

America at War

Anita Genna-Wolfe, WCVE

Overview

Topic: The Great War. This lesson centers on the issues facing Americans as World War I raged in Europe. By the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to describe what outraged Americans so much that they could no longer remain neutral. The student will also be able to discuss how the United States' role in World War I confirmed America's emergence as a global power.

Time Allotment

1 - 90 minute class period

Subject Matter

History/Social Science
Language Arts
Math
Science

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain the meaning of the word *neutrality*.
- Describe how America's economy changed during WWI.
- Explain what role the sinking of the *Lusitania* played in America's decision to enter the war.
- Distinguish fact from fiction using propaganda as a source.
- Describe and analyze the changing role of the United States in WWI and how it emerged as a global power.

(This lesson addresses Va. SOL Social Science USII.4

Language Arts 6.2, 6.5, 6.6, 6.8; Math 6.7 and Science 6.8)

Media Components

Video

History in Focus: #2, 1910-1919

Web Sites

World War I Trenches on the Web

<http://www.worldwar1.com>

Enter this site, go to the reference library and find a gallery of information. Here you will find a Media Room, the Armory, Photos, Documents, War Atlas, Publications, a WWI Forum and much, much more. Information in several languages is also available.

Picture Gallery: Lusitania Photo

<http://members.aol.com/linersWebM>

The Picture Gallery offers a photo list of famous ships dating from the early 1900's to 1965. New photos are added to this site on a continuing basis. Check it often!

Materials

Materials the teacher will need to prepare for the



Introductory Activity:

- 1 pair of scissors or cutting board
- 4 different colors of paper
- 1 plastic snack ziplock baggie for each student
- 3 scenarios to insert in each plastic ziplock bag (see attachments for scenario numbers 1, 2 and 3 (the draft))
- 1 Copy of “Now This Is What I Think” survey form for each student. (see attachments)
- 1 copy of the photo of the Lusitania (<http://members.aol.com/linersWebM>) for back side of survey form (see attachments)

Materials the teacher will need for the Culminating Activity:

- 1 4x6 index card for each student
- 1 photo of a World War I action photo pasted to each card (find photos at <http://www.worldwar1.com>)
- 1 large glue stick (to paste WWI photo to index card)

Materials the teacher will need for the Assessment:

- 1 copy of “World War I” Jeopardy game with answers (see attachments)
- 1 Large “Red Cross” box covered on all sides with the Red Cross symbol colored in red. Box should contain “gifts” of soap, powder, paper, pencils, etc. for each student ‘soldier’.

For each student:

- 1 “Now This Is What I Think” survey form
- 1 plastic snack baggie filled with three scenarios
- 1 4x6 “World War I” postcard
- 1 pen or pencil

Introductory Activity

1. Say, “It is 1914 and Europe is at war. Many people are without jobs and those fortunate enough to work make very low incomes. Rumor has it that new jobs will soon be available in the United States because our allies in Europe need our goods and services for the war effort. The President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, and most of the country wants to remain neutral and isolate themselves from

alliances with other nations.” Ask, “Can anyone tell me what the word neutral means?” (*Don’t get involved, don’t favor either side, stay in the middle*). After the students respond, ask, “Why do you think the American people did not want to get involved in this war?” (*Not their fight, nothing to gain, too much to lose, people will die*). Ask, “Is it possible to help someone win a war by supplying them with important goods and services?” (*Most should say yes*). To help students draw a conclusion, the teacher should then ask, “Can you help someone win a war by supplying what is needed and still remain neutral?” (*Most students should say no. If students say yes, then ask how that conclusion was drawn*).

2. Say, “Most of the people in America felt the same way. Some said yes and some said no. To help you better understand a number of the issues that Americans faced during this time (1914 - 1916), let’s take a short imaginary trip back to that era. While on this trip you are going to do an activity that will allow you to make important decisions and draw some interesting conclusions about entering the war or remaining neutral. Remember, during this time women were not allowed to fight in the military, so you are also going to have to imagine that you are a man between the ages of 18 and 35.”

3. After the teacher hands a survey form (attached) and the baggie containing three pre-WWI scenarios (attached) to each student, say, “Each of you has been handed a plain sheet of paper and a sealed plastic baggie containing different colored folded sheets. When I tell you to begin, I want you to read the folded sheet that corresponds to the color I name. Do not discuss your scenario with the person next to you. Your situation is very private. After reading each small sheet of paper, place the answers required in each of the corresponding columns. Place each folded sheet back into the baggie, and when finished, seal up the baggie. You have 15 minutes for this activity. When you have completed your survey forms, we will discuss your answers.”

Note to the teacher: The purpose of this activity is to give each student a very personal understanding of circumstances that may have affected and possibly swayed many Americans into entering the Great War.

Learning Activities

1. “Say, “You have just discovered how difficult it was for people in the United States to remain neutral about WWI. You have also learned that feelings and beliefs of neutrality were no longer a consideration if “Uncle Sam” called you to serve in the military. Now, you will be watching segments of a video about America’s eventual involvement in WWI. I will pause or stop the video from time to time to ask questions and discuss things that you have seen or heard. Are you ready?” **START** the *History in Focus #2* video where the narrator says, “Serbian soldiers were jubilant...” **PAUSE** the video after the narrator says, “...Europe was at war.” Ask, “What was happening in Europe that might have had an impact on the United States?” After discussing student answers, ask, “Who can name one enemy of Germany and one enemy of England?”

2. **Focus for Media Interaction:** Say, “In this next segment, you will hear that war was raging in Europe. Listen carefully and focus on what President Wilson was trying to do.” **RESUME** the video and **PAUSE** where the narrator says, “...and Americans proved willing and able.” Ask, “What was the President trying to do to remain neutral? What attempts did he make to follow through?” **REWIND** and **PLAY** the video segment again for comprehension and further discussion, if necessary.

3. **Focus:** Say, “The narrator just told us that Americans proved willing and able to supply goods to Europe during the war. A country can be willing to help, but they also have to be able to produce many goods and supplies. During this segment, listen to the narrator and watch the video carefully so that you can tell me if America had anything valuable to offer Europe, and if so, what?” **RESUME** the video and **PAUSE** after the narrator says, “...position of America in the war.” Ask the students what types of resources the United States made available. Continue to reinforce the fact that the more involved America became in helping our friends or allies, the less possible it was to remain neutral or non-biased.

4. **Focus:** Say, “American policy continued to

dictate neutrality, but in their hearts, most of the American people were deeply involved and took sides.” The teacher should **FAST FORWARD** and **PAUSE** the video where the narrator says, “...“But it was the submarine...” Say, “Watch and listen carefully to this next segment.” **RESUME** and **PAUSE** when the narrator says, “...and Germany showed no mercy.” Ask, “What happened to outrage the world? (*Submarine missiles sunk the Lusitania*). What was said about who would win the war?” (*Those who controlled the sea*).

5. **Focus:** Say, “People traveling by sea did not want to believe that anyone would attack a passenger vessel. After all, killing innocent men, women and children was considered uncivilized. In this next segment you will see a picture of an article cut from the newspaper. Listen carefully as the narrator tells you what the article says.” **RESUME** and **PAUSE** the video when the narrator says, “... nearly 1200 lives were lost.” Ask the students, “Who can tell me which country gave warning that all passenger ships traveling in a war zone should be considered unsafe?” (*Germany warned all seafaring passengers through advertisements in the newspaper.*)

6. **Focus:** Say, “In this next segment be able to discuss the troops being sent to Europe and what might be considered propaganda.” The teacher should **FAST FORWARD** the video to where hundreds of people are waving flags and the narrator says, “Only a month after his...” **RESUME** and **STOP** the video at the end of the song, “Over There.” Ask the students, “Why did America finally decide to actively send troops to Europe?” (*President Wilson declared war on Germany*). Ask, “Did you see or hear anything that might be considered propaganda? (*Yes, heard music, saw men standing in line for the draft, saw posters of Uncle Sam*). The teacher should complete this portion of the video lesson by discussing how America’s involvement in the Great War led them to an enhanced reputation of global greatness and power.

To the teacher: A utilization strategy that you may want to consider in this last video segment is **SOUND** or **VIDEO ON/OFF**. You can achieve this by covering the monitor with a towel or large sheet of paper before the song “Over There” begins. With the

VIDEO OFF the students can listen to the music and describe or predict what they think may be happening on the video. After removing the monitor cover, rewind the video and replay the same segment, this time also showing the visuals. This technique helps to enhance specific subject imagery.

Culminating Activity

Say, “When we filled out our survey forms, we discovered that 95% of you have been drafted. You are now in France either marching to the next war zone, or stuck in the muddy trenches attempting to stay alive. When you enlisted in the war, you were assured that you would be home for Christmas. This holiday has come and gone and there is no end to the war in sight. You are cold, wet, hungry and thirsty. You are also very lonely for your family whom you have not seen in months; however, something good and unexpected did happen just moments ago. The mail truck arrived. There is no mail for you, but you now have an opportunity to send a note home to a loved one. The Postman has enough post cards for everyone, but has limited time to wait for you to compose a note. (At this time the teacher will pass one post card to each student). Take a look at the photo on the postcard and use that picture to help you describe what is happening where *your* troop is located. Add information such as your morale, the availability of food and water, your physical condition and how you feel about the war. You may even want to note that the kind volunteers of the American Red Cross have not even found your camp. Remember, your allies or friends are France, England, and Russia. The central powers or the enemies are Germany and Austria-Hungary.”

“The “priest” and “rejected draftee” will also write a post card, but not to a loved one. These two people will write a short message to President Wilson describing his/her feelings and opinions about the war. You have 15 minutes to complete this project.”

Note to the teacher: When this project is complete, allow some volunteers to read his/her card to the class.

Assessment

WWI Jeopardy Game. This game includes 10 questions to review the material covered during this lesson. The teacher should divide the class into groups. Each group chooses a leader who is responsible for answering the questions. The leader may confer with the members of the group before answering. The student must raise his/her hand, be acknowledged and give a correct answer to score points. Unacknowledged or incorrect answers result in negative points. As a reward, the team with the highest score gets to choose an item from the Red Cross Box first. All other teams can then choose items from the box.

Cross-Curricular Extensions

Language Arts:

- The student could write a persuasive letter to President Wilson explaining why he/she believes the U.S. should enter the War or remain neutral. A poem could be added to the letter in hopes of swaying the President’s decision.
- Students could create a propaganda poster depicting an aspect of The Great War.

Science:

- Students could create a diary about the health situation at home or on the battlefield due to the result of a poor diet.
- Students could write a letter home describing how the sun and moon affect the war (Sun: heat; Moon: if full, more light in which to fight).
- Students could write a news article describing President Wilson’s decision to begin day-light-savings time and the affect it had on the public.

Math:

- Using a spreadsheet, have students calculate the size of artillery from different countries to discover whether size equals power.
- Using Excel, have students create a time line of

events during WWI.

- Students could compare the number of tragedies during WWI to other wars in which America was involved.

Community Connections

1. Students could create a scrapbook of war details including maps, newspaper articles, photos of lost ships, postcards, etc. found on a WWI Web Site or in his/her home.
2. Students could interview a family or community member who could share information about someone who fought or lived during WWI.
3. Students could visit a museum that has artifacts from WWI and share their findings with fellow students.

Internet Resources

- American Red Cross
<http://www.redcross.org> - The home page for the American Red Cross with up-to-date information about local and worldwide disasters. This site will keep you informed of the Red Cross' intervention programs, both present and past.
- Core Knowledge
<http://www.coreknowledge.org> - Great site! Includes lesson plans on social science and other core area subjects.
- The Gateway to Educational Materials
<http://www.thegateway.org> - The one-stop site for great curriculum units, lesson plans and other educational information.
- Learning Pages.Com
<http://www.sitesforteachers.com> - Recommended Internet site for core area educational materials, free lesson plans and links to other exciting sites.

- Lesson Planz.Com
<http://www.lessonplanz.com> - Teacher links, articles, lesson and instructional material for all subjects K-12.
- WWI: Photos of the Great War
www.ukans.edu/~kansite/ww_one/photos/greatwar.htm
You will be amazed at the photographs available at this site. Photo topics include: Refugees, Animals at War, Locations, Individuals, Auxiliaries, Weapons & Equipment and more.

About the Author

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Anita Genna-Wolfe is an Education Specialist for WCVE Richmond PBS. Prior to working at WCVE, Anita served as Program Manager for the Professional Skills Center for a local Richmond college, where her responsibilities included developing and scheduling open enrollment adult education courses and hiring and training program presenters and instructors. Anita also served as adjunct faculty teaching a variety of courses including Technology, English, Human Relations and Career Planning and Development. She has served as an Educational Consultant with the *Houston Post* where she developed, conducted and evaluated training programs for public school teachers to integrate news stories into the classroom curriculum. Anita has also worked with the New York public school system, teaching kindergarten and first grade. Anita holds three degrees: a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education, a Master of Arts in Education and a Master of Arts in Communications. A lover of cats, Anita has opened her heart and home to more than 30 strays over the years. Leisure activities include reading mystery novels, writing and doting on new granddaughter, Kaylee Ann. She also relishes time spent with her husband Lonnie.

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