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Teacher Guide: Hire Me to Lead: A Resume for Pershing

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In these video clips from *General John J. Pershing and His American Army*, the documentary explores the military life of John J. Pershing, General of the Armies and commander of the American Expeditionary Forces during WWI. These clips include a summary of Pershing's education, details about his military career, and his strategy for the AEF in Europe during WWI.

About this film: *General John J. Pershing and His American Army* was produced in 2007 by Lucasfilm as a companion to the television series, *The Adventures of Young Indiana Jones*. Executive produced by George Lucas, these documentaries expand on historic subject matter introduced in the fictional adventure series. They aim to inspire curiosity in students and empower teachers in the classroom. 94 documentaries and three one-hour lectures are now available online for free. To learn more visit <https://www.lucasfilm.com/young-indy-education/>.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this activity, students will be able to:

1. **Summarize** the key events, achievements, and leadership qualities of General John J. Pershing's military career.
2. **Interpret and extract information** from historical sources (e.g., educational videos) to complete a structured task.
3. **Demonstrate historical empathy** by reimagining a historical figure's resume using modern formats.
4. **Evaluate** the qualifications and impact of military leadership during World War I.
5. **Communicate historical understanding** through the creative construction of a resume that includes education, experience, skills, and honors.
6. **Use evidence from multimedia sources** to support claims about why Pershing was a strong leader.

The work: Students will watch and answer questions for 3 clips from the Lucasfilm documentary, "General John J. Pershing and His American Army". Students will then be tasked to do the following:

Imagine it's 1917. The United States is entering World War I, and the president is looking for the best candidate to lead American troops overseas. General John J. Pershing is being considered—but he has to submit a resume just like anyone else! Your job is to create that resume and convince the country that he's the right man for the job.

Grade Levels:	6-8
Curricular Standards:	<p>National Council for the Social Studies C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards:</p> <p>D2.His.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.</p> <p>D2.His.5.6-8. Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time.</p> <p>D2.His.16.6-8. Organize applicable evidence into a coherent argument about the past.</p>

Essential Question:

Why was Pershing the best choice to lead the U.S. forces in World War I?

Before Viewing Questions:

1. What makes someone qualified for a job?
2. What makes someone a good leader?

During Viewing Questions & Example Answers:

Clip 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCmRfkq0lpk>

How did Pershing's education, military career, and personal character help him to be qualified to lead American troops in the Great War?

He quickly "distinguished himself as a leader" at West Point, proved a "capable leader in the Indian Wars," was "cool as a bowl of cracked ice" in the Spanish-American War, and gained celebrity for his command in the Philippines. He was described as "hard-working," "determined," and "ambitious".

Clip 2: <https://youtu.be/qgGSxLjXr8k?si=CcZ0RSCqplqCIIxe>

What was Pershing's main idea for how the American army should fight in World War I, and how was this different from how the French and British had been fighting for years?

Pershing believed in "open warfare," which meant "pushing the Germans out of the trenches and then fighting them in the open". He emphasized "offensive tactics that they would make a breakthrough". This was different from the "attrition warfare" and "bloody stalemate" of "trench warfare" that the French and British had been stuck in for three years.

Clip 3: https://youtu.be/eHogWamQe7o?si=AypxZc5gKxx83H_Z

General Pershing was known for being very determined and organized. How did he change the way the American army was run to better support the soldiers fighting on the front lines? Who were some of the future famous military leaders he worked with?

Pershing "restructured his staff of officers" so their "sole job is to plan and organize not just the campaigns and the battles, but everything; supplies, food, ammunition, everything". He assembled a group of "highly capable young officers" including George Patton, Douglas MacArthur, and George Marshall, who would become future military leaders. His team also set up "training schools" and created an "elaborate supply system of horses, trucks, and trains" to deliver essentials to the front lines and laid "over 22,000 miles of telephone wire" for communication. He was a "superb manager" who "created a great organization" and "picked good people to run it".

After Viewing Question & Example Answer:

Obviously, Pershing got the job. How did Pershing's leadership protect both the lives of American troops and America's standing in the world as a military power?

General John J. Pershing's leadership played a pivotal role in protecting both the lives of American troops and solidifying America's standing as a formidable military power during World War I. His approach was characterized by a steadfast refusal to compromise on the independence and thorough preparation of the American forces, even in the face of immense Allied pressure. A key decision that protected American lives was Pershing's unwavering refusal to "amalgamate" American troops into the "bled dry" British and French armies. He was determined that American forces would "fight as an American army" and not be "thrown away piecemeal" or used as mere "replacements". This decision, while making the French "wait months" for relief, prevented American soldiers, many of whom were "hardly more than civilians in uniform", from being immediately fed into the horrific "attrition warfare" and "meat-grinder" conditions that had already claimed millions of lives. Pershing's refusal of amalgamation was fundamentally about preserving America's identity and proving its "strength on the world stage". He did not want the American contribution to be seen merely as "a part of somebody else's war effort," but rather to play a "distinct role". This unwavering stance ensured that when America's forces did fight, their achievements would be undeniably American.

Extension Activity:

Students imagine that General John J. Pershing has been called in for a job interview to command U.S. forces in World War I. They will either:

- *Option 1:* Write a transcript of the interview, including both questions and Pershing's responses.
- *Option 2:* Perform a mock interview in pairs or small groups, with one student acting as Pershing and another as the hiring committee.

Background Reading(s):	Kids Britannica: John J. Pershing Library of Congress: John J. Pershing Timeline National Park Service: John J. Pershing PBS American Experience: General John J. Pershing
Student Handouts:	Pershing Resume Handout Students can complete this with pencil and paper OR create a Google Slide using the template (will need to make a copy). Using the Google Slide format will allow students to add creative touches such as changing layout and font.
Teacher Tools:	Pershing Resume Example
Vocabulary List:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stalemate ● Attrition ● Amalgamation