

Montana and the “Great War”

Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 5-8

Essential Understanding: Large-scale historical events affect the lives of ordinary people.

Guiding Question: What would it have been like to live during World War I?

Activity Description: Students will work in groups to explore a “Story Map” featuring images and vignettes about the way World War I affected ordinary Montanans. They will then write a journal entry or a letter from the perspective of someone living in Montana (or serving in the armed forces) during the war.

Grade Level: 5-8 (adaptable for high school)

Time: 1-2 class periods

Objectives

Students will

Learn some of the ways World War I shaped the lives of Montanans.

Discover that people thought about (and experienced) the war differently depending on their background.

Understand that history is complicated. There is no single simple narrative that can adequately explain everyone’s experiences.

Write a convincing piece of historical fiction based on research.

Materials:

Computers with internet access (one per two-three students)

Projector

Website: <https://mhs.mt.gov/education/index5>

Handout: Creating a Character (below)

Standards

CCRA.L.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

CCRA.L.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCRA.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCRA.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCRA.W.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Teaching Notes: Some of the entries on the Story Map address adult themes (for example, one discusses venereal disease, another describes a lynching.) Preview the Story Map to make sure the content is appropriate for your students.

This lesson is best used as part of a larger study of World War I. You may wish to use the activity as an extension of (or introduction to) Chapter 16 of the Montana Historical Society’s middle school Montana history textbook, *Montana: Stories of the Land*. If you do not have copies of the textbook, you can download a pdf version of Chapter 16 from the *Montana: Stories of the Land* companion website: <https://mhs.mt.gov/education/textbook/chapter16/Chapter16.pdf>.

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Review lesson plan and Story Map.

Print copies of the Creating a Character Handout.

Arrange to project the Story Map.

Procedure

Explain the assignment. Tell students they are going to explore a website about Montana

during World War I. After learning about some of the events, activities, and issues that Montanans faced during World War I, they are going to create a fictional character who lived during the war and write a piece of “historical fiction” in the form of a short journal entry or letter from that person’s perspective. (As is helpful, discuss the concept of “historical fiction” and how it differs from other fictional genres, noting that historical fiction tries to be true to life. It is based on research and set in a real time and place. It may be helpful to have students cite examples of historical fiction they have read.)

Explain that to be able to write a convincing piece of historical fiction, students must first research the time period—which they will do by exploring the Montana Historical Society’s website “Montana and the Great War,” which includes true stories of Montanans’ experiences during World War I.

Project the Story Map and, as a class, read the Introductory Text “Over Here.”

Have students work in small groups to read and take notes on at least three of the stories on the “Over Here” map. (For each entry they read, make sure they record the PLACE their story occurred.)

Pause and, as a class, discuss what they’ve learned. Engage students’ critical thinking skills and elicit their emotional responses with the following four questions, most easily remembered through the acronym DICE: What **disturbed** you? What **interested** you? What **confused** you? What **enlightened** you?

Repeat the process (reading the introduction as a group, allowing time for small-group exploration of individual stories, and then processing information as a group) for the next two sections of the map: “Over There” and “Home Again.”

Distribute the Creating a Character Handout.

As a class, review the handout, discussing possible answers.

Have students complete the Creating a Character Handout and then create their journal entry, taking on the persona of someone who lived in Montana during World War I.

Extensions

Have students conduct additional research to flesh out their character and understanding of the issues surrounding World War I by having them follow the “Read More” links, listen to snippets from oral history interviews (links to which can be found on [Voices: Remembering World War I](#)), read an article originally published in *Montana The Magazine of Western History* (links to which can be found in [Books and Articles](#)), or find additional information through an internet search on World War I battles. Links to both the “Voices” and “Books and Articles” pages can be found at <https://mhs.mt.gov/education/index5>.

Instead of having students write a journal entry, have them write a “dialogue poem,” expressing two characters’ opposing points of view. Find sample lesson plans on dialogue poems from the University of Minnesota (https://carla.umn.edu/articulation/polia/pdf_files/dialoguepoems.pdf)

Student Name _____ Teacher Name _____ Period _____

MONTANA AND THE "GREAT WAR" CREATING A CHARACTER HANDOUT

Now that you've read some about WWI in Montana (and Montanans overseas), imagine a character.

What's your character's name? Age? Gender?

Where in Montana does your character live (or if now serving in the military, did s/he come from)?

What type of work does your character do (or does his/her family do)?

What is your character's nationality? Was s/he born in the United States? Were his/her parents?

Do s/he support the war? Why or why not?

How is/will the war affect your character and his/her family?

1.

2.

3.

What ISSUE or ISSUES do you want to write about?

Write at least one paragraph in the form of a journal entry or letter from the point of view of your character. Attach the paragraph to this handout and turn them in together.