

Part 1: The Interwar Period and Lead-Up to WWII, 1918-1938

Lesson Overview

Students will review the most significant events of the interwar period between 1918 and 1938, specifically regarding the rise of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, and the actions of Imperial Japan. The global Great Depression, as well as the policies established within the United States to respond to it, will be described and evaluated, as will several influential historical figures of this period. Provided with this lesson plan is a written timeline/synopsis of the ending of WWI and the inter-war period. Review this with students and/or print it out to distribute to the class before beginning the activities within this lesson plan.

Wyoming State Social Studies Standards

- SS12.6.4: Evaluate and integrate accurate, sufficient, and relevant information from primary and secondary sources to support writing.
- SS12.2.2: Analyze human experience and cultural expression (e.g., language, literature, arts, traditions, beliefs, spirituality, values, and behavior) and illustrate integrated views of a specific culture.
- SS12.4.4: Describe the historical interactions between and among individuals, groups, and/or institutions (e.g., family, neighborhood, political, economic, religious, social, culture, and workplace) and their impact on significant historical events.

Objectives

- Students will identify and analyze the consequences of the end of WWI and the conditions that ushered in the beginning of WWII.
- Students will describe and connect the political and social policies of the major world powers as they created the preconditions for the outbreak of the war.
- Students will identify the major leaders of the Allied and Axis Powers of WWII and evaluate their influence and importance in the context of the interwar period.
- Students will use primary sources to support their writing skills and further develop their knowledge of this period.

Materials

- Provided timeline/synopsis of the interwar period (attached to lesson plan)
- Primary and secondary sources documents (see Compilation of Sources)
- Internet access to conduct research
- Poster paper
- Index cards
- Glue/tape
- Writing utensils
- Notebook

Classroom Activities

Event Analysis Web

This activity will ask students to work individually or in partner groups to choose, research, and analyze an event from the provided timeline and connect it with three more events from the interwar period.

1. Begin the lesson by presenting the information included in the timeline (attached to the lesson plan). You may choose to share the events on it indirectly or print out the timeline as a handout for the class. Other relevant events occurring between 1918 and 1938 may be used in this activity.
2. Introduce the activity, explain that students either individually or with a partner, will select one significant event of the pre-WWII era to analyze and then place it in a broader context.
 - a. Events may include any from the provided timeline or another that the students discover or wish to explore more.
3. Once each student/group has selected an event, ask them to conduct research on that topic, and record their findings in a notebook or on a digital document.
 - a. Students should find at least one primary source and two secondary sources for their main event and provide links or correct citations (if used in your class) for them. See Compilation of Sources below for links to databases for primary sources
 - b. Through their research, students should discuss these things for their final product:
 - i. The name, date, and location of the event.
 - ii. A brief description of the event. What happened during it? Which people or countries were involved in it?

- iii. The people or countries impacted by it. Ask students to include, if possible, for their chosen event, one social, political, economic, and military impact. A one to two sentence description of each impact is sufficient; the goal of this activity is to identify and draw connections between events, not provide a complete deep-dive into them.
- iv. Students must identify three significant events that may be connected to their main event. They will be asked to provide a brief description of these additional events and how they are related to their main event, but they do not need to discuss their impacts.
- v. **Example of one main and three connected events:**
 - 1. **Hirohito became the Emperor of Japan after the death of his father, Emperor Taishō, on December 25, 1926. After Emperor Hirohito assumed control over Imperial Japan, he enacted a powerful policy of expansionism throughout Asia over the next two decades. On September 18, 1931, the Imperial Japanese Army invaded Manchuria (Connected event #1). After being condemned for its invasion of Manchuria, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations, ending diplomatic relations with the major world powers of the post-WWI period (event #2) In 1937, Imperial Japan invaded China (July 7), and began the six-week massacre of Nanjing on December 13, 1937 (event #3).**
- 4. After the students have had time to complete their research, provide each student/group with a piece of poster paper and several index cards or small pieces of paper, which will be glued or taped to the poster. *This step may be done after the introduction to the activity if that is preferable to after they have completed research.
- 5. Ask students to create a poster with their main event and its impacts described on a card at the top, with the three connected events on cards below it and lines of reasoning connecting them. This should look something like this:

6. When the posters have been completed, have the students share their findings with the class or in small groups. For grading purposes, request that their poster be turned in along with the sources they used.

Policies, People, and Primary Sources Essay

This essay will require students to individually use research, writing, and analysis skills. Students will discuss impactful leaders, policies, acts, and laws established during the interwar period. This will include specific historical figures who enacted them, and their implications in broader social, political, economic, and military contexts.

1. Introduce this activity to the class as an individual exploration of the politics that created the preconditions for WWII. The students will be tasked with writing an evaluation of their selected person, policy, act, or law in an essay format, to include an introduction, thesis statement, body, conclusion, and, optionally, a self-reflection.
 - a. If the students are unfamiliar with how to write a claim/thesis statement, take a short amount of time to review this. See the section on thesis writing in the Compilation of Sources for tools to help students understand and write their own thesis statements.
2. Ask students to select from the list of topics included in the section below titled “List of People, Policies, Acts, and Laws for Essay Activity,” or any other relevant

topics you or they may discover or choose. After selecting a topic, instruct the students to begin researching it. As they research, they should begin constructing an outline that they will use to write their essay.

- a. All sources used should be recorded, either in citations or links, and include at least one primary source.
3. When the students are ready to begin writing, reiterate the requirements of the essay. Within the components of the essay (introduction, thesis, etc.), ensure that students understand to include a general background of their chosen person, policy, law, or act, a description of the topic's social, political, economic, and/or military impact(s), and its placement in a broader, international, and historical context. Then, allow students to work independently to finish this assignment. Ensure that you or another educator is available to answer questions and provide additional guidance.
 - a. A personal reflection is recommended to be assigned within or after the conclusion. Within this reflection, students may share their interpretations, perspectives, and ideas about their topic *and* predict how it will influence World War II. This section is intended to be engaging and not to be graded on the accuracy of their predictions and interpretations.
4. Define a deadline for the completion of their essay (whether it is assigned to be completed during class time or as homework), a method of submission (i.e. digital or physical), and grading/scoring criteria. The recommendation for time limitations is 4-7 days.

Compilation of Sources

- Databases for finding credible sources:
 - Office of the Historian - <https://history.state.gov/milestones/all>
 - See “1914-1920: World War One and Wilsonian Diplomacy,” “1921-1936: Interwar Diplomacy,” and “1937-1945: Diplomacy and the Road to Another War.”
 - The National Archives - <https://www.archives.gov>
 - Library of Congress - <https://www.loc.gov>
 - Primary source sets from LOC:
 - The New Deal - <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/new-deal/>
 - President Speeches (focus on FDR and Woodrow Wilson) - <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/presidential-speeches/>
- Thesis Writing

- How to Write a STRONG Thesis Statement – Scribbr -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFp1uGTxo4Q>
- Purdue OWL -
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/the_writing_process/thesis_statement_tips.html

List of People, Policies, Acts, and Laws for Essay Activity

Policies, Acts, and Laws

- Treaty of Versailles
- The Third Reich's Nuremberg Race Laws, 1935
 - Includes the Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor
- U.S. Immigration Act of 1924 (also called the Johnson-Reed Act)
- Kellogg-Briand Pact, 1928
- U.S. Neutrality Acts and Isolationist Policy
 - Include the 1935, 1936, and 1937 acts, but not the 1939 act
- U.S. Dawes Plan of 1924
- U.S. Stimson Doctrine, 1932
- U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, 1918
- U.S. Johnson Act of 1934 (also called the Johnson Debt Default Act)
- Imperial Japan's Universal Male Suffrage Law of 1925
- The Third Reich's Enabling Act of 1933
- U.S. Sedition Act of 1918
- U.S. Good Neighbor Policy, 1933
- Fascist Italy's Manifesto of Race, 1938
- Washington Naval Conference, 1921-1922
- Munich Agreement of 1938 and Appeasement
- U.S. New Deal Acts, 1933-1938
 - Includes multiple policies, acts, and laws within it, but may be evaluated as a whole

Historical Figures

- Woodrow Wilson
- Franklin D. Roosevelt
- Joseph Stalin
- Neville Chamberlain
- Winston Churchill
- Hideki Tojo

- Albert Lebrun
- Philippe Pétain
- Joseph Goebbels
- Charles de Gaulle
- George C. Marshall
- Henrich Himmler
- Benito Mussolini
- Dwight D. Eisenhower
- Chiang Kai-shek

Planning a Visit to the NMMV

Although the lessons in this series can be implemented in the classroom without time-consuming or difficult preparation, they are also designed to be taught along with a visit to the National Museum of Military Vehicles, specifically the Marshall Gallery.

For this lesson (The Interwar Period and Lead-Up to WWII), pay special attention to these displays and/or highlight the significance of these concepts in the museum. All suggestions are made in a chronological sequence and as they appear in the museum's exhibits.

1. In front of the doors to the George C. Marshall Gallery (in between these doors and the back of the "Unknown Soldiers Weapons Vault"), read the wall panels in chronological order (i.e., "End of the Great War," "Expansionism," then "Dragged into War").
 - a. These descriptions provide a surface-level explanation of several events that directly caused the Second World War and the United States' eventual involvement in it.
 - b. Ask students to pay close attention to the countries and dates named here to include in and/or connect to their event analysis webs.
 - c. In this entrance, there is also a panel titled "General George C. Marshall," which would be informative for any student who selected this historical figure for his/her essay topic.
2. Throughout the museum, small allusions are made to significant historical figures, policies, acts, and events. Although the majority of stories and information featured inside the Marshall Gallery emerged or are relevant after WWII, ask your students to observe cases where they may see the influences or results of policies, acts, laws, and figures of the pre-WWII period (1918-1938). Encourage students to look at the display cases of belongings and reader rails with stories and information beyond the military vehicles (i.e., concerning people, policies, etc.).