

Lesson: Practicing Historical Thinking Skills – The Middle East (1914-present)

Lesson Context:

This lesson is designed to be implemented in an AP World History classroom at the high school level. The activity is designed to give students the opportunity to practice their critical thinking, comparison, and synthesis skills in preparation for the AP World History exam in May as well as any college-level history course they may take in the future. Before attempting this lesson your students should have some practice in making connections between both a current event and a historical topic or with different historical topics across different time periods.

Lesson Topic:

Examining how the Middle East has changed over the past century through discussion of primary source readings and maps.

Lesson Purpose:

The goal of this lesson is for students to emerge with a greater understanding of the critical thinking skills that are necessary to be successful in the field of history. In particular, the lesson will focus on analyzing sources and making connections with how the actions of the past connect with today's world. In this case the students will work on understanding how past events involving the Middle East have helped shape the region as we see it today. Furthermore, from an instruction standpoint, this lesson will follow Brookfield's (2013) Snowballing discussion technique so the students can practice these skills both individually and collaboratively while gradually working up from individual reading to whole-class discussion (pgs. 82-83). This technique is also being used to help increase engagement with the material and with in-class discussions by building confidence through scaffolding as well as providing each student with different perspectives/viewpoints on the same topic.

Learning Goals/Objectives:

- Students will examine and analyze documents and maps of the Middle East and through collaborative discussion will be able to explain how the Middle East has changed in the past century and what benefits/problems these changes have led to.
- Students will be able to practice the [Historical Thinking Skills](#) as laid out by the AP College Board (2016). In so doing, students will be able to:
 - o Analyze historical sources and evidence
 - o Make historical connections across different time periods
 - o Sequence events chronologically and provide reasoning
 - o Create and support a historical argument

Lesson Materials:

- [Sykes-Picot Agreement \(1916\)](#)
- [The Balfour Declaration \(1917\)](#)
- [Maps of the Middle East – WWI](#)
- [Maps of the Middle East – Present](#)
 - o Optional: [40 Maps that Explain the Middle East](#) (Supplemental)
- One computer (Google Chromebook) for each student

- Paper (For notes and timed-writing assessment at the conclusion of the lesson)

Lesson Plan & Procedure:

Time: ~35 minutes

Before Class: Analysis of Historical Sources & Evidence (Individual)

~ 15-20 minutes

Students will read the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) and the Balfour Declaration (1917) and take notes and observations on the two documents. The following questions will be posted to the Google Classroom page to act as a guide for the students:

- What is main idea of each document?
- What are the advantages of each document? Disadvantages?
- How do the two documents related to each other?
- How do the two documents conflict with each other?

Step 1: Set-up & Analysis of Sources (Partners)

~5-10 minutes

With a partner, students will discuss their observations and notes from the readings and guided questions posted to Google Classroom. This should take a couple of minutes and allow them to get on the same page with their partner so the rest of the lesson will proceed smoothly. After their initial discussion of the homework documents, each set of partners will then examine several maps of the Middle East at the time of the WWI and further discuss the guided questions in respect to how these maps may change or add to their interpretations. All maps in this document set are from the period of 1914-1930 so they can help the students visually see the effects of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration.

- **Note:** each student will have a Google Chromebook throughout this lesson so they can easily view the maps and documents.

Step 2: Analysis & Sequencing (Small-Groups)

~10 minutes

Students will now combine with another partner set to form a small group of four. They will repeat the exact same process from Step 1 with other half of their group. After they discuss the documents and WWI period maps, they will then examine maps of the Middle East throughout the rest of the 20th century and the present. In examining these new maps, the groups will discuss how they connect to what they have already learned. The main focus of this discussion set will be on identifying cause and effect and making connections between the two periods.

Step 3: Bringing Everything Together (Whole Class)

~10 minutes

Next, all small-groups will combine with the rest of the class to form a whole class discussion. This discussion set will be a continuation of Step 2 with the focus being set at identifying cause and effect and making connections between the two periods to gain an understanding of how the Middle East has changed over the past century.

Step 4: Historical Argument (Individual)

5 minutes

To bring the lesson to a close, every student will be tasked with a timed-writing assessment. As each student writes they should focus on everything they have read, viewed, and discussed over the course of the day. This writing is timed so each student can practice writing under a time constraint similar to one they will be faced with when they take the AP exam in May. Each student will answer the following question for this assessment:

How did the actions in the Middle East a century ago shape the Middle East as it is today?

Lesson Sources

40 maps that explain the Middle East. (n.d.). Retrieved March 26, 2017, from <http://www.vox.com/a/maps-explain-the-middle-east>

40 maps that explain World War I. (n.d.). Retrieved March 26, 2017, from <http://www.vox.com/a/world-war-i-maps>

AP World History Course and Exam Description [PDF]. (2016). New York: AP College Board. pgs. 7-9.

Brookfield, S. (2013). *Powerful techniques for teaching adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Grayzel, S. R. (2013). *The First World War: a Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.