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CLASSROOM GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

HISTORY® observes the 100th anniversary of World War I with a four-hour miniseries that focuses on the game-changing technologies introduced during “the world to end all wars.” ***World War I: The First Modern War*** takes viewers into the trenches, onto the fields, into the skies, and deep under water to explore the Great War. This series explores the innovative techniques used during World War I and examines the human costs and consequences of this cataclysmic conflict.

World War I: The First Modern War focuses on four main aspects of the war—the use of tanks, submarines, zeppelins and chemical weapons. With leading historians, eyewitness testimony, and riveting archive, each hour-long episode features the story of one of these technologies, exploring how and why they were developed, the strategy of how they were used, and their ultimate effectiveness. Throughout each episode, viewers will gain new insights into the many ways World War I changed the world.

CURRICULUM LINKS

World War I: The First Modern War would be useful for History, Politics, and Global Studies courses. It is appropriate for high school and college students. **Note to educators:** This classroom guide is intended for use with the series ***World War I: The First Modern War***. Visit us online at www.history.com/wwi for additional World War I content. There you will find resources for teaching additional aspects of WWI history including short videos about the Harlem Hellfighters, life in a trench, and many other aspects of the war.





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EPISODE 1: ARMORED BEASTS

Tanks were the first armored fighting machines to be used on the battlefield. These “land ships” were adapted from tractors and were first designed in secrecy. The goal of the tank was to break through the heavily fortified trenches and offer protection for troops from artillery attacks. Though a massive failure in the Battle of the Somme, the British refined the tank design and by the end of the war these machines were a key factor in battle.

TERMS TO DEFINE

neutrality	artillery
impasse	propaganda
stalemate	quagmire

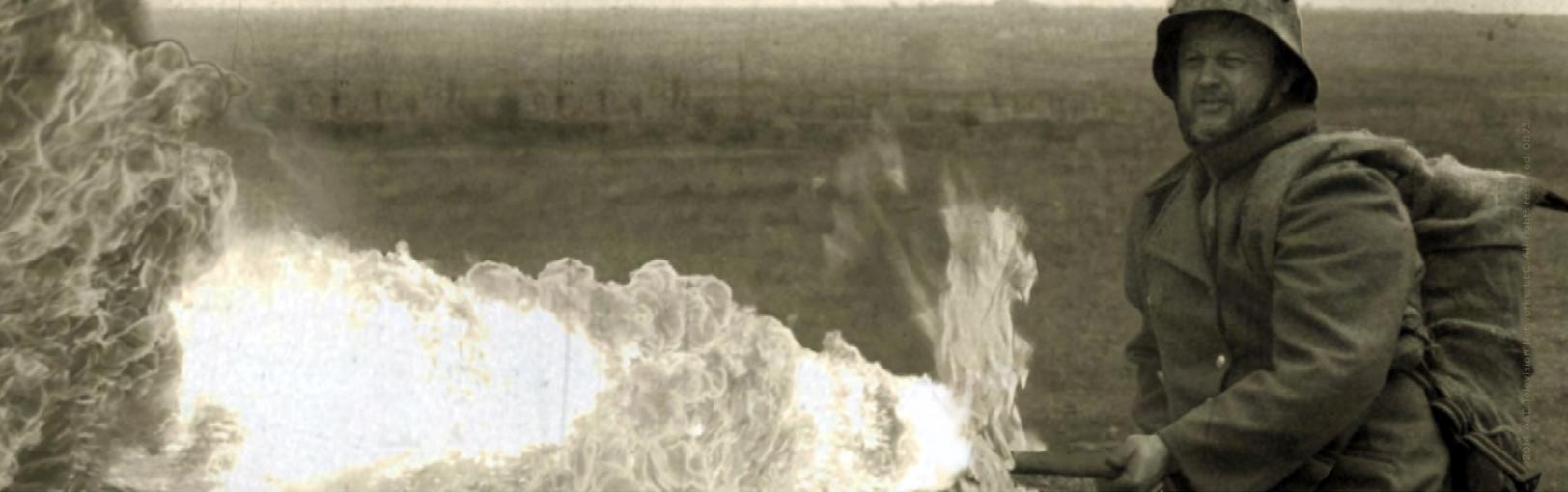
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did World War I start? Do you think any of the countries involved would have predicted that it would last four years?
2. Why were trenches developed in World War I? Why do you think “stalemate” developed during the war?
3. Why do you think tanks were developed during World War I, and why were they an important innovation?
4. Why do you think German soldiers were so afraid of tanks when they first saw them? What was the psychological importance of tanks in battle?
5. What was the outcome of the Battle of the Somme? What role did tanks play?
6. How did the British change initial tank designs to make them more effective?



ACTIVITIES

1. In this episode we learn about several important World War I military leaders including Winston Churchill, Ernest Swinton and George Patton, and events such as the Battles of Verdun and the Somme. Choose one person or event discussed in this documentary to research further. Write a short essay or create a visual presentation about the importance of this event or person in the context of World War I.
2. We hear an account in this episode from a WWI soldier describing the role of tanks in battle: “It was a stirring sight. And it was pretty marvelous to know that the tanks had borne the brunt of the attack and not us. We went forward into country in a manner never possible without the aid of tanks.” Based on this statement, and what you learned from this episode, write a short essay about the importance of tanks during World War I.



EPISODE 2: CLOUDS OF DEATH

Despite international treaties banning chemical weapons, poison gasses were used on both sides during World War I, with deadly consequences. After the Germans first use chlorine as a weapon, both sides employed poison gas in an attempt to gain the upper hand during the war. The use of chemical weapons escalated, culminating in a bold British plan that unfolded beneath the battlefield at Messines Ridge in northern France in June 1917. Chemical weapons sparked an on-going international debate about the ethics of using such weapons in warfare.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were the effects of chlorine gas both physically and psychologically? Why do you think the Germans decided to use this kind of gas as a weapon?
2. What does WMD mean in warfare? What are some examples of WMDs?
3. In this episode, the narrator suggests that “Pandora’s Box” was opened when deadly gas was first used during WWI. What does this phrase mean in this context? Do you think any nations would have chosen not to use gas during World War I?
4. What happened at the Battle of Messines Ridge? Why do you think the British chose this tactical approach to war? What were the consequences?
5. When did the U.S. enter World War I? How did the use of poison gas affect U.S. troops?
6. Today, the use of poison gas during wartime is prohibited. Why do you think it was outlawed?

ACTIVITIES

1. In 1899 many countries signed the Hague Convention Treaty which created international regulations for warfare. Research this treaty and write up a one sheet about the outcomes. What did the treaty cover? Which nations signed it? What was left out?
2. In this episode, we hear the first-person account of a French soldier. “We had just begun to cough when four smothered screaming soldiers came in. We laid them out on stretchers but there was nothing much we could do for them. A sort of pink foam was oozing out of their mouths. Each of them made the same gesture of clutching his chest. You can’t imagine how terrible it looked.” Based on this statement and what you learned, write an essay or op-ed piece about the use of poison gas in warfare. Do you think it is ethical to use this kind of weapon in warfare?

TERMS TO DEFINE

deploy	morale
ominous	vulnerable
barrage	fortifications





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EPISODE 3: MASSIVE AIR ATTACKS

One of the unique and destructive inventions of the World War I era was the zeppelin. These giant airships were designed by Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, who was inspired to create them after serving as a Germany Army observer in the U.S. during the Civil War and witnessing hot air balloon reconnaissance. These lighter than air superstructures were two times longer than the Statue of Liberty is high. This episode explores their development and use during World War I.

TERMS TO DEFINE

zeppelin	fuselage
aerodynamics	incendiaries
aerial	augmented

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the benefits of aerial views during the Civil War? Why did von Zeppelin think these techniques would be beneficial during World War I?
2. What were some of the significant characteristics of zeppelins? How did they operate?
3. Why were zeppelins considered such an innovation at the time they were first used? What do you think the Germans hoped the outcome of using zeppelins might be?
4. What were some anti-zeppelin tactics developed by the British?

PRIMARY SOURCE ACTIVITY

In this episode we hear the first-person account of British pilot Lt. Wulstan Tempest. Students can read this passage and respond to the document-based questions below.



“I saw a small cigar-shaped object which I at once recognized as a zeppelin. I was having an extremely unpleasant time as to get to the zep I had to pass through a very inferno of shells from the AA guns below. All at once it appeared to me that the zeppelin must have sighted me as she dropped all of her bombs in one volume. At this point my mechanical pressure pump went wrong and I had to use my hand pump to keep up the pressure in my petrol tank.

This exercise at so high an altitude was very exhausting besides giving me one hand less to operate with when I commenced a fire. I accordingly gave a tremendous pump to my petrol tank and dived straight at her. I could see tracer bullets flying from her in all directions but I was too close under her to concentrate on me. I had almost begun to despair of bringing her down when suddenly on letting her have another burst I saw her begin to go red inside like an immense Chinese lantern. And then I knew it was all up.” - **Lt. Wulstan Tempest**

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS

1. What are some adjectives you would use to describe Lt. Tempest based on this passage?
2. Why was Tempest worried at one point? What do you think he means when he says “And then I knew it was all up.”? Was his mission successful?
3. How do you think warfare might have affected men like Tempest? What kinds of resources might they need after the war?



EPISODE 4: UNDERWATER KILLERS

The Atlantic ocean became an important battleground as German submarines took on the might of the dominant British Navy. The stealth and silent submarines were able to sink 5,200 ships by war's end, and nearly brought Britain to its knees. In their frenzy of attacks, the Germans sunk the U.S. passenger liner Lusitania, killing nearly 2,000 on board including over 100 Americans. American outrage helped President Wilson get Congress to finally agree to enter the war. In the end, the Allied Atlantic blockade forced Germany to surrender. Submarines was established as an effective military weapon and opened up a new avenue of warfare and reconnaissance.

TERMS TO DEFINE

submersible	ruse
propulsion	convoy
contraband	ballistic
isolationist	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were German "U-boats"? Why were they such an important innovation during World War I?
2. Why was the attack on the HMS Pathfinder so significant?
3. What was "unrestricted submarine warfare" and why was it so important when Germany started to use this tactic?
4. Why was the sinking of the Lusitania such a turning point during World War I?
5. What were some of the ways the allies tried to combat the effectiveness of submarines?



"I swam to an overturned lifeboat to the sides of which twenty persons were clinging. One by one weakened by chill and exhaustion and buffeted by waves they dropped back into the water to be seen no more"

- Lusitania passenger James J. Leary of Brooklyn, New York

ACTIVITIES

1. The sinking of the Lusitania was a critical turning point in World War I. Students can learn more about this event by reading newspaper articles compiled by the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/topics/lusitania.html>. After reading one or more of these newspaper articles, ask students to discuss or write an essay about this event and its importance in the context of World War I.
2. In April 1917 the United States entered World War I. Read President Wilson's address to Congress outlining the reasons for war on the National Archives' Our Documents site <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=61>. After reading this document, write a short essay about why the U.S. decided to enter the war.





DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the major battles of World War I?
2. What if the Central Powers had taken France? What might the consequences be for the Allies?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Short videos, background articles and more from History.com:

<http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i>

The United States World War I Centennial Commission:

<http://worldwar1centennial.org/>

<http://worldwar1centennial.org/index.php/education/classroom-resources.html>

Excellent lesson plans from National History Day:

<http://www.nhd.org/WWI.htm>

National World War I Museum

<https://theworldwar.org/>

Learn NC: World War I Propaganda Posters

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/ww1posters>

