



The Ugly Truths of the Great War: Shell Shock in World War One

World War One Mental Illnesses of Soldiers



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Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	Time Frame	150 minutes
Subject	Social Studies	Duration	3 class period(s)
Course	Psychology, U.S. History		

Essential Question

What is the effect of war on soldiers and society?

Summary

In this lesson students will consider what they already know about psychiatric disorders and how they affect individuals. They will analyze poetry, photos, and video clips of the effects that World War One had on the soldiers mentally and physically.

Snapshot

Content Warning

This lesson contains discussions and readings referring to common mental disorders, suicide and other sensitive content. Consider sharing this warning with your students prior to beginning the lesson.

Engage

Students watch a video about shell shock in World War One, then discuss how the video made them feel.

Explore

Students analyze poetry and song lyrics pertaining to the effects of shell shock and compare them to each other.

Explain

Students review common mental disorders and gauge their own perceptions on each.

Extend

Students research shell shock and PTSD and create a research poster to present their findings.

Evaluate

Students demonstrate their learning by completing an exit ticket discussing what they learned.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: United States History (9th through 12th grade))

PS.9.1: Identify and explain potential sources of stress, effects of stress, and various coping strategies for dealing with stress.

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: United States History (9th through 12th grade))

USH.3.2: Evaluate the long-term impact of America's entry into World War I on national politics, the economy, and society.

Attachments

- [Anticipation Guide—The Ugly Truths of the Great War.docx](#)
- [Anticipation Guide—The Ugly Truths of the Great War.pdf](#)
- [Common Mental Disorders—The Ugly Truths of the Great War.docx](#)
- [Common Mental Disorders—The Ugly Truths of the Great War.pdf](#)
- [Double Bubble Map—The Ugly Truths of the Great War.docx](#)
- [Double Bubble Map—The Ugly Truths of the Great War.pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—The Ugly Truths of the Great War.pptx](#)
- [Reflections on the War—The Ugly Truths of the Great War.docx](#)
- [Reflections on the War—The Ugly Truths of the Great War.pdf](#)
- [Research Poster Checklist—The Ugly Truth of the Great War.docx](#)
- [Research Poster Checklist—The Ugly Truth of the Great War.pdf](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Double Bubble Map (attached; one per pair)
- Reflections on the War (attached; one per student)
- Common Mental Disorders (attached; one per student)
- Anticipation Guide (attached; one per student)
- Research Poster Checklist (attached; one per pair)
- Internet-capable devices
- Sticky Notes
- Chart Paper
- Markers
- Notebook paper

15 minutes

Engage

Optional Pre-Engage Videos

If your students have not been introduced to World War One prior to this lesson, you may want to take some time in the days leading up to the start of this lesson to show one of the videos listed below.

[Battlefield Experience: The Meuse-Argonne Offensive](#)

<https://youtu.be/Sczo4bejo9k?si=EmkU3pHjZYUWYuUE>

Introduce the lesson using the attached **Lesson Slides**. Go over the essential question and learning objectives on **slides 3-4**.

Transition to **slide 5** and play the video, [\(1918\) WWI veterans: shell shock sequels, war neurosis](#).

Embedded video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=X-elmAeX_4U?si=Un35WZO3qrW4CDsQ

When the video ends, move to **slide 6** and introduce the students to the instructional strategy, [How Am I Feeling? What Am I Thinking?](#) Distribute a sticky note to each student. Ask students to divide their sticky notes in half with a diagonal line and draw how they are feeling on one side. Direct them to write what they are thinking on the other side of the sticky note. When students are finished, facilitate a whole class discussion. Ask students to share their thoughts and take time to answer any questions.

25 minutes

Explore

Group students into pairs and distribute the **Double Bubble Map** (attached) and the **Reflections on the War** handout (attached).

Transition to **slide 7**. Instruct students to choose one of the poems or songs on the handout. Their choice should be different from their partner's. Using the [Double Bubble](#) instructional strategy, direct students to read their chosen poem or song lyrics and complete the Double Bubble Map by listing their chosen song in one of the large bubbles labeled "Name 1" or "Name 2." Next, have them add characteristics about their chosen piece in the outer bubbles attached to their large bubble. Allow students 5-10 minutes to complete their half of the map.

When students have completed their half of the map, move to **slide 8** and direct them to discuss their work with their partner. As a pair, ask students to add characteristics that their pieces share in the central bubbles connected to each large bubble. Allow 5-10 minutes for students to collaborate, then ask for volunteers to share their maps with the class.

25 minutes

Explain

Distribute the **Anticipation Guide** handout (attached).

Transition to **slide 9**. Ask students to respond to each statement on the handout by writing “agree” or “disagree” in the column labeled “Before Reading.” Then, have students discuss their responses in a small group. Remind them that it is okay to have a different answer than those around them. After students have discussed in small groups, facilitate a whole class discussion to review the responses.

Move to **slide 10** and distribute the **Common Mental Disorders** handout (attached) and sticky notes. Introduce students to the instructional strategy [Three Sticky Notes](#). Tell students to fill in their sticky notes after they read through the handout. On the first sticky note, have them write *one word* that summarizes the reading. On the second, instruct them to write *a phrase* that summarizes the reading. On the third, have them write *a sentence* summarizing the reading. When they are finished, have them discuss what they wrote in small groups.

Optional Instructional Strategy

If you would like to incorporate an additional strategy to facilitate the reading, consider using the [jigsaw](#) strategy. This will reduce the amount of reading each student will need to do and aid in generating a class discussion about the content. You can find instructions for students on hidden **slide 11**.

Once students have finished discussing their sticky notes, move to **slide 12** and ask them to revisit their Anticipation Guide handout. Instruct students to respond to each statement again with either “agree” or “disagree,” this time using the column titled “After Reading.” When students are finished, facilitate a whole class discussion about how students’ answers changed after completing the reading.

45 minutes

Extend

Instruct students to take out their internet-capable devices and move to **slide 13**. Direct them to work with their partner from the Explore activity to research Shell Shock and PTSD. Remind them that they may use their Common Mental Disorders handout in addition to finding other sources of information. Direct them to compare the disorders and to research the difference in available treatment from World War One to the present day, stigmas associated with each disorder, and societal reactions to those with each disorder.

When students have finished their research, distribute chart paper and markers to each group and transition to **slide 14**. Direct students to work with their partner to create [Research Posters](#) comparing Shell Shock during World War I and Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Distribute the **Research Poster Checklist** to each group. Move to **slide 15** and go over the requirements for the poster. The research poster should include the following:

- Summary of both disorders
- Available treatments and the difference in treatment between the time of the war and today
- Stigmas associated with each disorder
- Society's reactions

When students have completed their poster, allow each pair to share their work with the class.

10 minutes

Evaluate

Move to **slide 16**. Instruct students to take out a piece of notebook paper and a writing utensil and ask them to respond to the questions on the slide. Ask students to turn in their work when they have finished as their [Exit Ticket](#). If time allows, facilitate a class discussion about how students responded.

Resources

- American Battle Monuments Commission. (n.d). *Battlefield Experience: The Meuse-Argonne Offensive* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2J3eOdo2i0>
- Armstrong, C. (2012, October 24). One—Story Behind the Song. *Ultimate Metallica*. <https://ultimatemetallica.com/one-story-behind-the-song/>
- Disturban History. (n.d.). *The Tragic History of WWI Plastic Surgery* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sczo4bejo9k>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Anticipation Guide. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/58>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Bell ringers and exit tickets. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/125>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Double bubble map. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/3035>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). How am I feeling? What am I thinking? Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/187>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Research poster. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/1643efb18793d632c1f6f6639d0068ed>
- Nineteenth Century Videos. (n.d.). *WWI veterans: shell shock sequels, war neurosis* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-elmAeX_4U
- Poetry Foundation. (2024). Robert Graves. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/robert-graves>
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- Poets.org. (n.d.). Robert Graves. <https://poets.org/poet/robert-graves>
- The Real Story Behind One by Metallica. (n.d.). *Classic Rock*. <https://www.loudersound.com/features/the-real-story-behind-one-by-metallica>
- The War Poets Association. (n.d.). Ivor Gurney (1890-1937). <https://warpoets.org/conflicts/great-war/ivor-gurney/>
- Ward, C., ed. (1997). *World War One British Poets: Brooke, Owen, Sassoon, Rosenberg and Others*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications.