

THE GREAT WAR and the Shaping of the 20th Century

Lesson Plan Eight: The Legacy of the “Great War”

Overview

Within a generation of the signing of the treaty ending World War I, world war again swept through Europe as Adolf Hitler sought to restore German strength and power in the Third Reich by invading several of the new nations created in the treaty.

After Hitler’s defeat in 1945, the Allies who had united to win the war found themselves at odds again over the future of Europe as the Soviet Union sought to protect its borders and spread its influence in the Cold War. Eventually the burgeoning Soviet Empire collapsed in last years of the 20th Century, but new questions and conflicts arose as ethnic groups which had been contained within the new nations created in 1919 found themselves engaged in ethnic cleansing and struggles for superiority as those nations collapsed and new boundaries were drawn across the European continent.

In this lesson, students will investigate this continuing evolution as it ran through the 20th Century and beyond.

Learning Objectives

As a result of completing these activities, students will:

- Learn how the map of Europe changed as a result of the end of World War I and the signing of the Versailles Treaty.
- Investigate how the re-drawing of the map of Europe by the Big Four helped sow the seeds for the rise of Adolf Hitler and after the Allied victory in World War II, led to the Cold War.
- Learn how the end of the Cold War led to a period of “ethnic cleansing” and realignment of various groups in central and eastern Europe in the 1990s.
- Speculate on the future of political systems and national alignment in Europe in the early part of the 21st Century.

Estimated Time

Four to five class periods, depending on number of activities desired for students to complete, and the depth of investigation desired by the teacher.

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 40

Understands the search for peace and stability throughout the world in the 1920s and 1930s

Benchmarks

Understands how World War I influenced demographics and the international economy (e.g., the impact of the war on the international economy and the effects of industrial conversion from war to peace in Britain, France, Italy, and Germany; significant refugee populations created as a result of World War I, and their movements and dispersion)

Understands reasons for the shifts in the political conditions in nations around the world after World War I (e.g., how social and economic conditions of colonial rule, and ideals of liberal democracy and national autonomy contributed to the rise of nationalist movements in India, Africa, and Southeast Asia; the successes and failures of democratic government in Latin America in the context of class divisions, economic dependency, and U.S. intervention; how Japan's domestic democracy may have fallen victim to its imperialist foreign policy)

Understands how the treaties ending World War I and the League of Nations addressed different groups of people (e.g., how treaties ending World War I accorded with Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and the processes by which the treaties were established, the varied reactions of the Chinese to the provisions of the Versailles Peace Treaty, the goals and failures of the "racial equality clause" in the preamble to the Covenant of the League of Nations)

Understands post-World War I shifts in geographic and political borders in Europe and the Middle East (e.g., how the postwar borders in Southern Europe and the Middle East were created, including influence of local opinion, prewar "spheres of influence," long-and short-term interests; how Ataturk worked to modernize Turkey, how Turkish society and international society responded)

Understands arguments and theories regarding the causes of World War I (e.g., the role of social and class conflict leading to World War I; how primary and secondary sources illustrate the arguments presented by leaders on the eve of the Great War; why and how political leaders in European nations felt aggressive foreign policy, and the advocacy of war, would help subdue domestic discontent and disorder; the arguments for and against war used by diverse political groups and figures in European countries)

Materials

- Computers with Internet access
- Multimedia software (such as Microsoft Power Point).
- Print and online sources with maps of post-war Europe
- Large magic markers
- Chalkboard and chalk

Teaching Strategy

Prior to opening the activities with students, the teacher may wish to review the related resources on the PBS “Great War” web site, specifically the sections in Chapter 4, “Hatred and Hunger”, and “War Without End.”

(http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/chapters/ch4_overview.html)

As an overview for the lesson, the teacher should also discuss the purposes of the Versailles Conference in comparison to the armistice signed at Compiègne. (While the Versailles Conference would decide the terms for the end of World War I, the armistice simply was an agreement between the combatants to end the fighting.)

As a second preliminary step, the teacher should also diagram the participants, nations, goals, and outcomes of each of the “Big Four” delegates to the treaty. (see Student Handout)

After the discussion of the goals and outcomes of the Versailles Treaty, students should have a basic idea and understanding of the problems and issues facing the world community as it struggled to make the world “safe for democracy”, and heal the wounds of the war.

Activity One: Redrawing the Map

In this activity, students will act in groups as “Big Four” delegates to re-draw the map of Europe in hopes of providing more realistic “ethnic homelands” for people living in the Balkan Peninsula and avoid future unrest and disruption of world peace.

At the start of the lesson, ask students to review why nationalism became one of the fundamental causes of the war, and discuss the role of various terrorist groups during the pre-World War I era, particularly the “Black Hand”, which assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914. Ask students to speculate on whether allowing these various ethnic groups in the Balkan Peninsula prior to 1914 would have been enough to keep World War I from occurring. (Some students may say yes based on the idea that the Archduke would not have been assassinated, but other students would probably note that there were several other fundamental causes of the war that might have still caused the outbreak of hostilities.)

(Note: if necessary, the teacher may wish to review the fundamental causes of the war as well as various ethnic groups which felt oppressed during the pre-war years. Check the Great War page, “Chapter 1, Explosion”

(http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/chapters/ch1_explosion.html) for further information and reference.)

Next, ask students to review the ideas and thoughts of the historians listed in “The Shaping of the 21st Century” section of the Great War site (<http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/thenandnow/>). They should pay special attention to the sections on the page including, “Overview”, “World Terrorism”, “Serbia Explodes

Again 80 Years Later”, “Immigration”, “Bosnia and Rwanda Genocide”, and “European Union”. Suggest to the class that in some ways, the personal views and prejudices of the Big Four delegates may have caused more antagonisms and hatred between the “old order” and groups seeking a homeland and national identity.

The teacher should then divide the class into groups. Number of groups and students in each group will be dependent on the size of the class. Ask students to review the map of Europe in 1914 (<http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/maps/>), as well as the map of Europe at the conclusion of the Versailles Conference (http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/chapters/ch4_war.html).

Next, distribute blank European maps to each group (see the links above for outline maps with and without national boundaries as of 2004; it may also be an idea to provide extra copies for each group).

Announce to the student groups that based on their knowledge of World War I, as well as their review of the online resources, and knowledge of current events, they are to re-draw national boundaries on the European outline map in a way that, in their view, more adequately provides for ethnic homelands as well as providing for the security and economic benefit of nations on that continent. In addition to the physical map, they also must develop and present to the class as a whole a “position paper” which should include the rationale for the group regarding their map decisions, as well as a persuasive argument as to why their proposal should be selected over other student groups in the class.

Activity Two: The Seeds of World War II

In this lesson, students will investigate the issues and mistakes made by the Versailles delegates that led to the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Second World War, less than a generation after the end of the First World War.

Students working in groups will evaluate the evidence in the Great War site and make conclusions based on those resources as to what the Allies might have done to avoid another conflict. After they collect information from the resources, they will develop multimedia presentations highlighting their findings.

For purposes of this assignment, divide the class into three groups to conduct their research and create their presentations. Each group will research a particular aspect of how the Versailles Treaty and the end of World War I led directly to the beginning of the Second World War.

The groups include:

1. Political causes
2. Social causes
3. Economic causes

The groups should specifically look for information that fits the focus of their assignment.

While the teacher will want to set their own criteria for the length of the presentation, as well as other factors (animations, sounds, slide transitions, etc.), a sample “Criteria Sheet” outlining student requirements, and a sample rubric for grading presentations.

Note: If the teacher does not have access to Internet access and/or multimedia presentation software, the lesson can easily be adapted for students to develop traditional “poster presentations” of their findings by using poster board and traditional images copied from books and magazines.

Also, as an extension activity, the teacher may elect to have students create web pages highlighting their findings.

Allot sufficient time for students to research the Great War pages for information and evidence. Students should also research other sources, such as other web pages, text books, other books, and so on.

Once students have completed their research, they can work in their group to put together the presentation. When the presentations are completed, the teacher may wish to make arrangements to have the presentations viewed by the entire class, and have the class do peer evaluations and reviews of their fellow student groups’ presentations.

Online Resources

The Great War - Map of Europe at the start of World War I (1914):
<http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/maps/>

Map of Europe at the conclusion of the Versailles Conference:
http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/chapters/ch4_war.html

Outline maps (downloadable) of modern-day Europe:
<http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/europe.html> (Note: maps are in .pdf format, and the user will need the Adobe Acrobat Reader to view and print them.)

Western Front Association - World War I Links Central:
<http://www.wfa-usa.org/new/links.cfm>

Documents Relating to World War I:
<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ww1.htm>

Modern History Sourcebook (Terms of the Treaty of Versailles):
(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1919versailles.html>)

BBC World War I site:
(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwone/>)

Assessment Recommendations

The teacher should develop some sort of evaluation instrument based on whatever criteria desired. Criteria might include:

- Is the information in the “position paper” historically sound?
- Did the group present a persuasive argument for their point of view?
- Did the group use correct spelling and grammar in their oral presentation and in their “position paper”?
- Did the presentation include a bibliography of all sources used by the group for their project?

About the Author

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Student Handout
The Big Four

Delegate	Nation Represented	Goals	Outcomes
Woodrow Wilson	United States	World Peace, 14 Points, League of Nations	Wilson found he had to compromise most of his idealism in order to save the idea of the League of Nations
David Lloyd-George	Great Britain	Wanted to “make Germany pay” for the war”	Forced Germany to sign “war guilt clause”, forced Germany to give up territory, and pay war debts of the Allies.
Georges Clemenceau	France	Wanted territory, concerned about the future security of France	Took Alsace-Lorraine and Saar Basin from Germany, established Polish Corridor to weaken Germany
Vittorio Orlando	Italy	Wanted territory for Italy	Orlando’s demands were ignored by the other delegates. He became frustrated and went back to Italy.