

Lusitania Inquiry Lesson Plan

Objectives:

1. Students will gain a perspective on the American mindset after the Lusitania was sunk by participating in an inquiry lesson
2. Students will take a stance on whether or not the United States should have gone to war after the Lusitania was sunk by casting a vote in class
3. Students will reflect on the effective use of propaganda during war by participating in an inquiry lesson that focuses on the propaganda and writing a personal reflection at the end of the lesson
4. Students will relate the use of Propaganda to modern examples such as Iraq, Desert Strom, Afghanistan, through an in class discussion of the repercussions of propaganda.
5. Students will attempt to answer the essential question, “is there ever a justifiable reason to go to war?” in a personal reflection at the end of the lesson

Standards:

B.12.1 Explain different points of view on the same historical event, using data gathered from various sources, such as letters, journals, diaries, newspapers, government documents, and speeches

B.12.11 Compare examples and analyze why governments of various countries have sometimes sought peaceful resolution to conflicts and sometimes gone to war

B.12.15 Identify a historical or contemporary event in which a person was forced to take an ethical position, such as a decision to go to war, the impeachment of a president, or a presidential pardon, and explain the issues involved

Materials:

Lusitania PowerPoint

Lusitania articles (5)

Procedure

Bell Work:

As students walk into the classroom they are to add to the KWL on the Lusitania on the board. Create a column for what they know, want to know, and have learned. Each student is to contribute something to the board. Review what has been written with the class. Pass over any mention of war contraband being on the ship. (5 minutes)

A. Introduce the PowerPoint (10 minutes)

1. Total War

- a. . Total war is when a government devotes all of its resources to war. The warring European nations started to follow this policy. On the “home front,”

or domestic side of a country at war, that meant rationing, and propaganda. Rationing controlled how much food the home front consumed in comparison to what was sent to the front lines for the soldiers. Explain that both sides were short on supplies and food. The large amount of young men being sent to war, meant there were few workers on the home front to farm and collect a harvest. The type of fighting (trench warfare) had also destroyed a large portion of the farmland on the countryside. To fill supplies, the European nations started to trade heavily with the United States, especially on the Allied side. The governments also resorted to using propaganda (one-sided information) to keep the morale up on the “home front.”

2. (Slide #2)Unrestricted Submarine warfare. Germans submarines will fire on any enemy ship, hostile or unarmed.
3. Introduce the Lusitania
 - a. Sister ship to the Titanic. Was a passenger ship that sailed from New York to Ireland. There were 1,924 passengers on board, including many prominent Americans. On May 7th at 2:10am, 10 miles off the coast of Ireland the German sub U-20 fired at the Lusitania. It sank in 18 minutes, killing 1,119 passengers, 114 of which were American Citizens.
4. Ask students: Is it justifiable for the United States to go to war over the Lusitania? (50 minutes)
 - a. Take a poll of the class and mark results on the White Board
 - b. Break students into four groups. Assign each group a news paper article about the Lusitania. Give each group about 10 minutes to read and discuss the article and whether or not it has changed their opinion about war. Each group is then to present their article to the class, what was it about, who died, what were the facts? Have the group with the “Sinking Justified, says Dr. Dernburg” article present after the movie
 - c. Show clip of Lusitania movie. Then take another poll of the class’s opinion. http://www.archive.org/details/Sinking_of_the_Lusitania (6 minutes)
 - d. Have the final group present their article. Ask the class for their reactions and opinions. Is Germany creating an excuse? Are they trying to justify what they did?
 - e. Show the students the slide with the German warning flyer. Explain that Germany had given a warning to the New York Times to be printed to all passenger ships. The Lusitania was on their list of suspected smuggling ships. Again take a poll of the class’s opinion.
 - f. Read the final article (Blackwater diver finds “smoking gun” ammo on sunken Lusitania) Ask the class for their reactions? Emphasize that this was discovered recently, it was not known in 1917 when the United States

Declared war. Ask the students if their opinions on declaring war have changed because of this article, why? Explain that the Lusitania aided in fuelling Americas cry for war alongside the Zimmerman telegraph. Explain that it was a telegraph from Germany to its Mexican ambassador with instructions to approach Mexico with a Military Alliance if it appeared that the United States was entering the war with the Allies. Germany promised to aid Mexico in “reclaiming territories lost in the Mexican-American War. The results: the United States enters WWI with the Allies.

- g. Discuss as a class the affect of propoganda on public opinion? Did the teacher sway the class’s opinion through the presentation of the material? Do we see examples of this in modern warfare? Examples. (10-15 minutes)
- h. Present this question to the class; is there ever a justifiable reason to go to war?

Assessment:

Students are to write a one-page reflection on the question “Is there ever a justifiable reason to go to war?” It should incorporate knowledge of the Lusitania, and how the press can be used to sway public opinion.

