

The Sinking of the Lusitania: Is there a justifiable reason to go to war?

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Overview:

After students have discussed the underlying causes of World War I, the assassination of the Archduke, and the events surrounding the Lusitania (done the two days prior to this lesson), they will vote as to whether the United States should have joined the conflict or not. After further discussion and analysis of primary and secondary sources from the time period, students will again vote and explain how these sources influenced their opinions. Finally, they will answer the Essential Question, “*Is there a justifiable reason to go to war?*”

Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe and evaluate the mindset of Americans about entering WW I after the sinking of the Lusitania.
- Students will take and defend a position as to whether the US should have entered WW I after the sinking of the Lusitania.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast primary sources from the time period to determine if these sources can change their position.
- Students will answer the Essential Question, “Is there a justifiable reason to go to war?”
- Students will answer the following investigative question: “Based on the blueprints and the location of the torpedo strike, why did the Lusitania sink so quickly cause thousands of deaths?”

Time Required: One class period. (42 minutes)

Recommended Grade Range: Grades 10-12

Subject / Sub-Subject: Social Studies / World History or American History

Standards:

CC.8.5.9-10A: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CC.8.5.9-10.C: Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them

CC.8.5.9-10F: Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics.



CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., quantitative data, video, multimedia) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.11-12.8: Evaluate the hypotheses, data, analysis, and conclusions in a science or technical text, verifying the data when possible and corroborating or challenging conclusions with other sources of information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.11-12.9: Synthesize information from a range of sources (e.g., texts, experiments, simulations) into a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept, resolving conflicting information when possible.

Materials Used:

- PowerPoint to review material from previous lesson.
- Analysis tools (newspapers and posters)
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/primary-source-analysis-tool/>
[http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing Newspapers.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Newspapers.pdf)

Resources Used:

- Teacher-produced PowerPoint.
- The Evening Sun, May 9, 1915
 The sun., May 09, 1915, Image
 About The sun. (New York [N.Y.]) 1833-1916
 Image provided by: The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundation
<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030272/1915-05-09/ed-1/seq-1/>
- Remember the Lusitania Poster
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2003668491/>
 Title: Remember the Lusitania ... Enlist to-day / printed by David Allen & Sons Ld., Harrow, Middlesex.
 Created / Published London: published by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, [1915]
 Digital Id cph 3g11355 <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003668491/>
- Irishmen Avenge the Lusitania Poster
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2003668198/>
 Title: Irishmen - avenge the Lusitania. Join an Irish regiment to-day / W.E.T. ; John Shuley & Co., Dublin.
 Summary: Poster showing the Lusitania in flames and sinking, with people in the water and lifeboats in the foreground.
 Created / Published [Dublin]: Central Council for the Organization of Recruiting in Ireland, [1915]
 Digital Id cph 3g10986 <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3g10986>



- Sinking Justified, Says Dr. Dernburg
<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9E0CE4DE1F3EE733A0575AC0A9639C946496D6CF>
“SINKING JUSTIFIED, SAYS DR. DERNBURG”. Query.nytimes. The New York Times. 5/9/1915. 4/29/14. <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9E0CE4DE1F3EE733A0575AC0A9639C946496D6CF>
- Blackwater Diver finds “smoking gun” ammo on sunken Lusitania (Secondary Source)
<http://www.independent.ie/regionals/corkman/news/blackwater-diver-finds-smoking-gun-ammo-on-sunken-lusitania-27066171.html>
By Bill Browne February 10, 2008. The Corkman
- 18 Minutes That Shocked the World (Secondary Source)
<http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/18-minutes-that-shocked-the-world>
By Jessica Talarico. Imperial War Museums (iwm.org.uk)
- The Sinking of the Lusitania
https://archive.org/details/Sinking_of_the_Lusitania
Published 1918. Usage Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0
Topics Lusitania, Winsor McCay, Animation, History, World War I, Propaganda
- Blueprints of the Lusitania
http://www.atlanticliners.com/lusitania_home.htm#TorpedoStrike.

PROCEDURE

1. With the aid of a teacher-produced PowerPoint, review the four Underlying Causes of World War I, the assassination of the Archduke, and the sinking of the Lusitania.
2. Conduct a class vote. Based solely on the information that we have thus far, “Should the United States have declared war on Germany after the sinking of the Lusitania?” Teacher will mark the tally on the board.
3. Divide students into five groups:
 - a. Group 1: The Evening Sun Article (May 9, 1915)
 - b. Group 2: Remember the Lusitania Poster and Irishmen Avenge the Lusitania Poster
 - c. Group 3: 18 Minutes That Shocked the World (Secondary Source)
 - d. Group 4: Sinking Justified, Says Dr. Dernburg
 - e. Group 5: Blackwater Diver finds “smoking gun” ammo on sunken Lusitania (Secondary Source)
4. Students will be given approximately 10 minutes to use the appropriate analysis tool to “Observe”, “Reflect”, and “Question” their group’s source.
5. Each group will present their source to the class. These will be done in order 1-5.
6. Show “The Sinking of the Lusitania” video, published in 1918.
7. Class will discuss whether the articles, propaganda, or video caused them to re-think their original position about the US entry into the war.
8. Conduct a second class vote to determine if any students changed their mind. Class will discuss why this changed occurred or why it did not.



9. In their journals, students will respond to the Essential Question, “Is there a justifiable reason to go to war?”

Extensions / STEM

Students will visit http://www.atlanticliners.com/lusitania_home.htm#TorpedoStrike. This will provide blueprints of the ship as well as the presumed location of the torpedo strike.

Students will use this information, answer: “Based on the blueprints and the location of the torpedo strike, why did the Lusitania sink so quickly causing thousands of deaths?”

Evaluation:

1. Provide a detailed response to the Essential Question, “Is there a justifiable reason to go to war?”
2. “Based on the blueprints and the location of the torpedo strike, why did the Lusitania sink so quickly causing thousands of deaths?” Provide explanations to support your response.

