

THE GREAT WAR and the Shaping of the 20th Century

Lesson Plan Six: World War I Ends

Overview

Thanks in large part to assistance from the United States, the allies were able to stop a German assault on the Western Front. Consequently, German support for the war dissolved and a cease-fire was put into effect in November 1918. The entry of the United States into the war in 1917 was key to Germany's military collapse and the end of the military stalemate. President Woodrow Wilson did not want to keep the U.S. out of the conflict but a series of events, including German submarines attacking U.S. targets, pushed Wilson to ask for a declaration of war from Congress. By 1918, five million Americans were in uniform. In this lesson, students will examine this and other causes of the German collapse that led to the end of the war and an eventual but fragile peace.

Lesson Objectives

As a result of completing these activities, students will:

- Understand why the United States entered the World War I
- Brainstorm what led to the German collapse on the front.
- Examine the basic components/factors of the collapse.
- Review arguments for the factors contributing to the end of the war.

Standards

This lesson meets the following standards set by the Mid-Century Research for Education and Learning (<http://www.mcrcel.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)

Estimated Time

Three to Four classroom periods (with time allotted for research outside of class).

Materials Needed

- Chart paper and markers
- Copies of lyrics or overhead of lyrics
- Internet access, or copies of relevant pages from *The Great War* and other web sites

Teaching Strategy

Activity One: The U.S. Enters the War

On April 6, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson asked the U.S. Congress for a declaration of war with Germany. Wilson had been trying to keep the United States neutral in the conflict while trading with Great Britain hoping not to antagonize Germany. That delicate balancing act couldn't succeed forever.

Assign each team to explore factors –economic, diplomatic and military-- that eventually pushed Wilson into declaring war on Germany. Why was isolationism such a powerful force at that time? What were the economic interests at stake? Students can either write papers, or perform skits depicting a strategy session or cabinet meeting in the Wilson Administration. You could also design a role-play simulation in which various groups try to persuade the Wilson to either enter or stay out of the conflict. To assist student in their

research, distribute the handout <link to pdf document>. Under each heading, students can record how each issue was being debated by U.S. officials and how related events pushed the country toward war.

In addition to the resources on The Great War site, including historian David Kennedy's essay (http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/historian/hist_kennedy_01_wilson.html), the following resources may be helpful:

- World War I Document Archive: A Statement In Opposition to U.S. Entry Into the War (1917):
<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1917/norris.html>
- Documents of World War I:
<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ww1.htm>
- Wikipedia:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I
- How We Entered World War I:
<http://www.geocities.com/~worldwar1/how.html>
- America's Entry Into World War I
<http://www.worldwar1.com/dbc/reasons.htm>

Activity Two: The Road to Cease-Fire

Ask students to read "Collapse" (http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/chapters/ch3_collapse.html) Write "Events leading to the Collapse" on the whiteboard/chalkboard. Ask students to discuss which events led to the collapse of the German army. (Use the sites listed in Online Resources below.) Divide students into small groups. Each group is assigned a certain time period as follows; pre 1914-1914, 1915-1916, 1917-1918, 1919-1920, 1921-1922, 1923-1924. Each group will be responsible for organizing research notes into a timeline that depicts global events related to World War I.

The teacher may also wish to refer to the map section of the *Great War* web site, especially the map of the Western Front in 1918 (http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/maps/maps_western.html), to demonstrate the collapse of the German position in the war. (The map is animated, and if possible, the teacher should find a suitable way to project the web page output onto a screen to demonstrate the end of the war geographically to the entire class, or the teacher may elect to ask students to view it in groups or individually in the computer lab.)

To organize research notes, students should create a timeline using the resources (<http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/timeline/>) on the Great War and other sites. Use The Great

War: Historians (<http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/historians>) as a place to begin collecting data.

Divide the class evenly into "Precedents set in World War I continue to affect us today" and " Precedents set in World War 1 do not continue to affect us today ". Have students representing like ideas work in pairs to identify the pro and con arguments regarding choices and the alternative plans. Students should refer to their previous research from this lesson. Pair students representing alternative points of view and have each pair debate the issue and then submit written arguments.

Assessment Suggestions

- Students may be assessed in several ways:
- Students could create a questionnaire to test their peers' knowledge of
- A teacher or student-created rubric can be used to measure the level of student understanding.
- Student research charts, fact sheets, and written debate arguments can be collected and graded.
- Students may be assessed on their group involvement, as well as participation in class discussion.

Extension Activity

- Discuss the historian Robert Wohl's comments in "No Escape – Shaping of the 20th Century," (http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/historian/hist_wohl_07_escape.html) He writes: "Culturally, the war dragged on, and has dragged on into the post-war period, in many respects. In what sense? Because the war changed the way that we think about war." How did World War I change the way people view war? According to Wohl, how has patriotism been affected?

Online Resources

The Great War: Chapter I:

http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/chapters/ch1_overview.html

World War I Document Archive:

<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/>

WWI Timeline:

<http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/timeline/>

Summary of World War I:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwone/summary_01.shtml

World War I Timeline:

<http://www.america-at-war.net/wwi.htm>

First World War.com - How a Right Can Make a Wrong:

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/tandey.htm>

Channel4.com - The First World War:

http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/F/firstworldwar/cont_cracking_3.html

About the Author

From classroom instructor to an executive director, Linda Ferguson has been an educator for nearly 20 years. She has developed curricula and educational materials, and designed and facilitated professional development for classroom and community educators locally and nationally. Currently operating the Geo-Literacy Project International she is involved with diverse projects, including strategic planning and product development. A PhD candidate her recent projects include online teacher materials for The George Lucas Educational Foundation, Intel, and Apple.

Student Handout
The United States and World War I

Under each category, list some of the issues that were being debated by U.S. officials before the United States entered the war.

The United States Was Under Attack

Democracy was in Jeopardy

U.S. Economic Interests Were Threatened

U.S. Cultural and Economic Ties to Great Britain