



TEACHER NOTE 2

Hopefully students will by now be able to offer a range of practical points (such as space, money, resources available) and also ideological points (such as the purpose and audience of the museum). The point is that they realise that a museum exhibition is an interpretation. Choices are made and have to be defended about what to include.

TEACHER NOTE 3

Of course, you can adapt this brief. You may also like to add in a problem part of the way through your students' planning. For example, perhaps the funding has been cut and now there can only be two boards and two display cases. How will this affect their developing exhibition?

TEACHER NOTE 4

You will probably want to share the assessment criteria with your students as you set up the exhibition task. This task can either be done as a short summary of rough plans, or as a task in which they actually produce the exhibition, or a task somewhere between these two points. Time and motivation are likely to be deciding factors.

Your students may need to learn, or to be reminded, about the wide range of topics available to be housed in an exhibition with a theme of World War 1. Your students will find many helpful resources at historiana.eu, including an extensive timeline and a timemap of the War.

Teacher material

Why do we learn what about World War 1?

Activity Plan

Preparation before the lesson

Ask students to find out what is taught about World War 1 in their school and how it is taught. They may need to interview teachers and older pupils, as well as thinking about what they have been taught and how. World War 1 may not only be taught in history lessons. Ask students to do this research and to bring it to lesson.

Here are some questions that might help them to collect the information:

- What age groups learn about World War 1?
- In what school subjects do you learn about World War 1?
- Is the study of World War 1 optional, compulsory, or a mixture of both?
- How long do you study World War 1?
- Who decides what you are taught about World War 1? (it could be you, your teacher, your school, your national government, or someone else – who?, or a range of different people)
- What are you taught about World War 1? (If you are always taught from a textbook, look at the titles of sections etc. If you are not, you will have to think carefully and ask questions in school.)
- How are you taught about World War 1? (Again, if you use a textbook think about how many sources there are, what type of sources they are, how much text there is. If you do not have a textbook think of all the different ways World War 1 is presented to you.)
- If World War 1 is taught extensively, you might want to break the task down and ask small groups to research specific aspects. The information is then shared at the start of the first lesson.

Comparison of curricula [TEACHER NOTE 1](#)

Start the activity by agreeing what is taught in your school about World War 1 and how. This could be done in small groups or as a whole class. Give students the curriculum on World War 1 from a UK school (see Student Material). Ask them to read it in pairs and to find similarities and differences between their own school curriculum and this one. Discuss these as a whole class and encourage them to hypothesise about the reasons for any similarities and differences. Once again, these questions may help:

- Are there any similarities?
- What are the main differences between how and what they are taught and how and what you are taught about the First World War?
- What surprised you most?
- Can you form some hypotheses (theories of your own) as to why there might be differences?
- How could you test if your hypotheses are correct?



TEACHER NOTE 4 (continue)

After they have done some research, you may want to have a whole class discussion to stimulate their creativity and refocus them upon thinking about the selection process. For example students may have found out about a content area e.g. the experience of the home fronts. That's great! But whose home front experience should be presented? In addition, or instead, they may have decided that the course of the War is of little relevance and that causes and consequences are the most important things. Great! Can they say why? Which ones will they pick? What are their criteria? They may decide that the motives, the leadership, the human cost, the discussions that led to decisions are most important, rather than events. Great! Again, what are their criteria? Is it 'made the biggest contribution to the outcome to the conflict?' or 'provides a varied perspective?' or...?

Begin a discussion, to be continued later, about the factors that seem to shape the interpretations of the First World War that are taught in schools. Some ideas can be found in the teacher notes above. Students are likely to notice that there are practical as well as ideological reasons for the selection of curricula. Ask students to think on this further and to be aware of their wider school curriculum and to think about any other factors that might be at work in deciding what they learn in school.

Exploring why there are differences between curricula

Give students the 'Why we learn about World War 1 in the way we do' - from a UK school (see Student Material). Ask them to read it in pairs and to identify more factors that are at work in shaping a school curriculum. Do any of these also apply to their school curriculum? Discuss the findings as a class.

Working with the thinking

Tell students that they are now to plan an exhibition about the First World War to be housed in one section of a museum devoted to the history of Europe. Ask them at first, what factors are likely to influence the interpretation they put in the museum? [TEACHER NOTE 2](#)

Students now plan their museum exhibition. They have to decide what to put into the exhibition and how to present it. Give them this more detailed brief to work on. [TEACHER NOTE 3](#)

"The museum is funded by the European Union and is located in Brussels, close to the EU's buildings. Its audience is anyone who chooses to visit as a tourist and school students. The purpose of the museum is to present the historical context of the EU. The museum aims to be a place where every EU citizen can feel a connection, but it does not present national histories. The exhibition about the First World War will be housed in part of a small room with 4 separate display boards and 4 display cases."

Assessment [TEACHER NOTE 4](#)

Students present their plans to you and to their peers, justifying their interpretation as suitable for the museum. They should be assessed in terms of how effectively they present their ideas as well as the persuasiveness of their plans. The most persuasive plans will make it clear that the exhibition is an interpretation of World War 1, and that this interpretation has been selected with reference to a clear sense of the purpose of the exhibition, the wider purpose of the European museum and the intended audience. For example, they are likely to be explicit about their reasons for selecting some parts of World War 1 topic and disregarding others. They should also consider how tourists and school students can be engaged and learn. These questions may be helpful to consider:

- What would you select from the whole story of World War 1 in order to present a European perspective on the war? (That is, the whole of Europe, not the individual countries within it.) Please explain your choices.
- What do you think all European people should know about World War 1? Please explain your choices and criteria.
- How are you going to present in order to persuade the funders that your plans will meet the requirements of the purpose and audience of the exhibition.



- Do you have enough knowledge of the war to be able to make these decisions? If no, how are you going to find out? (Clue, your teacher and historiana.eu may be able to help!)

Sources:

1. **Britain expects every son of Israel to do his duty** (1918) Library of Congress, digital ID cph.3g11300.