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America in World War I

Backwards Planning Curriculum Units

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How to Use This Unit

Backwards planning offers an innovative yet simple approach to meeting curriculum goals; it also provides a way to keep students engaged and focused throughout the learning process. Many teachers approach history instruction in the following manner: they identify a topic required by state and/or national standards, they find materials on that topic, they use those materials with their students, and then they administer some sort of standard test at the end of the unit. Backwards planning, rather than just starting with a required instructional topic, goes a step further by identifying exactly what students need to know by the end of the unit—the so-called "enduring understandings." The next step involves assessment: devising ways to determine whether students have learned what they need to know. The final step involves planning the teaching/learning process so that students can acquire the knowledge needed.

This product uses backwards planning to combine a PowerPoint presentation, activities that involve authentic assessment, and traditional tests (multiple-choice and essay) into a complete curriculum unit. Although the materials have enough built-in flexibility that you can use them in a number of ways, we suggest the following procedure:

1. Start with the "essential questions" listed on slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation (these also appear in the teacher support materials). Briefly go over them with students before getting into the topic material. These questions will help students focus their learning and note taking during the course of the unit. You can also choose to use the essential questions as essay questions at the end of the unit; one way to do this is to let students know at the outset that one of the essential questions will be on the test—they just won't know which one.

2. Next, discuss the activities students will complete during the unit. This will also help focus their learning and note taking, and it will lead them to view the PowerPoint presentation in a different light, considering it a source of ideas for authentic-assessment projects.

3. Present the PowerPoint to the class. Most slides have an image and bullet points summarizing the slide's topic. The Notes page for each slide contains a paragraph or two of information that you can use as a presentation script, or just as background information for your own reference. You don't need to present the entire PowerPoint at once: it's broken up into several sections, each of which concludes with some discussion questions that echo parts of the essential questions and also help students to get closer to the "enduring understandings." Spend some time with the class going over and debating these questions—this will not only help students think critically about the material, but it will also allow you to incorporate different modes of instruction during a single class period, offering a better chance to engage students.

4. Have students complete one or more of the authentic-assessment activities. These activities are flexible: most can be completed either individually or in groups, and either as homework or as in-class assignments. Each activity includes a rubric; many also have graphic organizers. You can choose to have students complete the activities after you have shown them the entire PowerPoint presentation, or you can show them one section of the PowerPoint, go over the discussion questions, and then have students complete an activity.

5. End the unit with traditional assessment. The support materials include a 20-question multiple-choice quiz; you can combine this with an essay question (you can use one of the essential questions or come up with one of your own) to create a full-period test.

6. If desired, debrief with students by going over the essential questions with them again and remind them what the enduring understandings are.

We are dedicated to continually improving our products and working with teachers to develop exciting and effective tools for the classroom. We can offer advice on how to maximize the use of the product and share others' experiences. We would also be happy to work with you on ideas for customizing the presentation.

We value your feedback, so please let us know more about the ways in which you use this product to supplement your lessons; we're also eager to hear any recommendations you might have for ways in which we can expand the functionality of this product in future editions. You can e-mail us at access@socialstudies.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis
Chief Education Officer
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America in World War I: Backward Planning Activities

Enduring understandings:

- Various factors caused European nations to declare war on each other in 1914
- America sought to maintain its neutrality during the war
- Various events and issues drew the United States into the war
- Mobilization included several groups and areas of American society
- World War I caused significant social change in American society, particularly for African Americans and women
- The government restricted civil liberties for many Americans during the war
- The American Expeditionary Force participated in several major offensives during the last year of the war
- Personal, political, and philosophical differences between President Wilson and Republicans in the Senate ultimately led to the defeat of the Versailles Treaty
- Failure to create a lasting and just peace led to another, more devastating world war within a generation

Essential questions:

- Why was it difficult for the U.S. to follow a policy of neutrality during the early years of World War I?
- What developments caused the U.S. to enter the war?
- How did the U.S. make the transition from a peacetime to a wartime society?
- Why did the government find it necessary to restrict civil liberties during wartime?
- Why did the Senate ultimately fail to ratify the Versailles Treaty?
- What implications did the end of World War I have in regard to the rise of totalitarian governments during the 1930s and 1940s?

Learning Experiences and Instruction

Students will need to know…	Students will need to be able to…
1. Fundamental causes of World War I	1. Read and interpret primary source material from the World War I era
2. The events and developments that drew America into the war	2. Identify key people involved in the war and its immediate aftermath
3. How America mobilized for the war	3. Recognize economic, political, and social trends that emerged in the U.S. during the war years
4. Why President Wilson developed the "Fourteen Points"	4. Understand the impact the American Expeditionary Force had upon the war in Europe
5. How the personalities of the Allied "Big 4" leaders influenced the treaty negotiations	5. Recognize the contributions made by women and minorities during the war
6. Why the Republicans and President Wilson reached an impasse during the debate over whether to ratify the Versailles Treaty	6. Understand the goals and beliefs of those involved in the Versailles Treaty ratification struggle
7. How Wilson attempted to gain popular support for the treaty	7. Understand how the war altered American foreign policy
8. How concerns over anti-war protests led to restrictions on civil liberties	

These lessons incorporate the following learning activities to help students reach the enduring understandings:

- Overview of essential questions and basic understandings
- Class discussion of subject matter questions in the PowerPoint presentation
- Teacher introduction of common terms and ideas in the essential questions and related projects
- Students conduct research in groups to be used later in individual and group projects
- Informal observation and coaching of students as they work in groups
- Evaluation and delivered feedback on projects and research reports
- Students create and present their unit projects
- Posttest made of multiple-choice questions covering the presentation, with one or more essential questions as essay questions

Project #1: World War I Propaganda Posters

Overview:

In this lesson, students research propaganda posters developed by the Committee on Public Information (the "Creel Committee"). These posters either encouraged Americans to enlist in the armed forces or used propaganda to drum up civilian support for the war effort. While posters from the World War I era were made using ink and cardboard, students will be using 21st-century technology to create their posters, and will be able to include photos, video, and sound effects in addition to traditional poster elements.

Objectives:

As a result of completing this lesson, students will:

- Understand the concerns and fears of the U.S. government in regard to maintaining morale and focusing on the war effort to defeat the Central Powers
- Speculate as to what elements would have provided for the most effective statement to sway public opinion in favor of the war effort
- Develop conclusions about the effectiveness of propaganda
- Synthesize information regarding propaganda and make conclusions about how it swayed public opinion and may have affected a possible peace settlement between the U.S. and Central Powers

Time required:

Three to four class periods, although you may choose to take longer in order to accommodate technology concerns or extend the lesson.

Materials:

Computers with Internet access as well as a printer (if needed) should be available. You may also choose to set up shared folders on your school network if students save graphics or audio and video files for presentations. If you wish to have student groups present their poster to the entire class, a large screen monitor or LCD projector should also be available.

Note: Glogster.edu was selected as the "poster software" for this lesson. However, other free online resources can be used, such as Prezi (http://prezi.com/index/). You may also decide to substitute an online presentation-maker or use traditional presentation software, such as PowerPoint® or Keynote. If you cannot obtain access to computers for the entire class, students can still complete the lesson by creating physical posters.

Lesson procedures:

Start with a discussion about how it might have been difficult during the war for Americans to stay focused on who the enemy was and what the country needed to further the war effort. (You may wish to review slide #7 of the PowerPoint® presentation, "U.S. Neutrality," with the class in order to remind them that some groups in the United States had a larger stake in seeing the Central Powers win the war rather than the Allies.) Ask several students in the class to use different sources to find definitions of the word "propaganda." (The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines propaganda as "the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person.") Have students write these definitions on the board or on an overhead.

Once this has been completed, ask students how the definitions are similar. If there are differences, ask them why they think those differences exist. Next, ask the class if they believe propaganda is necessarily "good" or "bad." (You may wish to have students cite examples to support their opinions.)

You may also wish to have students review slide #31 on the Committee on Public Information (the "Creel Committee"). There are also other instances of propaganda posters found on slides in the PowerPoint® presentation, as well as in the resources section of this lesson.

Once this discussion has been completed, divide the class into groups of three to four students (the number of groups and number of students per group will depend on your class size), then introduce the assignment to the class. You can use the following sample script or develop one of your own:

Script:

During the World War I era, the U.S. government wanted to ensure that Americans contributed strongly to the war effort. In order to make sure that citizens were psychologically mobilized for war, the Committee on Public Information (also known as the "Creel Committee") created numerous posters emphasizing various messages. The CPI also sent thousands of volunteers, nicknamed "Four Minute Men," around the country to give short, patriotic speeches in support of the war effort.

In this lesson, you will be acting as artists for the CPI, working to develop propaganda posters to support the war effort. Keep in mind what the purpose of propaganda is, and whether it can be "good" or "bad." Be sure to include elements in your poster that highlight your ideas and beliefs about propaganda.

However, instead of making traditional posters, you'll use the Glogster.edu site to create multimedia posters that can include graphics, video, and sound files.

Your poster can focus on any of the following subjects:

- Recruiting soldiers for the Armed forces
- Urging citizens to buy war bonds
- Encouraging citizens to support various mobilization efforts (such as conserving food, recycling products, etc.)
- Any other World War I-related theme that you find in the accompanying lesson resources

Remember, you will want to make your poster as colorful and eye-catching as possible. Be sure to include pictures as well as text and drawings. You may add video or sound clips if available. (Be sure to provide information on the sources you use for your poster.)

After reading the script, allow students to decide which of the four choices they want to research (you may wish to assign a choice to each group). Provide each group with a "Poster Data-Collection Sheet," and have them begin their research.

Once students have had sufficient time to research and collect data, they should start creating their posters. Remind students they should make their presentations as compelling as possible.

Evaluation:

Once students have completed their presentations, each group should present their work to the class and then field questions from other groups. You may also wish to have groups critique each other's posters, either verbally, or in writing.

You can assess students' work by using a suitable rubric. A sample rubric is included in this lesson which you can use as is, or adapt to fit your students' needs and abilities.

Suggested Web resources:

Note: Many sites exist that include information about World War I as well as propaganda used by the United States and other nations. A sampling is included below. You may also choose to have students do further online research in addition to consulting traditional sources such as books, encyclopedias, and magazines.

- Woodrow Wilson (PBS, American Experience) "Gallery, Poster Art of World War I," includes examples of several propaganda posters from World War I as well as background information on each poster. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/wilson/gallery/posters.html
- FirstWorldWar.com feature article, "Of Fraud and Force Fast Woven: Domestic Propaganda During the First World War" http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/propaganda.htm
- "History Matters" page on "Four Minute Men: Volunteer Speeches During World War I" http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4970/

- FirstWorldWar.com U.S. Propaganda posters page (Adobe Flash; includes nearly 400 posters) http://www.firstworldwar.com/posters/usa.htm
- Library of Congress World War I Posters page http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/wwipos/ (Includes posters primarily from the United States, but from other nations as well).
- "A Summons to Comradeship: World War I and II Posters and Postcards" (University of Minnesota) http://digital.lib.umn.edu/warposters/warpost.html
- University of Washington War Poster Collection (contains posters from World War I and World War II) http://content.lib.washington.edu/postersweb/index.html
- U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, "Inspiring a Nation" (World War I posters of the Philadelphia Sketch Club) http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ahec/AHM/constitution_center.cfm

Sites highlighting Glogster.edu:

- Glogster.edu http://edu.glogster.com/
  (Note: Glogster offers several paid subscription levels. However, a basic "free" version with limited features is also available and should be suitable for this project.)
- Scribd presentation on setting up and administering Glogster.edu accounts for students http://www.scribd.com/doc/14015153/Glogster-Instructions
- Free Technology for Teachers Glogster.edu Resource page http://www.freetech4teachers.com/2010/04/glogster-edu-resource-library.html
- Using Glogster in the Classroom http://cnx.org/content/m32202/latest/
- Classroom in the Cloud "Using Glogster in the Classroom" http://www.classroominthecloud.net/2009/04/how-to-use-glogster-in-classroom.html
- Jonathan Wylie's "Using Glogster in the Classroom" http://www.brighthub.com/education/k-12/articles/57951.aspx

World War I Propaganda Poster Data-Collection Sheet

Student names: _____

Poster subject: _____

Description of information	What is the nature of the poster's propaganda?	How effective is this poster?	Other helpful information	Web site or URL where the information was found