

**Lesson Title:**

Why War? Wars are not Random Events

**Subjects:**

U. S. History, World History

**Suggested time:**

One 50-minute class period (extend to additional class periods as needed)

**Grade Levels:**

7-12

**Essential Questions** (adapted from Greg Cashman's *What Causes War*, 2014<sup>1</sup>):

- Are humans aggressive by nature?
- Can we find any patterns in the way that war breaks out?
- Is war preventable?
- Do individual differences among leaders increase a chance for war?

**Learning Targets:**

After examining case studies about the main causes of American conflicts, students will be able to identify how different risk factors may lead to international conflict.

**Overview:**

Wars are not random events; recurring risk factors combine to spark conflict. *Why War* considers major American wars and their causes. In his book *The Life of Reason* (1905-06) George Santayana stated that “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”<sup>2</sup> While this is certainly a call to learn about history for the sake of a better future, the question remains whether we can move to a state of greater world peace. In this lesson, students will explore 10 risk factors that lead to war and contextualize them using WWI as a case study.<sup>3</sup> While this lesson builds on WWI, any war could be used by simply replacing the content with facts and details from a different conflict (see the extension activity at the end of the lesson).

**Materials:**

*America's Story from America's Library*, a site developed by the United States' Library of Congress, is an excellent online resource that will allow students to supplement their learning about American wars. Students are able to access eras of American history, and learn concise information about specific topics. America's Story can be used in this lesson to help students begin to understand the causes of war. This URL is for an index to the site, and allows students to begin exploring an era and its conflicts: <http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/index.php>. This

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<sup>1</sup> Cashman, G. (2014). *What Causes War: An Introduction to Theories of International Conflict*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>2</sup> Santayana, G. (1905-06) *The Life of reason*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons.

<sup>3</sup> Greg Cashman developed these causes from his research on wars over time. He describes these in *What Causes War* (2014).

site will provide a good starting point for student research, but is not a sole source for all of the information students will need for this lesson.

**Procedure:**

*Warm-up:* Ask students to think about the causes of conflict. Why do people argue? Why do neighbors get angry? Why do nations fight? Ask if they can identify over-arching reasons for conflict and war. To help this conversation, students can pair with a partner, and talk through these questions. Bring the class together to hear from several pairs about how they answered these questions.

*Step 1: Form workgroups*

Place students in 10 groups of about 3 students each, and give each group one of the following 10 risk factors that may lead to war:

1. Neighbors
2. Territory
3. Mismatch
4. Turmoil
5. Democracy
6. Rivalry
7. Coercion
8. Equals
9. Power Shifts
10. Leaders

Ideally, this activity will be held in a computer lab, or in a location where students have internet access.

*Step 2: Understanding risk factors for war*

Provide each group with the list of risk factors and their brief descriptions (this is a handout located at the end of this module). The groups will have 10 minutes to read the description of their risk factor, and then help everyone in the group understand the words and descriptions. For example, the first risk factor, Neighbors, uses the term “internal instability.” Student will not likely know what this means, so they should work together to define this term. Encourage students to use the internet for help. Also, the teacher will want to be readily available to assist. Encourage students to review any word or phrase that is new to them, or that they do not fully understand. Allow each group plenty of time to think and complete this task.

*Step 3: A case study of World War I*

After each group understands the description for their risk factor, present them with their task: “We are going to begin an exploration into why we have wars. The Great War, now known as World War I, is going to be our example of a war. Using the descriptions of your assigned risk factor, and using information about World War I, provide examples of how your risk factor helped lead to the outbreak of this war.”

NOTE: While not every bulleted description will be evident to students, encourage them to look for as many examples of their risk factor as possible. Allow for 20-30 minutes for this research phase of the activity.

*Step 4: Similarities and Differences (in your own words)*

After each group has identified examples of the risk factors, they will briefly share their findings with the other groups. Start with the first factor (neighbors), and work through the tenth factor. Following this three-step process will encourage student learning:

- 1) Project the risk factor and descriptions for the class to see (they will also have these in the handout you distributed at the start of the activity). Have a member from the group explain the risk factor and descriptions to the class in his/her own words. Student should not read what is written (they already have this); by using their own words, they will develop deeper thinking about each factor.
- 2) Have the group give examples from WWI for the descriptions.
- 3) After a group presents, have each group huddle together to compare the examples presented to the examples they found. Students will likely see some overlap, and begin to understand how many of the risk factors are intertwined.

*Step 5: Primary risk factors*

At the end of the presentations, state the following:

“These ten risk factors are not considered to be equal; three are primary factors:

- Territory
- Rivalry
- Coercion

Based on what you learned, and the presentations, how are these three factors primary factors and the other seven secondary factors?”

A follow-up probe to this is to ask: “If you were assigned to research a secondary factor, explain how it fits under one or more primary factors.”

**Extension activity #1:**

These risk factors are applicable to any war. Students could use a different war as another case study of the causes of war, and follow the above procedure.

**Extension activity #2:**

When students go to the “Why War: The Causes of Conflict” exhibit at the Flying Heritage Collection, they will see a large graphic with these ten factors. After the presentations, place them in groups of 3 or 4 and design a graphic that shows the three and seven secondary risk factors leading to international conflict/war. When entering the exhibit, they can then compare their graphic depiction of the factors with what was produced for the collection.

**Language Support:**

To aid those with limited English proficiency or others who need help with academic language, place them in groups with at least one student who speaks English as a first language. The

handout on risk factors can also be given to ELLs the day before this activity, and ELLs should be told which risk factor they will examine.

## **Standards:**

### **Washington Standards (EALRs/GLEs)**

#### **8th Grade Social Studies**

##### **EALR GLE GLE Description**

- History 4.3.1 Analyzes and interprets historical materials from a variety of perspectives in U.S. history (1776—1900).
- 4.3.2 Analyzes multiple causal factors to create positions on major events in U.S. history (1776 – 1900).

#### **9th and 10th Grade Social Studies**

##### **EALR GLE GLE Description**

- Civics 1.3.1 Analyzes the relationships and tensions between national interests and international issues in the world in the past or present.
- History 4.2.1 Analyzes how individuals and movements have shaped world history (1450—present).
- 4.2.3 Analyzes and evaluates how technology and ideas have shaped world history (1450—present).
- 4.3.2 Analyzes the multiple causal factors of conflicts in world history (1450 – present).
- 4.4.1 Analyzes how an understanding of world history can help us prevent problems today.

#### **11th Grade Social Studies**

##### **EALR GLE GLE Description**

- History 4.2.3 Analyzes and evaluates how technology and ideas have shaped U.S. history (1890— present).
- 4.3.1 Analyzes differing interpretations of events in U.S. history (1890—present).
- 4.3.2 Analyzes multiple causes of events in U.S. history, distinguishing between proximate and long-term causal factors (1890—present).
- 4.4.1 Analyzes how an understanding of United States history can help us prevent problems today.
- Skills 5.1.1 Analyzes the underlying assumptions of positions on an issue or event.

#### **12 Grade Social Studies**

##### **EALR GLE GLE Description**

- History 4.2.1 Evaluates how individuals and movements have shaped contemporary world issues.
- 4.2.2 Analyzes how cultural identity can promote unity and division.

**Common Core State Standards:**

**Build Social Studies Literacy through Reading and Writing Common Core State Standard for ELA & Literacy in Social Studies Grades 9-10**

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/9-10/>

Key Ideas and Details:

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.

**Build Social Studies Literacy through Reading and Writing Common Core State Standard for ELA & Literacy in Social Studies Grades 11-12**

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/11-12/>

Key Ideas and Details:

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.

Craft and Structure:

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.11-12.5

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

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.

**NCSS C3 Framework (College, Career, and Civic Life)**

Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries

Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools

Dimension 3: Argument Writing

Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action