

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

New Report Confirms Gulf War Syndrome Is Real, 11/21/08

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/health/july-dec08/gulf_11-21.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

[Student Worksheet](#) (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. When was the first Gulf War?

2. Who was involved in the conflict?

3. Have you heard of Gulf War Syndrome? If so, what is it, if not, what does it sound like?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

1. What started the First Gulf War?

ANSWER

The first Gulf War began in August 1990 when Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein amassed troops in the south and then invaded its neighbor Kuwait.

U.S. President George H.W. Bush (father of 43rd President George W. Bush), backed by the United Nations, ordered the Iraqi Army to withdraw from Kuwait by Jan. 16 or face military action.

On Jan. 17, a coalition of 34 nations launched a major air and land campaign that lasted six weeks. Much of Iraq's military and civilian infrastructure was destroyed, and Iraq withdrew from Kuwait in February 1991.

2. What is Gulf War syndrome?

ANSWER

Gulf War syndrome is an illnesses suffered by many war veterans caused by exposure to chemical toxins during the First Gulf War.

3. What are the symptoms?

ANSWER

Symptoms typically included persistent memory and concentration problems, chronic headaches, widespread pain, gastrointestinal problems and other chronic abnormalities.

4. How many soldiers suffer from Gulf War Illness?

ANSWER

Nearly one quarter of returning troops -- more than 175,000 veterans -- suffer from the illness.

5. What caused the illness?

ANSWER

The illness was caused by two toxic exposures either working together or by themselves: the ingestion of pyridostigmine bromide, PB pills -- which were provided to the troops to protect against nerve gas attack-- and pesticides, which were used to protect the troops from disease-carrying insects, according to the report.

6. Why is this report a “bittersweet” victory?

ANSWER

Anthony Hardie, a Gulf War veteran and member of the committee, called the report "a bittersweet victory, [because] this is what Gulf War veterans have been saying all along. Years were squandered by the federal government ... trying to disprove that anything could be wrong with Gulf War veterans."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. Why do you think there has been so little research into a cure for the illness?

2. Some veterans have been suffering for 17 years how do you think they should be compensated? Where should the money come from? Remember that many soldiers are returning from the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) how should these soldiers be helped?

3. Imagine you suffered from Gulf War illness, what significance do you think this report would have to you?

4. Is there a Veterans Administration health care facility in your community? What can your school do to help care for veterans returning from wars?

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.