

Lesson Plan

Contemporary History World at War: Introduction

Length

Two 45 minute periods

Grade Level

High School

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to identify the main reasons why countries go to war.

[Contemporary History World at War: Introduction](#)

[Guided Reading Handout](#)

[Presentation](#)

Class One

1. **(10 Minutes) Think-Pair-Share:** On the board, write the following question: How do countries decide to go to war? Have students consider the question, discuss with a neighbor, and then share out with the class.
2. **(10 Minutes) Activating Background Knowledge:** Explain to the class that they will be looking into why WWI and WWII happened and how this shaped the modern world. Ask students to create a written brainstorm (paper/ board/ newsprint) about what they know about the following three ideas:
 - What do you know about WWI? Why did it happen?
 - What do you know about WWII? Why did it happen?
 - When finished, spend a couple minutes and discuss it as a class.
3. **(10 Minutes) Watch:** *How Do Countries Decide Whether to Go to War?* And complete Part 1 of the guided reading handout.
4. **(15 Minutes) Readings/ Notes:** Divide the class in half and assign to each group ONE of these readings:
 - Group 1: *Why Did World War I Happen?* → Part 2 of the Guided Reading Handout
 - Group 2: *Why Did World War II Happen?* → Part 3 of the Guided Reading Handout
 - Tell students that they should annotate or take notes on the major reasons leading to war. They should consider if some of these general ideas/ concepts still exist in the modern world. Students will work during the next class to compare and contrast the wars.

Homework

Students will complete their assigned reading for the next class.

Class Two

1. **(5 Minutes) Establish Jigsaw Groups:** Create small groups of students composed of half who did the WWI reading and half who did the WWII reading. Ideally, each group should have a minimum of two students who did each reading.
2. **(10 Minutes) Share:** WWI students should take about 5 minutes to share key notes (Part 2 of Guided Reading Handout). WWII students should take about 5 minutes to share key notes (Part 3 of the guided reading handout).

3. **(30 Minutes) Activity** - Applying the Lessons of a World at War: Students will complete the attached worksheet in their groups. They will be asked to compare and contrast WWI and WWII and consider what lessons are important to carry forward.

Homework

1. Students will write a one-page response building off of “Applying the Lesson of a World at War.” They will answer the following questions:
 - o What do World War I and World War II teach us about how countries decide to go to war?
 - o What general patterns seem to make war more likely?
 - o What are some key indicators that could lead to war?

Vocabulary

acquisition

when one company takes over another.

alliance

an official partnership between two or more parties based on cooperation in pursuit of a common goal, generally involving security or defense.

arms race

a competition between rival parties to develop and accumulate weapons. A nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union was a defining element of the Cold War.

civil war

a war among groups inside of one country.

communism

a political and economic system in which private property is eliminated in favor of common, public ownership of the means of production (such as factories), natural resources, and more, leading to the creation of a stateless, classless society.

foreign intervention

when one country interferes in the affairs of another, often referring to military operations.

industrialization

the process by which the balance of production shifts from agriculture toward manufacturing and industry.

infectious disease

also called communicable, a disease that spreads via people, animals, insects, or contaminated food and water—such as the flu, chickenpox, or Ebola.

pandemic

disease outbreak that has reached at least several countries, affecting a large group of people.

prisoners of war

members of organized fighting forces, usually states' military forces, who are captured and held by the opposing side pursuant to special rules defined in the Third Geneva Convention.

