

Lesson Title:

Casualties from War

Subjects:

U.S. History, World History

Suggested time:

Two 50-minute class periods (this may need to be longer, depending on how in-depth students will examine this topic)

Grade Levels:

7-12

Essential Questions:

When is war justified?

How do wars change a nation?

Learning Target:

Students will develop a deeper understanding of the cost of wars and conflicts by being confronted with and thinking about casualties (death and injuries) incurred during American wars.

Overview:

The civilian and military casualties of war are difficult to think about for a number of reasons. Thinking about casualties directs our attention to injuries and deaths that are a direct result of wars and conflict. The numbers of casualties from conflicts are so large they become difficult to comprehend. The difference between 250,000 casualties and 300,000 is a number so large it could fill professional sports arenas. However, we tend to merely read these numbers without much impact or emotion. Add to the numbers that every casualty represents a person and his/her family that has also been impacted by war, and we are quickly confronted with a staggering number of war casualties over time.

In this module, students will first look at war technologies throughout history that led to victory. Almost always, these technologies led to more destruction of property and casualties, which led to victory for the country with the better technological breakthrough. After thinking about technological innovations from war, students will begin to think about the numbers of casualties from conflict over time. Casualties can be thought about in different contexts, including

- Comparison of casualties war by war
- Wounded and killed civilians
- Wounded and killed soldiers
- Dollars and human property destroyed during a specific war

Through a series of handouts and a powerful 18 minute video, student will have their thinking challenged about the cost of war casualties.

Materials:

- Video for Step 2: “The Fallen of World War II” (18:15 minutes). This video can be accessed via YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwKPFT-RioU>
Or from its original posting site: <http://www.fallen.io/ww2/> (click on the interactive link)
- Handout for Step 1: “Casualties from War: Timeline of Technological Advances in Warfare Through WWII.”
- Handout for Step 2: “America’s Wars-Fact Sheet.”

Procedures:*Warm up: Perspective*

Assuming you have about 30 students in your classroom, ask them about how many students fit in the school’s gymnasium for a basketball game. Follow this up by telling them that the stadium where the Seattle Seahawks play (CenturyLink Field) holds about 68,000 people (you may want to project an image of this stadium for a graphic reference).



<http://www.centurylinkfield.com/>

Now ask students to think together about how to understand the size of large numbers of people. For example, how can we comprehend a number such as 100,000 people? Or 500,000? Or 1,000,000? Ask students to share with the class how they might picture or visualize these large numbers. The purpose of this warm-up is to help students think in concrete ways about numbers of people. For example, the abstract statement of “100,000 people were lined up at the parade” is hard to picture, but saying “enough people to almost fill CenturyLink Field two times” or “the number of people is takes to fill 200 typical Boeing 747s” gives a more concrete and comprehensible image of the number. You will refer to this warm up during Step 2 below.

Step 1: War Technology

Hand out the .pdf “Casualties from War: Timeline of Technological Advances in Warfare Through WWII.”¹ Ask student groups of four to read through the document twice. The first time have them check words or terms they do not know, returning to these words and finding definitions as a group. For example, some students will need to learn the definition of a trebuchet. If someone knows about a trebuchet, then s/he can tell the group. If no one knows,

¹ This handout was created from information displayed at The Flying Heritage & Combat Armor Museum’s (FHCAM) “Why War: The Causes of Conflict” exhibit. The extension activity below provides ideas for integrating this content into a field trip to the museum.

then they can find out about it with an online search. After all the terms have been identified, have the students read through the document a second time. During the second reading, have the groups stop after each date/description, and identify one reason this was a significant development in conflict and war. For example, have them hypothesize one reason the inception of guerilla warfare changed battles, or one reason the iron-clad ship was a significant technological advancement. As you monitor this, challenge students to provide well thought-through reasons. For example, instead of reporting that iron-clad ships were an advancement because iron was an improvement over wood, guide students to provide a more thoughtful answer such as iron allowed ships to move closer to enemy cannons, bullets, fire, etc. and increased accuracy and destructive effect of their cannons.

Finally, have each group select what they think are the “Top 5” advances, and explain why they are most significant. Tally the selections of the class, and display the five each group identified so the students can see what the other groups selected.

If you have time or interest, Extension Activity #1 below will fit well here. This activity has students identify more recent technological advances in weapons, and then consider which advancement has the greatest impact on worldwide war today (for example, Hydrogen bomb, cruise missiles, atomic submarines, drones).

Step 2: Numbers of Casualties

Place students in pairs and handout the .pdf from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs titled “America’s Wars-Fact Sheet.” Inform the students that they will have a very short time to read over the handout (about 5 minutes), and then they will talk about their first impressions from the handout. It might be helpful to structure this time as follows:

- A. Take 5 minutes to read over the handout.
- B. Talk with your partner about three topics:
 1. What did you already know that was on this sheet?
 2. What new information did you learn?
 3. What do you feel or think about this new information?
- C. Write down two areas you learned about.

After these three sub-steps (about 10-15 minutes), bring the class together for a debrief, where you ask students to share what they wrote down about new areas of learning. As students share, try to categorize the ideas that they found new/interesting.

Note: if you need to assist students thinking about the fact sheet, you might ask them to look at the categories for each war, and then the numbers. They can then look across the different wars and compare the numbers. If they have some prior knowledge about these wars, they may also look at the statistics in light of their understanding of when, where, and how particular wars occurred.

After students shared their thinking, view the video “The Fallen of World War II” (18:15 minutes). This video can be accessed via YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwKPFT-RioU>

Or from its original posting site: <http://www.fallen.io/ww2/> (click on the interactive link).

The original posting site allows for periodic interaction with the numbers. It asks for donations at the end, however, so you'll need to determine which site to access the video. The video is a very powerful display of WWII casualties.

During the video, have students write down five new or interesting ideas about war that they learned from the video. Before starting the video, let them know they will be hearing about large numbers of casualties. Helping them remember the warm-up activity may help these large abstract numbers be more concretely understood. Also, consider telling the students that after the video they will be writing a paragraph response to this prompt:

“Learning about war casualties from WW2 changes how I think about war because...”

After the video, ask the class to briefly discuss this prompt (you can have them do this in pairs, or as an entire class). Then allow 5-10 minutes for the students to write their responses to the prompt.

Extension Activity:

The handout from Step 1 (“Casualties from War: Timeline of Technological Advances in Warfare Through WWII”) ends with the atomic bomb in 1945. Technological advances since then have been extensive and have changed the ways wars are fought. Today, with the war on terrorism, technological advances continue to evolve especially in the areas of surveillance and drones. Given this brief background, have students consider what war-related innovations occurred since 1945 (hydrogen bomb, cruise missile, atomic submarine, drone, satellite surveillance, etc.), and then suggest recent technologies today have had the greatest impact on current wars or conflicts. Ask students to support their claim with examples of how that technology has had an impact. Students can then determine if they need to revise their thinking after viewing the Flying Heritage & Combat Armor Museum’s (FHCAM) “Why War: The Causes of Conflict” exhibit.

Language Support:

To aid those with limited English proficiency or others who need help with academic language, place them in groups with at least one student who speaks English as a first language. The handout on risk factors can also be given to ELLs the day before this activity, and ELLs should be told which risk factor they will examine.

Standards:

Washington Standards (EALRs/GLEs)

8th Grade Social Studies

EALR GLE GLE Description

- | | | |
|---------|-------|--|
| History | 4.3.1 | Analyzes and interprets historical materials from a variety of perspectives in U.S. history (1776—1900). |
| | 4.3.2 | Analyzes multiple causal factors to create positions on major events in U.S. history (1776 – 1900). |

9th and 10th Grade Social Studies

EALR GLE GLE Description

- Civics 1.3.1 Analyzes the relationships and tensions between national interests and international issues in the world in the past or present.
- History 4.2.1 Analyzes how individuals and movements have shaped world history (1450—present).
- 4.2.3 Analyzes and evaluates how technology and ideas have shaped world history (1450—present).
- 4.3.2 Analyzes the multiple causal factors of conflicts in world history (1450 – present).
- 4.4.1 Analyzes how an understanding of world history can help us prevent problems today.

11th Grade Social Studies

EALR GLE GLE Description

- History 4.2.3 Analyzes and evaluates how technology and ideas have shaped U.S. history (1890— present).
- 4.3.1 Analyzes differing interpretations of events in U.S. history (1890—present).
- 4.3.2 Analyzes multiple causes of events in U.S. history, distinguishing between proximate and long-term causal factors (1890—present).
- 4.4.1 Analyzes how an understanding of United States history can help us prevent problems today.
- Skills 5.1.1 Analyzes the underlying assumptions of positions on an issue or event.

12 Grade Social Studies

EALR GLE GLE Description

- History 4.2.1 Evaluates how individuals and movements have shaped contemporary world issues.
- 4.2.2 Analyzes how cultural identity can promote unity and division.

Common Core State Standards:

Build Social Studies Literacy through Reading and Writing Common Core State Standard for ELA & Literacy in Social Studies Grades 9-10

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/9-10/>

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

Build Social Studies Literacy through Reading and Writing Common Core State Standard for ELA & Literacy in Social Studies Grades 11-12

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/11-12/>

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

NCSS C3 Framework (College, Career, and Civic Life)

Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries

Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools

Dimension 3: Argument Writing

Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action