



Teacher material

The causation of World War 1

Activity Plan

Task 1



1 hour

Key question: what happened in Sarajevo?

Introduction

In this lesson your students will be reporters in a newsroom working on a story to be released on the news later in the day. At the start all will be calm. They expect to be reporting on the visit to Sarajevo of the Archduke and his wife. This is the lead story of the day, but there is plenty of time to get everything ready for the news programme. As news starts to come in of other events, the story will get more dramatic and complex. You, the editor of the news programme, will also be pushing them to get the story out to the world more quickly. Can they get a reliable story out quickly? [TEACHER NOTE 1](#)

TEACHER NOTE 1

Obviously, we are being anachronistic with our newsroom in 1914, but it works as a learning activity.

Arrangement of the class

Put your students into groups of 2-4. They will be working as a newsroom team in these small groups until the student debrief at the end.

Give students the story of the assassination to be cut up onto cards.

TEACHER NOTE 2

TEACHER NOTE 2

The story of the assassination cards can be found in the Student Materials section.

Running the newsroom activity

Release the student groups one by one throughout the activity. Each card tells the students what to do next. Your role is to give out the cards in a way that keeps the pace of the lessons going and allows the students to complete the task in the time. You then run the student debrief and set the assessment work.

Student debrief

Here are questions you can use to help your students relate the newsroom process to the work of historians:

- How difficult was it to get the news out accurately and speedily?
- How did students try to tell a good story but also to make it clear that their knowledge was partial and that the witnesses they were using were conflicted?
- How can we relate this to what historians do when they use source material as evidence to construct interpretations of history?

Relating what we have learnt to our larger enquiry?



Do your students have any questions about the events? If so, run an 'ask the expert' session, with yourself as the expert. Discuss what the responses to the assassination were likely to be. Which countries would be interested and what might happen next. Get your students to hypothesise about the outcomes of the assassination. They will be finding out if their hypotheses were right in the next activity.

Suggestion for assessment

Students could write a newspaper report for the morning papers. Discuss with them the structure of newspaper reports. These typically tell the main story, then elaborate on the context, take evidence from witnesses and then speculate on the implications of the story.

Taking the enquiry further for themselves

Your students could learn more about the assassination by watching the reconstructed newsreel of the assassination in the World War 1 module contents section of Historiana. There is also information at the following online sites:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/mwh/ir1/assassinationrev1.shtml>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z26bjxs#ztn4mp3>

Task 2 1 hour

Key question: how did the Sarajevo assassination result in the major European powers going to war?

Introduction

In this lesson your students will learn how the assassination in Sarajevo triggered the two major rival alliance systems into war in August 1914. They will learn about what happened between 28th June and 5th August 1914. They will be able to explain the course of events and the reactions of the great powers to these events. They will use the Historiana World War 1 module content 'Timemap for World War 1' and 'Descent into War' to complete a worksheet.

Arrangement of the class

Students work individually or in pairs until the debrief at the end of the lesson. Students will need access to the 'Timemap for world War 1' and 'Descent into War' from the Historiana World War 1 content module. Give the students a copy of the worksheet with the enquiry title. It has a diagram and a map. Students will need two different colours to complete the map. [TEACHER NOTE 3](#)

TEACHER NOTE 3

The worksheet can be found in the Student Material.



Worksheet completion

Students complete the worksheet using the 'Timemap for World War 1' and 'Descent into War'

Student debrief

When your students have completed the 2-page worksheet ask them to use it to describe what happens between 28th June and 6th August 1914. Ask them to use the information they have collected to explain how the great power alliances react to each other. Draw to their attention the idea of a barrel of gunpowder with a spark that lights a fuse. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using this sort of metaphor to describe change? Then ask students what they still need to know if they are to answer the big enquiry question: "How did 2 bullets fired in Sarajevo cause a war in 1914?" These questions will be answered in the next lessons.

Suggestion for assessment

Students could be asked to choose and explain another metaphor to describe the change that took place from 28th June to 6th August 1914. [TEACHER NOTE 4](#)

TEACHER NOTE 4

Some contemporary historians such as Margaret MacMillan in her book 'The War that Ended Peace, would want to avoid a sense that tension was building towards war in 1914. Rather they would emphasise the rising and falling of international tension in the years before 1914.

Taking the enquiry further for themselves

Your students could learn more about the alliance systems and the events between the end of June and the start of August 1914 by working with more of the Historiana World War 1 module section 'Descent into War' and at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z26bjxs#ztn4mp3>

Task 3 2-3 hours

Key question: what was the political situation in Europe in the early 20th century?

Introduction

In this activity your students will use source material to collect evidence that will answer their questions about the underlying causes of the outbreak of war in August 1914. They will collect evidence of the enemies, suspicions, problems and ambitions of each of the major European powers. They will then use this evidence to explain the motivations behind the actions of each of the major European powers between 28th June and 4th August 1914. Students will gather and transform their evidence using two charts (see Student Material). The source material they need to complete this evidence can also be found in the Student Material section. They will then use their learning to produce a display board to write an introduction to a museum exhibition about the enquiry question.

Arrangements



Students work individually or in pairs for the first part of the activity. Students will need copies of the source material (you may want to cut these up and put them into packs) and two charts from the Student Material.

Worksheet completion

Students complete the charts the 'Source material about the causes of World War 1'

Student debrief

When your students have completed the 2 charts, then they are ready to summarise their learning. Tell them that there is to be a museum exhibition on the theme: 'What was the political situation in Europe in the early 20th century?' They are to write the introduction to the exhibition to be displayed on the first display board at the entrance to the museum. This introduction is expected to summarise the enquiry question. Then ask your students to discuss the big enquiry question: "How did 2 bullets fired in Sarajevo cause a war in 1914?" They will now find that they have a lot of material relevant to this question. Ask them what remaining questions they have, so that you can address these. By now these are likely to be quite specific to your students. They can also be challenged to research their questions for themselves. The writing of the introduction to the museum display board will indicate to you how well your students have understood this work.

Taking the enquiry further for themselves

Your students could learn more about underlying causes of the outbreak of war in August 1914 through the Historiana World War 1 module 'Descent into War' and at: <http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/origins-and-outbreak>

Task 4 2 hours

Key question: but why did my country get involved in (or stay out of) World War 1?

This enquiry is obviously very specific to particular groups of students in particular countries and will need to be designed locally.

Task 5 1 hour

Key question: why did 2 bullets fired in Sarajevo cause a war in 1914?

Introduction

In this activity your students will show that they can answer the big enquiry question using what they have learnt in the previous lessons. How did a local difficulty between two nations, Austria-Hungary and Serbia, develop so



quickly into a global conflict involving so many countries? The assessment you choose to use will of course be that which is appropriate to your students and the system in which you work.

Arrangements

At the start of the activity give students 4 headings:

- Nationalism
- Imperialism
- Militarism
- Alliances

The summative activity

Ask them to review all that they have learnt and find evidence of each of these as causes of the outbreak of war in August 1914. When they have done this, they will need to think and discuss how the categories link together, the relative importance of each and to consider if they are useful to us when we debate the question: 'Why did 2 bullets fired in Sarajevo cause a war in 1914?' Some students may like to run a formal debate, for example debating, with evidence, the importance of each category. Some students may like to stand up and move around the classroom to demonstrate how the categories link together.

Assessment of the activity

There are many ways that this enquiry can be assessed. Here are a few examples:

- Writing an essay
- Writing a report for a magazine
- Designing a museum exhibition
- Oral presentation of findings and views to another group of students
- Designing a website
- Writing a drama to be filmed and posted on the internet

However the students are asked to demonstrate their learning, the assessment of high achievement in understanding the causation of World War 1 would include:

- A detailed knowledge of the people, places and events involved.
- A sound understanding of the relevant chronologies.
- An ability to explain the nature of the changes that took place.
- An identification and categorisation of the different causal factors.
- The explanation and analysis of the inter-connectedness of the causal factors in bringing about change.
- The substantiation of views expressed with evidence from source material.
- A well-substantiated judgement about the enquiry question.



- An understanding that there are a range of possible interpretations about the causation of World War 1 and that these can be judged by reference to how well they are substantiated.

Any assessment method used should allow a student to demonstrate how far they have achieved this level of understanding.

Sources:

1. Europe map 1914: http://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=2232&lang=fr + modified by the author.
2. Propaganda poster, *Hark! Hark! The dogs do bark!* (UK, 1914). IWM Public Domain. Ref: [O] K 96/2290
3. Propaganda poster, *Humoristische Karte von Europa im Jahre 1914* (Germany, 1914). IWM Public Domain. Ref: Q 42891
4. Propaganda poster, *En Chine -- Le gâteau des Rois et... des Empereurs* (France, 1898) Library of Congress. Public Domain. Ref: Goldstein, no. 334
5. Map of Europe alliances 1914 made for a Wikipedia page in France in 2006.
6. Humorous postcard, *L'Ingordo, trop dur* (France, c1915) Commons Wikimedia.
7. Picture of HMS Dreadnought (1906) Commons Wikimedia.
8. Map of the Schlieffen Plan (US Military Academy) now Commons Wikimedia.
9. Morse Code image created for Wikipedia in 2008.
10. Other sources are written by the author and/or snippets from letters from the time.