



ENQUIRY 9

Did The Allies Win The First World War Or Did The Central Powers Lose It?

Key stage 3

ENQUIRY OVERVIEW

This enquiry structures a staged investigation allowing students to examine the extent to which the Allied victory in 1918 can be attributed to the strengths and actions of the Allied powers or the weaknesses and actions of their opponents the Central Powers, (concentrating on Germany as by far the most important member of that alliance). Students consider in turn the relative strengths of rival alliances in 1914, the failure of the Schlieffen plan, the war at sea and the Allied naval blockade, the German spring offensive of 1918 on the Western Front and Allied reaction to it. Students consolidate their understanding of these factors by participating in final debate about how Allied victory might be best explained.

Particular sites on the Western Front associated with events covered in the enquiry could be linked to a battlefields visit.

There are opportunities through this topic to make links to English (e.g. developing speaking and listening skills, writing and speaking in a persuasive and discursive style, analysing texts) and Mathematics (e.g. researching and analysing statistics).



LESSONS

STAGE 1 Which alliance looked more likely to win a war before it actually broke out in 1914?

The purpose of this stage is for students to weigh the relative strength of the rival European alliances in 1914. Display **Resource A** (or a similar map) which shows a world map of 1914 with much of the globe divided up between European empires. Ask pairs or small groups to look carefully at the map (the zoom function can be used to focus in on particular details) and compare it to a modern world map in a current atlas. Lead a whole class discussion about similarities and differences between the two maps and what the 1914 map may tell us about the world in 1914.

Ask pairs or groups to look again at the 1914 map and identify which European countries seemed to control the most land and which ones the least. Display **Resource B**, another map of the world in 1914 which shows how much territory each European country controlled. Explain that in 1914 the major European powers were divided in to two rival alliances, the Triple Entente (Great Britain, France and Russia) and the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy). Lead a whole class discussion taking suggestions about which alliance appeared to control the most land globally and what advantages that might bring to that side in the event of a war. Take a vote on which alliance might be more likely to win a war based on the collective size of the empires alone.

Set time for small groups to research statistics that allows them to compare the powers in each alliance further e. g in terms of the size of their armies, naval strength, population size, coal and steel production etc. Lead a whole class discussion about what these figures might show about which alliance had the advantage and take a further vote on which side might be more likely to win a war.

Give out **Resource C** as separate cards (which give further information about each power in 1914) to the same groups as above and ask them to follow the instructions in **Resource D**. Hold a final discussion and vote on which alliance might be more likely to win a war, probing the understanding of pupils carefully (opinion on which alliance might win might turn on which powers were actually prepared to support their allies militarily in the event of war. Arguably the absence of Italy would not make much difference to the Triple Alliance but the absence of the British might be crucial to the chances of the Triple Entente).

List of resources, worksheets, video clips and interactive activities for use with Stage 1

Resource A

Political Map of the World 1914

http://www.mapsinternational.co.uk/product_details.asp?pid=WM995&pName=Vintage-Bartholomew-Political-World-Map-1914---Medium&utm_expid=9950499-1.jjz6rVxUTVSPj7vvBhcT9A.0&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.co.uk%2Furl%3Fsa%3Dt%26rct%3Dj%26q%3D%26esrc%3Ds%26source%3Dweb%26cd%3D1%26



LESSONS

STAGE 1 Which alliance looked more likely to win a war before it actually broke out in 1914? (continued)

List of resources, worksheets, video clips and interactive activities for use with Stage 1

Modern Atlas

Resource B

Modern map depicting the world in 1914 (scroll down to figure 5)

<http://debitage.net/humangeography/colonialism.html>

Examples of the kind of statistics that could be researched for each country are given on page 3 of the following document

http://www.shoreham-academy.org/upload/files/ww1causes_revision_booklet.pdf

and for the strength of each alliance on Aug 4th 1914 at

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/648646/World-War-I/53114/Forces-and-resources-of-the-combatant-nations-in-1914>

Resource C

Cards describing the countries of the Triple Entente and Triple Alliance in 1914

Resource D

Instructions for using the cards in Resource C

STAGE 2 Did Germany actually lose the First World War in the autumn of 1914?

The purpose of this stage is to consider how the German Schlieffen plan of 1914 went wrong and consider the implications of a two front war for Germany.

In a large space with a clear floor create a “map” of Europe in 1914, grouping furniture together with large labels and flags to represent the six great European powers referred to in the first stage. Stand different groups of students by each label or flag as the “armies” of each country. Display the map from **Resource A** which shows German fears of facing a two front war (or a similar map). Explain Germany’s dilemma and lead a discussion about how the country might have been able to defeat their enemies if they were attacked by France and Russia at the same time.

Display and play the first two stages of the animation from **Resource B** showing the Schlieffen plan (the German strategy to defeat France quickly by encircling Paris before moving forces eastward to defeat the supposedly slower Russians). Move “armies” of students between “countries” across the room while explaining the plan (adding further details from **Resource B** or similar map as necessary). Take suggestions as to what could go wrong (e. g. the assumption that Britain would stay neutral).



LESSONS

STAGE 2 Did Germany actually lose the First World War in the autumn of 1914? (continued)

Play the remaining parts of the animation from **Resource B**, showing what happened from the actual outbreak of war in August 1914 to December. Reinforce this by acting out and explaining troop movements on the eastern and western fronts using the student “armies” as before. Lead a discussion about why it might have been difficult for Germany to win the War once it was fighting on two fronts at once. Lead a further discussion about what problems countries might face fighting an expectedly long war.

On a visit to the battlefields students could be alerted to sites on the Western Front that played a significant part in its formation during the autumn of 1914.

List of resources, worksheets, video clips and interactive activities for use with Stage 2

Labels and/or flags for countries fighting in 1914.

Resource A

Map showing encirclement of Germany by the Triple Entente.

http://www.johndclare.net/causes_WWI2.htm

Resource B

Animated map of the Schlieffen plan

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/interactive/animations/western_front/index_embed.shtml

Detail on the Eastern Front 1914.

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/battles/ef.htm>

STAGE 3 How close did Germany come to winning the war at sea?

The aim of this stage is for students to assess whether the Germans came close to winning the war at sea, beginning with introductory evidence focused on a particular incident.

Give out copies of the images from **Resource A** of the German medal made to celebrate the sinking of the British liner Lusitania off the Irish coast on 7th May 1915 by a German submarine accompanied by the English translation of the German inscriptions but without contextual information about the sinking. After giving time for pairs to draw inferences from the images and inscriptions lead a discussion to their ideas.

Give out **Resources B to D** allowing time for an analysis of each one and discussion of conclusions including about how different details might change students’ perspective of the event and why. Lastly explain further historical background on the sinking and reasons why it still generates controversy.



LESSONS

STAGE 3 How close did Germany come to winning the war at sea? (continued)

Tell the students about the naval rivalry between Great Britain and Germany before the outbreak of war and set the sinking of the Lusitania in the context of the struggle for supremacy at sea between the two powers. Ask groups of students to draw a graph on a large piece of paper with the horizontal axis marked with the years from 1914 to 1918 and the vertical axis marked victory at the top and defeat at the bottom where it intersects with the year 1914.

Give out **Resource E** as a card sort and instruct groups to lay the cards along the horizontal axis in date order reading about each event carefully in turn. Introduce the students to the question How close did Germany come to winning the war at sea? and instruct them to plot each card in turn against the vertical axis of the graph, deciding whether it brought Germany closer or further away from winning the war at sea. Lead a class discussion, comparing and contrasting the different patterns created across the groups.

List of resources, worksheets, video clips and interactive activities for use with Stage 3

Resource A

An image of the original German medal commemorating the sinking of the Lusitania.

Resource B

The German government advertisement warning against sailing in Cunard liners from an American newspaper.

Resource C

British recruitment poster exploiting the sinking.

Resource D

British recruitment poster exploiting the sinking.

Resource E

Card sort of events during the war at sea 1914-1918.



LESSONS

STAGE 4 How close did Germany come to winning the First World War on the Western Front in the spring of 1918?

The aim of this stage is for students to study the spectacular German gains of Spring 1918 in the context of their planning and the Allied reaction to them.

Play the clip from **Resource A** (link to a scene from the 1930 film *All Quiet on the Western Front*). Lead a discussion about how soldiers involved in such infantry attacks and those defending trenches might have felt. Use **Sources B to D** or refer to any prior learning about trench warfare on the Western Front to explain to the students about the successive failure of offensives between 1915 and early 1918 to make any substantive gains in territory. Refer to the high casualty figures especially those for the battles of Verdun and the Somme in 1916.

Set up a number line around the room between 1 and 10 with 1 labelled “Not close to victory at all”, 5 labelled “Quite close to victory” and 10 “Very close to victory”. Using **Resource E** explain the details of the German spring offensive of March 1918 (it is important that students are not given any further information about it at this stage). Allow time for pairs to discuss how close Germany apparently came to victory on the number scale and invite individuals to stand by the number they agree with. Lead a discussion probing student reasoning for standing by a particular number.

Give out **Resource F** and allow them to read and discuss this further information about the German offensive. Allow the students to discuss their position on the number line, possibly change it and then lead further discussion probing their reasoning, particularly if they have moved.

Give out **Resource G** which provides details of the Allied reaction to the offensive and repeat the activity above. Lastly invite suggestions as to what German commanders might have done differently to improve their chance of victory.

On a battlefield visit students could be alerted to sites on the Western Front played an important role in the German spring offensives of 1918 and the Allied counter-offensives.

List of resources, worksheets, video clips and interactive activities for use with Stage 4

Resource A

All Quiet on the Western Front extract.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ciq9ts02ci4>

Resource B

Animated map of events on the Western Front 1914-1918.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/interactive/animations/western_front/index_embed.shtml



LESSONS

STAGE 4 How close did Germany come to winning the First World War on the Western Front in the spring of 1918? (continued)

List of resources, worksheets, video clips and interactive activities for use with Stage 4

Resource C

Detail on the Battle of Verdun 1916.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/battle_verdun.shtml

Resource D

Detail on the battle of the Somme 1916.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/battle_somme.shtml

Resource E

Account of the German spring offensive of 1918.

Resource F

How well planned was the German spring offensive of 1918?

Resource G

How did the Allied powers react to the German spring offensive of 1918?

Resource H

Detailed narrative of events on the Western Front from March to November 1918.

<http://www.nam.ac.uk/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/western-front-1918>

STAGE 5 How much pressure did the Allied naval blockade put on Germany during the First World War?

The aim of this stage is for students to assess how much pressure the Allied naval blockade of Germany placed on the German home front compared to the policies of the German government itself.

Display **Resource A** which shows the image of a pressure gauge. Lead a discussion about how a pressure gauge works, ensuring that all students understand that the further up the gauge the needle travels the more critical the level of pressure that is recorded. Divide the class in to groups and ask them to draw a pressure gauge on a large piece of paper.

Display the map from **Resource B** which shows the coastline of Germany during the First World War and lead a discussion about why the country would be vulnerable to a naval blockade. Then read out the events for each year of the First World War from **Resource C**. These describe the Allied naval blockade for each year and the effects on Germany attributed to it. Pause at the end of each year's events for groups to debate and mark on their gauges the level of pressure they think Germany was being subjected too.



LESSONS

STAGE 5 How much pressure did the Allied naval blockade put on Germany during the First World War? (continued)

After each group has agreed where to mark the pressure for that particular year on their gauge lead a whole class discussion where groups can share their opinion about the level of pressure they think the blockade placed Germany under. Challenge groups to substantiate their judgement from particular evidence (if necessary give out copies of the information in **Resource C**).

Next, lead a discussion about how important students think the blockade might have been in winning the First World War. Then give out copies of **Resource D** for the students to read and discuss. Allow time for groups to re-adjust the amount of pressure on their diagram they consider the Allied blockade actually might have placed on Germany and lead a final discussion where the students justify any changes they have made.

List of resources, worksheets, video clips and interactive activities for use with Stage 5

Resource A

Image of a pressure gauge.

Resource B

Map of Europe in 1914.

Resource C

The effects of the Allied naval blockade on Germany?

Resource D

How much pressure did the German government put on its own people during the First World War?

STAGE 6 Did the Allies win the First World War or did the Central Powers lose it?

The aim of this stage is for students to debate answers to the enquiry question and arrive at reasoned conclusions, where appropriate drawing on evidence studied in more depth in earlier lessons.

Divide the class into small groups. Prepare the list of explanations of why the Allies won or the Central Powers lost the First World War in **Resource A** as a card-sort and give out to each group along with a large piece of paper.

Ask the groups to draw a Venn diagram of two interlocking circles on it. Instruct the students to head one circle "The Allies won" and the other "The Central Powers lost". Instruct the groups to spread the statements out and through discussion place them in a particular circle, drawing lines between any statements that they



LESSONS

STAGE 6 Did the Allies win the First World War or did the Central Powers lose it? (continued)

consider might link together even if they have been placed in different circles. For example those statements concerning the same theatre of the war such as the Western Front, or a common theme such as being contributory explanations for the deteriorating Home Front in Germany itself.

Allocate two groups to prepare rival presentations, one arguing that the Allies won the War, the second that the Central Powers lost it. A third group could argue that the outcome of the War was the result of factors on both sides of the argument. Then instruct the two or three groups chosen for the presentations to prepare to present their case within a short time limit as if for a televised debate. Other students can be asked to support particular lead groups.

The presentations could be filmed and you could act as a presenter of a class debate conducted afterwards with a final vote being held. During this vote the students would be free to vote for the case they find the most convincing rather than the one they were allocated to support.

List of resources, worksheets, video clips and interactive activities for use with Stage 6

Resource A

Card-sort of explanations for why the Allies won and the Central Powers lost the First World War.

Resource B

Historiographical background on the reputation of Allied commanders on the Western Front.