

2010 Historica-Dominion Battlefields Study Tour
Lesson Plan

“Causes of World War I – What Would You Do?”

Grade/Level – Grade 11 (Social Studies 11)

Province – British Columbia

Time Period – Lead up to outbreak of WWI (1914)

Alotted Time – 1 class (1hr15mins)

Class Size – approx 24-25 students

Overview

In small groups (3-4) students will be given the opportunity to reflect on the tensions and mood in Europe at the time leading up to the outbreak of World War I (militarism, imperialism, alliances...) in order to better understand the circumstances that ultimately contributed to widespread conflict.

Objectives

- to have students consider the effects and reactions of countries under certain circumstances (ie. competition over military power, foreign territory)
- to have students better understand the circumstances leading up to war
- to have students work together to develop reasoning skills and the ability to predict possible reactions/responses in certain circumstances

Material

Students will be provided with cards or pieces of paper with the name of a country and the circumstance in which they find themselves (see below for samples). They will need few materials other than this information and a pen/pencil and paper. They will likely like to use a map (either textbook or atlas) to get a better sense of where these countries are in relation to the others.

Activity

1. Teacher explains that the point of the upcoming activity is for students to have a better sense of the “feeling” of the times leading

- up to the War. They should come to a better understanding of how seemingly small events can combine to precipitate something larger. Brief overview of tensions between countries and outline Triple Alliance and Triple Entente (approx. 5-10 mins.).
2. Divide the class into 6 groups, each of which represents the heads of state of a country.
 3. Each group will get one of the scenarios on cards/paper and will be asked to reflect on their situation and respond to the questions posed (10-15 mins.) ***see below for examples of these cards/questions
 4. Teacher will ask each of the groups to share its scenario with the rest of the class and provide some of the solutions it came up with (approx. 15 mins.)
 5. Class discussion/contribution to reflect on ideas and solutions posed by groups and the common reactions (if any) of the countries when faced with circumstances.
 6. Power Point presentation given which breaks down the causes into subheadings. The information in this power point will (hopefully) seem logical and realistic to the students once they have completed the previous activity and have a better sense of the tensions and feeling in Europe at the time. Students will be asked to take notes on the presentation and should be able to relate (at least in general terms) at a future date. Follow-up discussion to follow the next class.

*** I will attach a copy of a power point presentation that I have created using some of the pictures I took on my trip in July 2010***

Country/Scenario Cards

1. England

You have been a powerful empire for quite a long time and have many other countries and territories that are now under your control. You are in constant competition with other countries to obtain/maintain overseas territory and are known as the strongest navy in the world. You have found out that other countries are beginning to compete for other territories (particularly Germany). How are you going to react? What actions will you take? You have also discovered that Germany is trying to increase its power and is trying to outdo you by building a stronger army and more navy ships. What is your reaction to this? To top things off, you have just found out that Germany has tried to invade Belgium (a country that is a friend to you). What are you going to do? Think about how your actions may affect other countries around you.

2. Germany

You have recently began branching out and colonizing more overseas territory. You are now in competition with many of the powerful countries in Europe (especially England) for this land. Though you have a strong army, it is well known that England has the world's most powerful navy. What are you going to do to compete with England? You have also discovered that one of your allies, Austria-Hungary has declared war on Serbia (based on a conflict between the two over a royal's assassination). You have promised Austria-Hungary to support them in any conflict, so what is your reaction? Reflect on how your actions may affect some of the countries around you.

3. Russia

Your empire has become weakened as more and more of your territories are seeking independence. You are in alliances with other European countries, namely with France and Britain (Triple Entente), but are also supportive of other smaller countries, such as Serbia. You have discovered that Austria-Hungary (one of your opponents and member of the Triple Alliance) has declared war on Serbia. What are you going to do? What do you think will be the reaction of some other European countries?

4. Serbia

Bosnia, a country which contains a large majority of ethnic Serbs (people who share your culture and "belong" in your country) has just been taken over by Austria-Hungary. Many of the people there are upset and bitter at the Austro-Hungarian Empire for their actions.

You want to support your fellow Serbs and have found out that the Crown Prince of Austria-Hungary (Franz Ferdinand) will be visiting Bosnia (against the wishes of the Serbian population). What do you do to support the Serbs? Remember, you are very strongly against Austria-Hungary and its dominance of your people.

5. Austria-Hungary

You have just taken over Bosnia against the wishes of the majority of the ethnic Serbs living there. During a trip to Bosnia, your Crown Prince, Franz Ferdinand, is assassinated by a Serbian terrorist group. What are your feelings towards Serbs at this time? How are you going to react to their actions against your monarch? How do you think countries that support you (for example, Germany) will also react? How do you think this reaction will affect other European countries?

6. France

You are strong allies with Britain and Russia. You have found out that Russia has already declared war on Austria-Hungary (after Austria-Hungary had declared war on Serbia). Now you find out that England has declared war on Germany (after they had tried to invade Belgium). France is now the only remaining member of the Triple Entente not at war. How are you going to react? What are you going to do to support your allies?