

Franklin & Winston: And So To War

I. Introduction

This lesson is intended to compare and contrast the justifications that led to British (1939) and American (1941) involvement in World War II. It can be used as a stand alone lesson or as a supplement to a lesson outlining the origins of World War II, and is designed to fit into an overall unit on the study of World War II. Students will be asked to read two famous speeches and answer questions, discuss the speeches, work collaboratively in groups answering open-ended questions about the justifications of war, and write a response to a prompt.

II. Guiding Question

How valid were the British and the American justifications for entering World War II particularly as presented by Winston S. Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt in two of their speeches? After ten years in the political wilderness, Winston Churchill was brought back into the government as First Lord of the Admiralty, by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, on the very day he made this speech. Roosevelt had been President of the United States since 1932.

III. Learning Objectives

The student will understand the gravity of war and the necessity to rationalize the justifications of entering a war.

The student will know the reasons used to justify British and American involvement in World War II, Winston S. Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, the German invasion of Poland in 1939, the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941.

The student will be able to read two famous speeches and answer questions about them, participate in a whole-class discussion about the speeches, work in a mixed-ability groups graffiti activity to answer open-ended questions about war and its justifications, and respond in writing to one of the open-ended graffiti questions.

Virginia Standards of Learning

Era VII: Era of Global Wars, 1914 to 1945

WHII.11 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the worldwide impact of World War II by

- a) explaining economic and political causes, major events, and identifying leaders of the war, with emphasis on Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, George Marshall, Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Hideki Tojo, and Hirohito;

Conflict: The World at War: 1939 to 1945

VUS.10 The student will demonstrate knowledge of World War II by

- a) identifying the causes and events that led to American involvement in the war, including military assistance to Britain and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor;

IV. Background Information for the Teacher

Britain and France were forced to declare war after Germany ignored their separate ultimatums, delivered on 3 September 1939, demanding the withdrawal of German troops from Poland. In the mid-1930s, Britain's response to the acceleration of Germany's rearmament and the threat of war was to appease rather than confront Hitler and his generals. By late 1938, Hitler

was making speeches that furiously proclaimed Germany's right to annex the Sudetenland, a Czechoslovak territory with a significant German population. Chamberlain flew to Germany to calm the situation, eventually signing the Munich Agreement with Hitler, giving control of the Sudetenland to Nazi Germany. With the invasion of the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, Britain was no longer acquiescent and Chamberlain warned that any further attacks would meet resistance. It took the defeat of Poland six months later to induce the British and French governments to declare war.

(http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/1/newsid_3506000/3506335.stm)

The United States between the two world wars enacted an isolationist foreign policy having been disillusioned following World War I. With the onset of the Great Depression and subsequently the worldwide depression in the 1930s American retracted further inward especially with regard to financial commitments abroad. American looked upon the growing tide of fascism and Nazism in Europe as not their problem, but kept a close eye on Japan's territorial aggressions in East Asia. The United States, operating under the Stimson Doctrine, grew increasingly at odds with Japan and negotiations between the two countries diminished. When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 the United States quickly mobilized with a congressional declaration of war against the Empire of Japan on December 8. Nazi Germany and the United States declared war on each other on December 11, 1941 and thus began World War II.

V. Preparation for Teaching this Lesson

Handouts (included): “[War Speech](#), 3 September 1939, House of Commons,” available at the website of The Churchill Centre, www.winstonchurchill.org and “Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Japan”

Colored Pencils or Markers

Easel Paper

Suggested Graffiti Questions (when creating graffiti questions remember to make them open-ended): Is war an opportunity or a burden? Is war ever justified? Are these great speeches or merely propaganda? Was Britain right to go to war in 1939? Was America right to go to war in 1941? Do alliances create wars? Who is guilty in war?

VI. Suggested Activities

1. Primary Source Document Reading:

Students should read and answer questions individually on “War Speech, 3 September 1939, House of Commons.” Teacher and students should discuss the speech and responses to questions.

Students should read and answer questions individually on “Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Japan.” Teacher and students should discuss the speech and responses to questions.

Teacher and students should compare the contrast the two speeches in terms of rhetoric, message, objectives, and determine who made the better case for war.

2. Graffiti Activity:

The teacher should print out the graffiti questions in large font and post them around the room. It would be helpful to have large easel paper on which to post the questions so that student groups can write around the question. The teacher should create three to five person student groups and give each group a different colored pencil or marker. Each group is assigned to a graffiti question. Students will have one to two minutes to discuss and respond in writing on the easel paper to the graffiti question. At the set time students will move to next graffiti question and repeat this process until they return to their original question. At that time they should synthesize all of the group responses and be able to present a cogent response when asked to share their question. Following this response the teacher should allow other groups to comment and discuss. This should be repeated for every group until finished. The teacher should allow for final comments by students.

VII. Assessment

Students should choose one of the graffiti questions that their group was not assigned and respond in writing. The response should be cogent, written in complete sentences, but without a specified length. Students must make specific reference to both Churchill's "War Speech, 3 September 1939, House of Commons" and Roosevelt's "Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Japan" in order to receive full credit. This can be done in class if there is enough time remaining or be assigned for homework for the next class

VIII. Extending the Lesson

Class Debate: have students choose sides as to who gave a better speech, or who was a better overall leader.

Counter speech, support speech: similar to the debate, but strictly in writing. Have students write their own speeches for or against the words of Churchill or Roosevelt. An additional writing assignment might be a polemic in the same vein.

Propaganda Posters: look at World War II posters and have students create propaganda posters supporting either the British or American cause in World War II.

IX. Additional Information

Author: John Baran, Monticello High School, Charlottesville, VA 22902

Grade Levels: 10-12

Subject Areas: World, European, and United States History

Time Required: 1-90 minutes block; 2-45 minute periods