

# WORLD AT WAR: TEACHER'S GUIDE

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## Teaching WWI with an Essential Question through a Historical Deliberative Forum

Recommended Grade Levels: 9-12

Course/Content Area: U.S. History, Civics, Social Studies

by the National WWI Museum and Memorial

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How do values influence decision making?
- How do you reconcile opposing views in a time of war?
- How did Americans feel about the Great War in 1915?



**SUMMARY:**

The date is October 20, 1915. The “European War” continues raging and expanding. America is a neutral nation, but people are wondering how long that will remain the case. Using the issue guide “A World at War,” students will learn about three options many Americans supported and the historical context behind them. Students will participate in a deliberative forum where they will (try to) come to a consensus to answer the question: “What Role Should the United States play in international conflict?”

**STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:**

See Appendix E for Common Core standards alignment.

**TIME NEEDED:**

90 minutes for a forum, plus preparation and time for extension activities

**OBJECTIVES:**

*Students will:*

- determine how the United States was affected by the first year of WWI,
- deliberate on the best course of action for American involvement in the war,
- support arguments based on historical evidence,
- democratically make decisions based on community needs.

**INTERDISCIPLINARY:**

American History, Government, Civics, Communication

**THEMES & CONNECTIONS:**

- U.S. entry into WWI
- Decision making
- Democratic participation

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**

- “A World at War” issue guides for each student
- Different colored markers for Notetaker/whiteboard or printed note sheets
- Optional – “A World at War Forum” PowerPoint and projector

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Designed to encourage collaboration in the democratic process, deliberative forums ask participants to consider three options for answering an essential question. A deliberative forum is not a debate, but an examination of costs and consequences of possible solutions to daunting community problems. There is a straightforward process to follow that involves an issue guide for participant preparation.

The historic issue guide, “A World at War” will provide learners with the context needed to take part in a deliberative forum:

- The introduction provides information about the first year and a half of World War I, as well as its impact on the United States.
- Three options, supported only with evidence that would have been known during this time in history, are offered for participants to choose as a solution to the question of American involvement. Participants cannot use contemporary information or hindsight on the topic.
- The conclusion, which should be read after the activity, presents “what really happened.”

The group activity requires participants to think about ideas and values when choosing their words and making their decisions. A Moderator helps create civil deliberation. The goal is to find common ground, encourage historic empathy and practice civil discourse focused on problem-solving rather than partisanship.

Information about deliberative forums comes from Kettering Foundation’s “Working through Difficult Decisions” and the David Mathews Center for Civic Life’s “Moderator Development Handbook.”

Visit <https://www.kettering.org/content/issue-guides-and-issue-frameworks> and [mathewscenter.org](https://www.mathewscenter.org) for additional information.

Especially useful is *Deliberation in the Classroom: Fostering Critical Thinking, Community, and Citizenship in Schools*, by Staci Molnar-Main. <https://www.kettering.org/catalog/product/deliberation-classroom>

# LESSON

## DIRECTIONS:

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN -

1. Students should be well acquainted with the issue guide, either having read it in class or as homework.
2. Arrange seating with everyone in a circle (if this can't be done, arrange so people can see one another as much as possible.)
3. Assign a student to be Notetaker for the forum. They will take notes on a whiteboard/blackboard/flipchart/shared online document. [See Appendix D]

### TIMING/FORUM PROCESS-

Requires approximately 90 minutes

Introduction 10 minutes

- a. Stakeholding
  - b. Forum Guidelines
  - c. Provide the forum setting
- Option One 10-15 minutes  
Option Two 10-15 minutes  
Option Three 10-15 minutes  
Reflections 10-15 minutes

### PROCESS:

#### 1. Introduction – 10 minutes

##### a. Stakeholding

*Establish why this deliberation is important to participants; create student buy-in.*

- Ask who has a loved one, either a relative or a family friend, who is serving/has served in war. How do they feel about this?
- How has war impacted them/their communities? Are there other ways war affects them?
- What do they think about growing up in a time of war?

Make clear that Americans felt the same sense of uncertainty during the Great War and had different ideas about the best way to handle the international situation.

##### b. Explain the purpose and process of a deliberative forum.

Explain (or remind) how a deliberative forum works [Appendix A-B].

Learners will consider the historic issue guide, then discuss with one another.

##### c. Have one (or several people) clearly read Forum Guidelines

- Stay on track; keep focused on the issues.
- Everyone gets to participate.
- Everyone should listen as well as speak.

*If you feel like no one else is contributing but you, it's quite possible you need to refrain from talking too much and let everyone else have a chance to speak.*

- It's okay to disagree, but all views should be considered with respect.
- Remember: These are complicated questions and there is no "one" right or wrong answer.

d. Establish a Notetaker [Appendix D]

e. Read out loud the forum setting

As seen in the issue guide introduction, it is October 20, 1915. Across the ocean, the brutal European war rages on. Our citizens have a lot of ties to nations involved on both sides of the war. We're not involved, but can that go on forever? We've got to decide what role the United States should play in international conflicts. This isn't a decision we should sit back and let other people make for us. We gather together today to talk about what is best for our community.

## 2. Option One Deliberation – 15 minutes

- Ask everyone to turn to the Option One chart.
- Have one person read the Option One description aloud:

### **Option 1: Protect Our National Security**

There does not seem to be an end in sight for the war, and we put our national and economic security at risk if we are unprepared militarily. At present, our standing army is small in comparison to other countries, and our reserve forces lack the training necessary for the battlefield. Our naval fleet is inadequate, leaving our major cities exposed without protection. Any country that respects itself should be prepared to fight for its security. The strength of our economy is dependent on our ability to export goods safely. A strong military and willingness to use it to defend our country and interests will make a statement to the world. But other nations may see such a military build-up as a threat, which increases the likelihood of our being drawn into the conflict.

- The Moderator begins the discussion:  
I'd like to hear your thoughts about this option. Do you agree? Do you disagree? Why? And equally important, I'd like you to consider all the consequences of choosing this option, both positive and negative. There are no right or wrong answers here, we're just talking about our thoughts.
- Use the last 15 minutes for group discussion. See the Moderator Sample Questions [Appendix C] for ideas if the group is slow to contribute.
- Be sure to ask if anyone has any final thoughts before moving on. This can push some people who wanted to contribute but were reluctant to jump in earlier.

## 3. Option Two Deliberation – 15 minutes

- Ask everyone to turn to the Option Two chart
- Read Option Two aloud:

### **Option 2: Be Neutral and Work for Long-Term Peace**

War is the worst way to solve a human conflict, and we must remain completely neutral if we are to have any influence in this situation. A flawed international system is to blame for this war, and as a neutral nation, the United States has a

unique opportunity to be a broker of peace, ushering in a new system that will rely on a concert of nations, rather than a balance of power. Whether large or small, all nations should have equal rights, and we have a moral obligation to seek peaceful ends to disagreements. We should assist those populations ravished by the conflict, but we must remain neutral and advocate for peace. But, neutrality can be seen as a sign of weakness and indifference, and although we may dislike war, it is a necessary part of human existence.

- Repeat deliberation process.

#### 4. Option Three Deliberation– 15 minutes

- Ask everyone to turn to the Option Three chart.
- Read Option Three aloud:

##### **Option 3: Strengthen our Democracy at Home**

Participation in the war that is taking place in Europe and around the world has the potential to distract us from becoming a truly democratic nation in both word and deed. The current war is the result of the greed and power of the ruling classes, rather than the will of the common people. This war is not ours to fight, and any involvement will divert energy and resources that would be better used to address our own problems. We need to strengthen our democracy by giving power to people, not corporations, and realize that unbridled militarism is not in our national interest. But, there are some real risks to our security if we do not participate actively in this global fight. If we do not act with purpose and strength, this war may eventually come to us.

- Repeat deliberation process

#### 5. Conclusions/Reflections – 15 minutes

a. Ask for individual reflections. Sample questions:

- What surprised you about this deliberation?
- How has your thinking changed as a result of this conversation?
- What did you learn about the effects of making this type of decision in your community?

b. Sample questions:

- What do we still need to talk about?
- How can we use what we've learned today?
- What did our discussion teach us about the values we share as a community?
- *More questions are provided on the Moderator Sample Questions [Appendix C].*

c. Can your group come to a consensus?

- Take a vote to see which option participants choose
- Quick discussion – one representative for each vote will explain why

d. Several may suggest a cherry-picked possibility, combining certain elements from all three. Discuss if this is a fair choice or if your community will find that permissible.

- e. Ask who had difficulty choosing. Explain this is a good sign, as it shows they understand the difficulty of the choice, how it affects others and that they struggle because of empathy for people with opposing views.
- f. If there were more time, does anyone feel they could be persuaded, for the good of the community to accept a different option?

## **EXTENSIONS**

- Have students write an essay explaining their individual stance and why they support the option they do.
- After the forum, ask students to write an essay in defense of an option they did not support. What are its merits? Have students present their impassioned pleas in the style of a Four Minute Man speech.
- Prior to using the issue guide, ask students to create a timeline of events from June 1914 – October 1915. Next, provide them with the issue guide question and the three options. Do their timeline events inspire support for any of the options? What led students to support one option over the others? Compare student findings and then hold the forum. Afterward, ask students to write a brief essay explaining their pre and post-forum choices to figure out if their minds were changed and why.
- Using a service like newspapers.com or local paper archives, read editorials from June – November 1915. What did members of your community actually think about the war? How did they justify their feelings? Can you surmise which way they would have chosen if they took part in this forum in 1915?
- Ask students to compare issue guide topics and events with current events. Have a class discussion about the similarities and differences.
- Jigsaw: Rather than having students read the issue guide, assign options to groups and let them teach to the rest of the class. Hold the forum after peer instruction has taken place.

## Appendix A: Forum Guidelines

<p><b>What is a deliberative forum?</b></p>	<p>A <b>deliberation</b> is a process of thoughtfully weighing the costs and consequences of possible solutions to daunting problems.</p> <p>The goal is for participants to come to a consensus on one of the solutions by examining each option’s facts and the values they reflect.</p> <p>A deliberation is <b>NOT</b> a debate or an airing of grievances, but a genuine conversation.</p>
<p><b>What is the purpose of deliberative forums?</b></p>	<p>Known in Ancient Greece as “the talk we use to teach ourselves before we act,” deliberative forums are an opportunity for participants to <b>expand their thinking</b> beyond their own experiences, <b>fostering community cooperation</b> in decision making.</p> <p>In working with others to <b>reach consensus</b>, a culture that is focused on problem solving rather than adversarial partisanship is cultivated.</p>
<p><b>What are the expectations of the Moderator?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remains neutral</li> <li>• Doesn’t take on an “expert” role with the subject matter</li> <li>• Keep deliberation focused on the options</li> <li>• Asks clarifying questions</li> <li>• Asks thoughtful and probing questions to surface costs and consequences</li> <li>• Helps participants find common ground</li> <li>• Encourages deeper reflection</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the expectations of Participants?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone is encouraged to participate.</li> <li>• No one should dominate.</li> <li>• Actively listening is as important as speaking.</li> <li>• Participants should address one another, not just the Moderator.</li> <li>• Participants need to respect other speakers.</li> <li>• Disagreement is fine, but should be handled with a reasonable discussion not unpleasantly or with disrespect.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What is the structure of deliberative forums?</b></p>	<p>Requires approximately 90 minutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction 10 minutes             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Stakeholding</li> <li>b. Forum Guidelines</li> <li>c. Provide the forum setting</li> </ul> </li> <li>Option One 10-15 minutes</li> <li>Option Two 10-15 minutes</li> <li>Option Three 10-15 minutes</li> <li>Reflections 10-15 minutes</li> </ul>



## Appendix B: Forum Structure

<b>Welcome</b>	The Moderator introduces the issue to be discussed and the purpose and practices of a deliberative discussion.
<b>Guidelines</b>	Participants review suggested guidelines that will help them examine the issue together deliberatively.
<b>Starter Activity</b>	Many National Issues Forums include a brief, multiperspective conversation starter video.
<b>Personal Stake</b>	Participants share interest in the issue and how it impacts their lives or the lives of others.
<b>Deliberation</b>	Participants examine a range of approaches to addressing a public issue, considering advantages, drawbacks, and trade-offs of each.
<b>Reflection</b>	Participants reflect on the entire discussion to highlight areas of commonality and differences and to consider potential next steps.

"Stages of Deliberative Discussions." *National Issues Forums*. March 6, 2022.  
<https://www.nifi.org/en/catalog/product/stages-deliberative-discussions>

## Appendix C: Moderator Sample Questions

The Moderator maintains a neutral position during the deliberation to keep participants focused on moving their conversation forward. By asking clarifying and probing questions about the ideas being shared between participants, the Moderator fosters understanding and encourages deeper reflection on the option.

### Getting started:

- What is valuable to us? How did we develop these values?
- How does this issue affect us personally?
- What are your concerns about the issue?
- What do you find appealing about this option?
- What makes the approach good/unacceptable?

### Probing questions:

- What do we mean when we say...
- What \_\_\_\_\_ are most important to us?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ affect our community?
- What is the relationship between \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- What challenges do we face that cannot be solved by \_\_\_\_\_?
- What are some root cause problems that affect \_\_\_\_\_?
- Is it realistic to \_\_\_\_\_?
- What would the impact be?
- For those that hold that position, what do they care deeply about?  
What's most valuable to them?
- How would someone make a case against what you just said?

### Follow Up Questions:

- What perspective have we not considered? What “voice” have we not heard?
- What is the tension between options?
- What is the grey area?
- Even if no one in the group favors an option, it is still important to consider it.  
Ask what someone who favors the approach might say about it.
- What are the positives of an option receiving a lot of criticism?
- What are some negative aspects of the approach you favor?
- If you followed this course of action, what would the effects be on your life?

## Appendix D: Note Taking Directions

The Notetaker records participants' ideas and categorizes them in two columns, "Benefits" and "Consequences/Costs." Once participants have finished discussing the option, the Notetaker will match each "Benefit" to an opposing "Consequence/Cost" (see the example below), visually demonstrating the harmony and tension between each idea. This provides good opportunities for discussion as everyone can assess if ideas have been categorized properly.

### Directions:

1. Assign a Notetaker.
2. Notes can be taken on a whiteboard/blackboard/flipchart/shared online document. You can also print the following three templates on 8.5 x 11 paper and use them on a clipboard.
3. It works well to use two colored markers/fonts, assigning different colors to comments supporting an option and those representing its costs.
4. During the Reflections period, be sure to share your thoughts too. Did you notice any trends in the deliberation? As someone who paid close attention you may have observations others overlooked.
5. Notes are essential in the Reflections period. Students can use them to remember what was said and revisit arguments for/against the three options.

### Example: OPTION ONE: PROTECT OUR NATIONAL AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

BENEFITS	CONSEQUENCES/COSTS
War is close; we'd be stupid not to be ready to defend ourselves	This may lead to a draft and that could cause a crisis
Preparing for war will be preemptive; that's much better than being	Belligerents may see this as a threat and we could make enemies
People are nervous about the possibility of war; they'll want to train to be ready	US is making money from the war; why would we want to possibly make the people we're supplying with goods and loans feel threatened?
This is a good way to unite different cultures in a time of mass immigration – let everyone prepare for the common good	Why should we worry about war? There's a whole ocean between us and them. Preparation like this will be a waste of time and money.
Our industry is powerful; we need to protect that at all costs	

**Option:**

<b>BENEFITS</b>

<b>CONSEQUENCES/COSTS</b>

# Appendix E: Common Core Standards Alignment

## Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading for students in grades 6–12:

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2:* Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4:* Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6:* Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7:* Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.8:* Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10:* Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

## Common Core English Language Arts Standards for History/Social Studies for students in grades 9-10:

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1:* Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2:* Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3:* Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4:* Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.5:* Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8:* Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9:* Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.10:* By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

## **Common Core English Language Arts Standards for History/Social Studies for students in grades 11-12:**

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1:* Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2:* Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3:* Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4:* Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

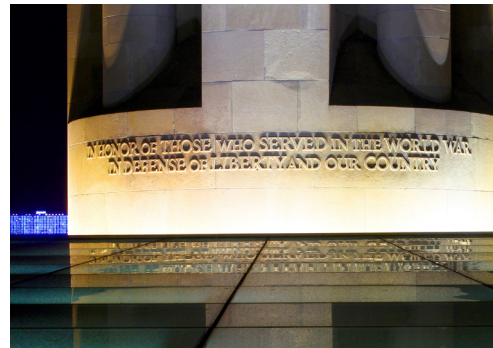
*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6:* Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7:* Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8:* Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9:* Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.10:* By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.



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**[www.theworldwar.org](http://www.theworldwar.org)**



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