



Pre-war Photograph of a Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz-Ferdinand and his family
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Online.

Origins of World War I

Recommended Grade Levels: 9-12

Course/Content Area(s): World History

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LESSON OVERVIEW:	The question of which country bears the most responsibility for causing World War I continues to be debated by historians. The countries of Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Serbia, Great Britain, and France have all been implicated. Evidence points to each of these countries sharing some responsibility for bringing on the war. This lesson asks students to determine their answer to who might have been responsible, if anyone, based on a series of primary and secondary sources that investigate the origins of the war. In order to determine responsibility, students will undertake an investigation into four countries, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Serbia.
OBJECTIVES:	<i>Students will:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze primary and secondary sources. Explain the long and short-term causes of World War I. Create a reasoned historical argument on which country is most responsible for causing World War I.
STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:	<p>National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) C3 Framework Standards:</p> <p>D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.</p> <p>D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.</p> <p>D2.His.10.9-12. Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.</p> <p>D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.</p> <p>D2.His.15.9-12. Distinguish between long-term causes and triggering events in developing a historical argument.</p> <p>D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.</p>
TIME NEEDED:	Five 45-minute class periods
PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of concept of different historical interpretations Primary v. Secondary sources Long-term v. Short-term causes

MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causes of WWI PowerPoint • Announcement of Murder (Appendix A) • Long-term Causes (copies for each group) • Short-term Causes (copies for each group) • Graphic Organizers (copies for each student)
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LESSON

PRE-ASSESSMENT/INTRODUCTION/HOOK:

Brainstorm: Show students slide 2 in the Causes of WWI PowerPoint. Students, with a partner if they wish, are to list as many general causes of wars from throughout history and/or what they think might have caused wars. After 5 minutes, have a whole class discussion while listing student answers on the board. Emphasize any that connect to the causes of World War I. Using slides 3 & 4 discuss the impact of Imperialism and Nationalism as causes of WWI.

Introduction: While showing slide 5, explain to students that which country is most responsible for WWI is still debated. Tell students that they are going to take on the roles of detectives in trying to determine who killed Ms. World Peace (as can be seen in slide 5). Read the Announcement of Murder (Appendix A).

DIRECTIONS:

Day One:

- After the Brainstorm and Introduction, have the class read about the Alliance System (see Long-Term Causes document) and fill in the section of the Long-Term Causes chart (see Graphic Organizers).
- Use slides 6 & 7 during class discussion about the division of Europe into the two major alliances.

Day Two:

- Divide the class into groups (investigative teams) of 4-5. Each group will investigate one of the main suspects in the murder (Austria-Hungary, Germany, Russia, Serbia).
 - It will probably be necessary to have 2 groups investigating each suspect. Adjust the numbers in the groups and/or number of groups to reflect your class sizes.
- Give each group a folder/envelope containing the evidence to examine the long-term causes (Long-Term Causes document). Students should then divide up the readings with each student filling out a part of the Long-Term Causes chart (Graphic Organizers).
 - It may be necessary to have more than one student working on the same reading depending on the number of students in a group.
 - Once everyone in a group is done, the students should share their information with each other, so all students have the Long-Term Causes chart filled in.
 - If a group has time remaining, they can begin filling in the "Which Country Is Most Responsible?" chart (Graphic Organizers).

Day Three:

- Give each group a folder/envelope containing the evidence to examine the short-term causes (Short-Term Causes document). Students should then divide up the readings with each student filling out a part of the Short-Term Causes chart (Graphic Organizers).
 - It may be necessary to have more than one student working on the same reading depending on the number of students in a group.

- Once everyone in a group is done, the students should share their information with each other, so all students have the Short-Term Causes chart filled in.
- If a group has time remaining, they can begin filling in the “Which Country Is Most Responsible?” chart (Graphic Organizers).

Day Four:

- Each group (investigative team) should fill out the “Which Country Is Most Responsible?” chart (Graphic Organizers).
- Each group will then share with the whole class the key evidence for guilt of the country they investigated. All students should fill in the chart for the countries they did not investigate.
 - Slides 8-13 can be used as a part of this discussion.

Day Five: (Use slide 14)

- Each group (investigative team) should review all the evidence presented for each of the suspects and decide which country they believe is most responsible, if any.
 - This does not have to be the country they investigated as a group.
- As part of a whole group discussion, each group states which country they believe is most responsible and explains 2-3 key pieces of evidence in support.
 - Require the groups to have at least one long-term and one short-term cause.
 - If students would like to argue that all or none are most responsible, they may do that too, following the rules for evidence to support their decision.

POST-ASSESSMENT:

Options:

- Write an essay arguing for why one of the countries is most responsible or why none are.
- Create a poster or infographic with evidence for responsibility.
- Create a series of newspaper headlines (including images and short descriptions) based on evidence for responsibility.
- Record a podcast making the argument for responsibility.

MODIFICATIONS/ACCOMMODATIONS

- Provide students with links to sources for online access.
- Edit readings to shorter length depending on the level of students.
- Reduce the number of long and/or short-term causes readings.

Appendix A:

Announcement of the Murder of Ms. World Peace

August 4, 1914

Good morning/afternoon folks, pardon the interruption. We have some breaking news that has just come across our news desk. Rumors have been coming in that Ms. World Peace has been found dead. We can now report that police have confirmed her death and that they are treating it as a homicide. This is a tragic day for the whole world as she was a beloved individual who will be greatly missed. Police have identified 4 prime suspects: Austria-Hungary, Germany, Russia, and Serbia. If you have any information you are encouraged to report it to your local police. We will continue to monitor this story and will provide updates as they become available. We now return to your regularly scheduled program.

Further Resources:

- [How the World Went to War in 1914](#)
- [10 Interpretations of Who Started WWI](#)
- [The War of 1914: An Avoidable Catastrophe](#)
- [How Europe Went to War in 1914](#)
- [The Outbreak of War in 1914: New Ways to Think About the 'Road to War'](#)
- [Dance of Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of War, 1914](#)
- [Crash Course: The Roads to World War I](#)

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