



Aerial view of an observation balloon in the air flying over buildings below.

Online Collections Database, 2010.125.265, www.theworldwar.org/research/database. National WWI Museum and Memorial. Online.

A Short Activity: Observation Balloons

Recommended Grade Levels: 9-12

Course/Content Area(s): World History, U.S. History

Authored by: Leah Schwartz, National WWI Museum and Memorial Teacher Fellow

LESSON OVERVIEW:	In this lesson, students learn what observation balloons are and how they differ from dirigibles and free balloons. Then, students look at photographs from, and of, observation balloons to identify pros and cons of observation balloons in WWI.
OBJECTIVES:	<i>Students will:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify at least 2 pros and cons of observation balloons used during WWI ● Speculate about the impact of observation balloons on the war
STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:	<p>National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) C3 Framework Standards:</p> <p>D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.</p>
TIME NEEDED:	20 minutes
INTERDISCIPLINARY:	Science, Geography
PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students should have a general knowledge of WWI including the causes and which countries were involved ● Students should know that there was a lot of new technology developed and used during World War I
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Photos from and of WWI observation balloons ● Balloons and Dirigibles Article or Balloons and Dirigibles Slides ● Access to Google Earth ● Space for note taking

LESSON

PRE-ASSESSMENT/INTRODUCTION/HOOK:

Ask students to consider and discuss the following questions:

1. What are the tactical advantages to having a view from above during a war?
2. Is this an effective strategic height to be able to see from?
3. Is 200 ft too high or too low?

DIRECTIONS:

1. Explain the difference between an observation balloon, dirigibles, and free balloons using either the Balloons and Dirigibles Article or the Balloons and Dirigibles Slides
2. Task students to look at [aerial photos from and of observation balloons during WWI](#) in the Museum and Memorial Online Collection and compare them to their views on Google Earth.
3. Have students write two pros and two cons of using observation balloons during WWI.

POST-ASSESSMENT:

Students will answer the following question in a paragraph as an exit ticket: What was the impact of observation balloons during WWI?

MODIFICATIONS/ACCOMMODATIONS

- Students who cannot write a full paragraph may write 1-2 sentences answering the question.
- Students can work in pairs or small groups if necessary.
- Provide students with a selection of images and specific locations to observe on Google Earth if more structure is needed.
- For a more in-depth exploration, students can explore [Letters](#) from Walter Myers about being in the Balloon Corps