

Lesson 7:

Just War Theory in the History Classroom II: You Decide ...

Lesson 7 provides teachers with a template they can use throughout the year to engage students in applying critical thinking and analytic skills to reach their own conclusions about the justifiability of a particular war being studied.

Objectives:

- Students will analyze specific wars in U.S. (or World) History, and decide if they were “just” according to the fundamental principles of just war theory. They will reflect on whether they themselves believe the war was justified.

Prior Knowledge:

- Students should have spent some time exploring the meanings of “war” and “peace.”
- Students should be familiar with the history, and basic principles of Just War Theory.

Materials: Student Worksheet #1: Just War Principles, one per student
Student Worksheet #2: Justification of War Case Study Matrix, one per student for each war

Procedure: The procedure is laid out referencing U.S. History, but is essentially the same for world history.

While studying a specific war:

1. Think-pair-share: Students read the textbook section on the war being studied. Using the think-pair-share strategy, students discuss the events leading up to this war. Students answer the question: Why did the United States fight this war?
2. Applying Just War Principles: Divide students into groups of two to four. Assign each group one of the just war principles. Direct students to discuss and analyze the war being studied in light of the principle(s) they have been assigned. Their task is to decide if the war was “just” under the requirements of *that* principle, using historical evidence to support their decision.

Example: Principle Three - Last Resort: Using historical evidence, students must decide if all peaceful options were exhausted before the war began. What were those options? What was done? What else might have been done?

3. Handout the “Justification of War Case Study Matrix”. Students should use this to take notes during the “Share Out” by the groups.
4. Working through the principles one by one, each group shares their deliberations. They discuss their analysis of the war in light of the principle they were assigned, and present their argument citing historical evidence. The class takes notes using the matrix.
5. Discuss: After all the groups have presented, engage the class in a discussion of the results, again, working through the principles one by one. Keep students focused on the principle under discussion and avoiding bird-walking to other principles. Does everyone agree with the group’s

conclusions regarding that principle? Some groups assigned the same principle may have reached different conclusions.

6. After a thorough discussion of all of the principles, move to a discussion of the war over-all. Do they think it was just? Why or why not? Does a war need to meet every principle in order to be a just war? Make intellectual room for those students who generally reject the notion of applying just war principles to decide whether a war is right.
7. Students write a persuasive essay:

According to the Just War principles, was this a just war?

Begin your essay by summarizing the war (when, where, who, why, and outcomes.)

Using the just war principles, present your opinion on whether the war was, or was not just *according to the principles of just war theory*. Cite evidence to support your argument.

Whatever your conclusion (was just, was not just according to the theory), indicate whether you personally do or do not agree with the conclusion. If you do not agree, you may present your own conclusion explaining why it differs from the one based on just war principles.

Extension Activities::

- As additional wars are studied throughout the year, the same procedure is followed, and students compare and contrast different wars in terms of whether they met the just war criteria or not.

JUST WAR PRINCIPLES

Today, the principles most often used for determining whether going to war is justified (*jus ad bellum*) are:

1. **Just cause/right intention:** A just war must be fought only for purposes of self-defense against armed attack or to right a serious wrong.
2. **Proper authority:** A war is just only if waged by a legitimate authority.
3. **Last resort:** A just war must be the last resort; all peaceful options must be exhausted before the use of force can be justified.
4. **Probability of success:** There must be a reasonable chance of success; deaths and injury that result from a hopeless cause cannot be morally justified.
5. **Beneficial outcome:** The outcome of the war must be better than the situation that would exist had the war not taken place.
6. **Proportionality:** The violence and destruction must be proportional to the injury suffered.

JUSTIFICATION OF WAR CASE STUDY MATRIX

NAME OF WAR:

NAME OF STUDENT:

Principle	Evidence to Support Opinion
1. Just cause/right intention: A just war must be fought only for purposes of self-defense against armed attack or to right a serious wrong.	
2. Proper authority: A war is just only if waged by a legitimate authority.	
3. Last resort: A just war must be the last resort; all peaceful options must be exhausted before the use of force can be justified.	
4. Probability of success: There must be a reasonable chance of success; deaths and injury that result from a hopeless cause cannot be morally justified.	
5. Beneficial outcome: The outcome of the war must be better than the situation that would exist had the war not taken place.	
6. Proportionality: The violence and destruction must be proportional to the injury suffered.	