

100 Years in Mesopotamia: A Century of Conflict in Iraq, 1914-2014

By Jeremy Reinholt

This two-week unit plan was created for 9th grade Modern World History. Class size may vary from 24-33, and the class schedule calls for one 45-minute session and two 93-minute sessions per week. I have included 6 lessons that are related to the unit, though the unit can be extended beyond 6 sessions. Ideally, this unit should be used after students have a grounding in European colonialism and the main events of World War I.

Unit objectives

- Students will analyze the effect of World War I on present day Iraq
- Students will be able to answer the essential question “How did WWI and its aftermath shape conflict in the Middle East today?”
- Students will analyze the importance of natural resources, border creation, and support of dictators over democracy in relation to Iraq
- Students will write a persuasive essay arguing that the events following WWI caused current conflict in Iraq

State of Oregon content standards

HS.1. Evaluate continuity and change over the course of world and United States history.

HS.2. Analyze the complexity and investigate causes and effects of significant events in world, U.S., and Oregon history.

HS.9. Identify historical and current events, issues, and problems when national interests and global interest have been in conflict, and analyze the values and arguments on both sides of the conflict.

HS.11. Gather and analyze historical information, including contradictory data, from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including sources located on the Internet, to support or reject hypotheses.

HS.12. Construct and defend a written historical argument using relevant primary and secondary sources as evidence.

HS.14. Create and use maps, technology, imagery and other geographical representations to extrapolate and interpret geographic data.

HS.15. Analyze and illustrate geographic issues by synthesizing data derived from geographic representations.

HS.19. Evaluate how differing points of view, self-interest, and global distribution of natural resources play a role in conflict over territory.

HS.61. Analyze an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon, identifying characteristics, influences, causes, and both short- and long-term effects.

Key vocabulary for the unit

Islam	Muslim	Sunni	Shia
Iraq	Mesopotamia	Iran	Persia
Ottoman Empire	World War I	Allied Powers	Central Powers
Sykes-Picot Agreement	San Remo Conference	King Faisal Husayn	Iraqi Revolt
Saddam Hussein	Ba'ath party	Shah Reza Pahlavi	Iranian Revolution
Ayatollah Khomeini	Iran Hostage Crisis	Iran-Iraq War	Iran-Contra Scandal
Ronald Reagan	Oliver North	George H. W. Bush	The Gulf War
Rogue State Doctrine	George W. Bush	Dick Cheney	Donald Rumsfeld
de-Ba'athification	sectarian	Mission Accomplished	
Guantanamo Bay prison		Abu Ghraib prison	oil

Materials

Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*, "Despotism and Godless Terrorism" and "Thunder Run"

James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History*, "The US in the Middle East"

Sykes-Picot Agreement: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/sykes_pico.html

Mapping activity: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pDypL_Bc3YLWELny-xmY814rDp3d8pVvxMaYSCAGoRs/pub

Mapping activity presentation: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/12Ms-i7M3vUsS8xTECb827SQBeCZ4--ZLxi9Kz_ZbL70/pub?start=false&loop=false&delayms=3000#slide=id.p

Shaking Hands with Saddam: <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/>

PBS Frontline "The Gulf War": <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/>

If America Were Iraq, What Would It Be? <http://www.juancole.com/2004/09/if-america-were-iraq-what-would-it-be.html>

What We Did To Iraq: <http://www.juancole.com/2013/03/what-we-did-to-iraq.html>

George W. Bush speech: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vr7OKqqTb_o

Lesson 1: Mapping the Middle East

Lesson objectives

- Students will be able to identify negative aspects of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the San Remo conference/Treaty of Sevres.
- Students will analyze natural resources and demographics while creating their own map of the Middle East

Before the lesson

Students will have read the summary of the Sykes-Picot Agreement as homework - http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/sykes_pico.html - (The actual text of the agreement will be difficult for lower students, so make that part optional.)

Starting the lesson

Using the mapping activity presentation - https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/12Ms-i7M3vUsS8xTECb827SQBeCZ4--ZLxi9Kz_ZbL70/pub?start=false&loop=false&delayms=3000#slide=id.p, explain (or refresh, if they already know) the slow loss of Ottoman territory to Europe over the century leading up to WWI and the Ottoman loss in WWI. Show students the maps of Sykes-Picot and San Remo, and then challenge them to do a better job than the British and French did. Distribute the mapping activity handout (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pDypL_Bc3YLWELny-xmY814rDp3d8pVvxMaYSCAGoRs/pub), and project the directions slide from the mapping activity presentation. This can be an individual activity or a small group project (no more than 3), but if you do small groups each student should write their own ideas about the strengths and weaknesses of their group's map.

Homework

Finish their write-up of the strengths and weaknesses of their map.

Lesson 2: The British, King Faisal, and the Iraqi Revolt

Lesson objectives

- Students will begin to learn about outside political interference in Iraq
- Students will understand the importance of natural resources in international relations

Before the lesson

Students will have examined the formation of the modern Middle East map in the aftermath of WWI.

Starting the lesson

Popcorn reading - "The US in the Middle East" in Gelvin. Whole group discussion about the responsibilities of powerful nations regarding the support of democratic vs. non-democratic leaders.

Homework

Give the students the chapter in Kinzer entitled "Despotism and Godless Terrorism." Ask them to consider who the winners and losers were in the Iran coup.

Lesson 3: The Rise of Saddam and the Fall of the Shah

Lesson objectives

Students will understand how Saddam Hussein rose to power in Iraq

Students will understand the Iranian Revolution of 1979

Before the lesson

Students will have read the chapter in Kinzer entitled "Despotism and Godless Terrorism" and considered who were the winners and losers of the Iran coup.

Starting the lesson

Have students write questions about the homework reading on the whiteboard/chalkboard. Whole group discussion on the homework questions. Have students volunteer answers to the homework questions based on the Kinzer reading. Lecture to fill in the cracks.

Homework

Students should read "Shaking Hands With Saddam" - <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/> and consider the question "Why would the US want to install/support a dictator in the Middle East during the Cold War?"

Lesson 4: The Iran-Iraq War

Lesson objectives

Students will understand the connection between the United States and the Iran-Iraq War

Students will understand the connection between the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War

Before the lesson

Students will have read “Shaking Hands With Saddam” and considered the question “Why would the US want to install/support a dictator in the Middle East during the Cold War?”

Starting the lesson

Have student write questions about the homework reading on the whiteboard/chalkboard. Whole group discussion on the homework questions. Have students volunteer answers to the homework questions based on the reading and prior knowledge of US foreign policy during the Cold War. Lecture to fill in the cracks.

Homework

Give the students the chapter in Kinzer entitled “Thunder Run.” Ask them to consider the question “How many different reasons can you come up with for why the US invaded Iraq in 2003?” Finish by the start of Lesson 6.

Lesson 5: The Gulf War

Lesson objectives

Students will understand why Iraq attacked Kuwait in 1990

Students will understand why the United States attacked Iraq in 1991

Before the lesson

Students will understand why the US supported Saddam Hussein prior to 1990.

Starting the lesson

Chalkboard/whiteboard lecture to ensure the students understand the geopolitical realities of 1990. US defense industry needed to justify continuing its Cold War level funding after the Cold War was over. Explain the Rogue State Doctrine, and make sure students understand that part of the reason we went into Iraq was to justify the Rogue State Doctrine. Show excerpts of PBS Frontline “The Gulf War.”

Homework

Students will read two articles “If America Were Iraq, What Would It Be?” - <http://www.juancole.com/2004/09/if-america-were-iraq-what-would-it-be.html> - and “What We

Did to Iraq” - <http://www.juancole.com/2013/03/what-we-did-to-iraq.html> - from juancole.com, and be ready to discuss in the next class.

Lesson 6: The 2003 invasion of Iraq

Lesson objectives

Students will understand why the United States attacked Iraq in 2003

Before the lesson

Students will have read the chapter in Kinzer entitled “Thunder Run” and thought about the question “How many different reasons can you come up with for why the US invaded Iraq in 2003?” They will also have read two articles – “If America Were Iraq, What Would It Be?” and “What We Did To Iraq” - from juancole.com, and will be ready to discuss them.

Starting the lesson

Have students write questions about the homework readings on the whiteboard/chalkboard. Play the George W. Bush speech from March 17, 2003: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vr7OKqqTb_o . Whole group discussion on the homework questions and the speech. Have students volunteer answers to the homework questions based on the Kinzer reading. Lecture to fill in the cracks.

Homework

Culminating assessment. Five-paragraph persuasive essay with the thesis “Sectarian violence in Iraq today is the result of border creation, natural resources, and western political interference.” Give them a week to turn in the rough draft (peer editing in class, if you want), and another week to turn in the final.