\\_01\\_women.html](http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/historian/hist_braybon_01_women.html)
- Total War  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwone/total\\_war\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwone/total_war_01.shtml)

Divide students into small groups and distribute a packet of primary source documents reflecting how WWI affected various populations. (See Online Resources below. Documents can include newspaper articles, letters, photographs, etc. See web resources below.) Each group can receive the same or different documents. If the same, they should reflect as many varied groups of people as possible. If different, each group should have different materials reflecting two-three various populations.

Instruct students to review the materials and make determinations about how “the total war” took its toll on humanity. They should note, for example, the extent of human casualties, how people died, which groups were especially targeted (e.g., the Armenians), and specific events that caused the most deaths (e.g., major battles.)

Ask each group to share its reflections. Chart the various groups of people identified and provide additional information on each one. Students can conduct additional research to find the total number of casualties per group.

Ask each student to assume the role of a fictitious character present during WWI. The character can be a soldier, a journalist, a civilian, a military or political leader, a nurse, etc. (It may be helpful to create a list of roles.) The character can share his or her first-hand experiences watching, for example, the Armenian Genocide or a soldier during a day of battle. The character writes a letter or poem, tells the story as a monologue, whatever vehicle the students choose to convey these close-up encounters with the WWI warfront. Students can share their perspectives with the class.

## **Activity 2. War in Literature**

In this lesson, students will look at several poems written by World War I soldiers, evaluate the effectiveness of the work to describe the horrors of war to the reader, and write their own descriptive works and poetry about World War I battles and conditions.

During World War I, several soldiers wrote of their experiences through poems about the conflict. Wilfred Owen, who was killed one week before the signing of the armistice, and Siegfried Sassoon are two soldier-poets specifically mentioned in the Great War site ([http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/chapters/ch4\\_voices2.html](http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/chapters/ch4_voices2.html)). Other soldiers wrote as well, including the American Joyce Kilmer, author of *Trees*.

Ask students to review several of the poems printed, either on the Great War site or included in the Online Resources below. The teacher may elect to read some of the poems to the class, ask students to read them, or if there is a computer with sound card, speakers, and if needed, appropriate software, the teacher may play sound files of some of the poems included on the site(s).

After giving students sufficient time to read/reflect on the poems, ask the following questions in class discussion:

- Look at one specific poem. What particular message do you think the author was trying to convey in his work?
- Do these poems give the reader an accurate depiction of the true meaning and impact of war on the average soldier and their families, especially during the World War I era?
- Do you think these poems were a significant source of anti-war feeling with the Allies or with the Central Powers? Why or why not?
- What sorts of specific word pictures do the authors use to get the reader to “see” and “feel” the same experiences they did?
- Do you think artistic works such as these poems would be successful or popular today? If US soldiers stationed in Afghanistan or Iraq wrote this type of literature, would audiences positively receive it?

After this segment of the lesson, ask students to review the *Great War* site for information about specific battles and military operations. (Suggestions include the Battle of the Somme, Verdun, Gallipoli, and Tannenberg. The teacher may direct students to the “Maps and Battles” page of the *Great War* site (<http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/maps/>) for geographic and background information about battles, or may wish to have students search the site for information.

Allow sufficient time for students to do their research. Once the research is concluded, students should write an original poem about some aspect of the war. Suggested areas to focus on include:

- Everyday conditions of the common infantryman during the war
- Specific battles (either as listed above, or the teacher may elect to use other battles discussed in the class’s textbook or in class discussion)
- Technology used in war (for example, the experiences of flyer during the war, or a sailor stationed on a U-Boat)

The teacher may wish to add whatever criteria desired, such as length of the poem.

### **Online Resources**

The Western Front and the Birth of Total War  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwone/total\\_war\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwone/total_war_01.shtml)

Schools Online World War One-Survivor  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/worldwarone/survivor/>

Schools Online World War One-Soldier  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/worldwarone/soldier/>

Schools Online World War One-Sister  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/worldwarone/sister/>

Death of an Air Ace, 1918  
<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/luf.htm>

Gas Attack, 1916  
<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/gas.htm>

Lawrence of Arabia, 1918  
<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/lawrence.htm>

Military Casualties of World War One  
<http://www.ysursa.com/history/West%20Civ/Textbook/WWI-casualties.htm>

First World War.com/Primary Documents  
<http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/index.htm>

Bryce Report into the Armenian Massacre, October 1915  
[http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/brycereport\\_armenia.htm](http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/brycereport_armenia.htm)

France at War  
[http://www.richthofen.com/france\\_at\\_war/](http://www.richthofen.com/france_at_war/)

Hasan Etem/Armin Wegner  
[http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/chapters/ch2\\_voices2.html](http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/chapters/ch2_voices2.html)

First World War.com: Memoirs and Diaries  
<http://www.firstworldwar.com/diaries/index.htm>

“the rest is silence: Lost Poets of the Great War”  
(<http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/LostPoets/>)

“An Introduction to World War I Poets” includes analysis of several World War I era poets and their works (<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ltg/projects/jtap/tutorials/intro/>)

Sonnets of World War I page (<http://www.sonnets.org/wwi.htm>)

### **Assessment Recommendations**

Create a rubric to assess the level of student ability to analyze and draw information from primary source documents. Assess student involvement in collaborative learning. Have students keep a writing portfolio to review their writing process.

### **Extension Activities**

- Estimate the number of civilians killed per nation during WWI and estimate the total number of the war's civilian casualties.
- Analyze the Armenian slaughter and compare it to other war-related genocides over the years.
- Compile a collection of letters from WWI that speak to its impact.

### **About the Authors**

Michele Israel has been an educator in varied capacities for more than 20 years. As founder and director of Educational Consulting Group, Israel currently serves nonprofit and educational institutions, providing services including strategic planning, educational product development and project management. In addition, she produces learning materials and writes articles for companies such as PBS, Education World and CNN/Turner Learning.

Michael Hutchison teaches social studies at Lincoln High School in Vincennes, Indiana, and at Vincennes University. In both 1996 and 1997, Michael was named a national winner of the 21st Century Teacher competition. In addition to his teaching positions, Michael hosts a weekly social studies forum for TAPPED IN, works as a staff member for ED Oasis, and serves as a faculty member of Connected University.