

Perilous Fight Lesson Plan 2

War Stories

Subject Areas: Secondary social studies, history, communication arts, journalism, and psychology classes.

Objective: Students will be able to:

1. use classroom discussion and film content to develop interview questions.
2. use original questions to conduct interviews.
3. conduct research about WWII topics related to the person they are interviewing.
4. compile interview notes and research materials to create a feature story about WWII.
5. use presentation skills to share their work with a broad audience.
6. evaluate what they have learned using expository writing skills.

Materials:

television

vcr

copy of *The Perilous Fight: America's World War II in Color*

Internet access for students

access to library resources

Handouts: Project Guidelines

Sample Mind Map

access to people who experience WWII firsthand*

*NOTE: This lesson will require the teacher to find people for students to interview and plan for students to have access to these resources. It may involve inviting people into the classroom or taking students on a field trip to meet the subjects of their interviews. See Project Guidelines handout for specific information.

Procedures:

Part 1: Creating Student Interest

1. To create student interest in the film and subject matter, choose two or three letters from the *Perilous Fight* website. Try to choose letters that illustrate the war from various perspectives. Read the letters to the class. If possible, be sure to include the dates the letters were written as an introduction to each letter. Facilitate a discussion about the letters using questions such as:
 - What significant historical event was taking place during this time period?
 - Why were letters an important means of communication at the time?
 - What did you learn about how WWII was affecting the letter writers?
 - What is the mood/tone of the letters?

2. After discussing the letters briefly, give students 3-5 minutes to brainstorm about what they already know about WWII. Ask them to record words and phrases related to WWII on paper. Remind students this is an individual, silent activity.
3. When students finish individual brainstorming, take time to create a graphic organizer similar to the sample Mind Map that is included with the plan. Use information from student brainstorming to complete each section of the Mind Map. Post this Mind Map where all students can refer to it. (NOTE: Use poster board or butcher paper to create this large Mind Map so it is easy for all students to read.)
4. Introduce the film by telling students they will be seeing a color history of actual WWII footage while learning about the war through a number of letters that were exchanged between families and friends throughout the war. Encourage students to focus on the important role the letters played in terms of communication between families as well as for boosting the morale of both troops and the U.S. citizens on the home front.
5. Show the following segments of the film:
 - Introduction/film opening
 - Part 1: 38:40 to 44:30 Pearl Harbor
50:26 to end Midway
 - Part 2: Beginning to 9:21 Army life, role of women, internment
20:50 to 22:18 Psychological effects
23:30 to 26:25 Life on the Home Front
36:15 to 44:17 Women in the workforce, military, and WASP's, German war atrocities
 - Part 3: Beginning to 10:55 Dday planning and invasion
14:45 to 18:25 One family's story, Italian front
28:45 to 31:15 One family's story
34:18 to 35:36 Concentration camps
36:12 to 37:54 Concentration camps
39: 40 to 41:05 VE Day
 - Part 4: Beginning to 10:00 Pacific front, life at home, psychological effects
11:40 to 12:25 Saipan
22:40 to 23:50 Importance of letters
28:15 to 29:15 Importance of letters
34:50 to 36:20 One family's story
37:50 to end of film Final victory

Part 2: Learning from the Past

NOTE: This portion of the lesson will require the teacher to find people for students to interview and plan for students to have access to these resources. It may involve inviting people into the classroom or taking students on a field trip to meet the subjects of their interviews.

1. Once students have viewed film segments, discuss which segments/letters had the greatest effect on the students as viewers. Do this using questions such as:
 - What did you learn about WWII that you didn't know before?
 - How did hearing the letters make you feel about what people endured during WWII?
 - Did hearing the letters effect any of the opinions you have about the current conflicts the U.S. is facing today?
 - How do you think you would have reacted if you were in the situations that were described in the letters?
2. When discussion is completed, introduce students to the project. Explain to them that they will be using what they have learned from the film to help them further investigate and report on WWII. Explain to students that they will need to conduct interviews about different aspects of the war from reliable sources. Not only will they research, but they must create a project that shows what they have learned. The project should be done according to the directions on the Project Guidelines sheet included with the lesson plan.
3. Give students ample time to plan, conduct interviews and research, write and edit their stories, and prepare them for presentation.

Part 3: Sharing Your Work

1. Once stories have been completed, have students share their work with the class. Teachers can decide how this should be done. Consider having students placed in small groups so they can hear 3-4 other stories, having students read stories individually to the entire class, or distributing stories to the entire class by compiling them and producing a sort of book that all students can have a copy of.
2. As a follow-up to the assignment, ask students to write a 1-2 paragraph response to the lesson. Have them address questions such as:
 - What did you learn from this assignment?
 - In what ways did this assignment change or affect you?
 - Did hearing stories based on the experiences of real people make the topic more relevant and real for you? Why?
 - How did what you learned from this assignment effect how you feel about America's involvement and handling of current world conflicts?

Assessment Suggestions:

1. Give students a participation grade for taking part in brainstorming activities and discussions.
2. Create a checklist or scoring guide to evaluate the quality of the feature stories written by each student. This could then be used to assign a grade for the project

3. Create a peer evaluation form that will allow students to critique one another's final projects.
4. Give students a completion grade for doing the follow-up written response to the assignment.

Extension Activities:

1. Invite the group of people who were interviewed into the classroom to hear students share their stories. After stories have been shared, allow for open discussion time between students and the older adults they interviewed. This will allow students to learn more about the experiences of those who lived through WWII and will offer those who were interviewed the opportunity to share their experiences directly with more students.
2. Compile the stories into a book that could be distributed to other classrooms in the school, district, or area who are studying WWII. Encourage students and teachers to use it as a tool for learning more about what people truly endured and how they were affected by their experiences.
3. Have students spend additional time gathering pictures and video clips related to their stories. Using presentation software such as Power Point, have students use the pictures, video clips, and music to create a multimedia presentation related to their story. They could then have this presentation running as they read their feature story. This will add a technology and visual component to the assignment.

National Standards:

Historical Understanding

Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective

United States History

Standard 25: Understands the causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs

World History

Standard 41: Understands the causes and global consequences of World War II

Language Arts:

Writing

Standard 2: Uses stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing

Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes

Reading

Standard 7: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

Listening and Speaking

Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

Viewing

Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

Behavioral Studies

Standard 4: Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups, and institutions

About the Author: Lisa Prososki is an independent educational consultant who taught middle school and high school social studies, English, reading, and technology courses for twelve years. Prososki has worked with PBS TeacherSource and has authored many lesson plans for various PBS programs over the past five years. In addition to developing materials for corporate clients and conducting workshops for teachers at various state and national conventions, Prososki has also worked as an editor and authored one book.

The Perilous Fight Lesson Plan: Project Guidelines

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: You will be working to create a project that describes what you have learned about WWII through investigative interviewing and research. It is important that you follow the criteria below when planning the project.

Project Goal: To create a project that can be used to teach others about WWII through personal accounts of what happened and how people were affected by the events.

Project Expectations:

Start your project by interviewing people who actually experienced WWII first hand. These people could be contacted through phoning local veteran's groups such as VFW or American Legion posts, local senior citizens centers, veteran's hospitals, or other related organizations. It is important to remember to interview a variety of people such as former soldiers, women, minorities, volunteers, or people who had family members directly involved in the war effort in some way. Think about people from your own family who may be able to offer information about life during WWII.

After you have conducted your interviews, create feature articles that tell their stories. Include photographs if they are relevant. Remember to use a headline and byline for each story, captions for the pictures, and as many quotes as possible to make your stories interesting.

Your last step will be to compile the feature articles into a short newsletter or magazine type of format. This will allow others to read your work easily and clearly.

Planning:

It is important to develop interview questions BEFORE going to conduct your interviews. On a separate sheet of paper, construct at least 20 questions related to WWII. Use the Mind Map created by your class to help you think of questions that span a variety of subjects related to the war. If you know the person you will be interviewing, tailor your questions to them. (i.e. Ask former soldiers about military life, training, battles, experiences. Ask a woman who was left at home to care for children and work outside the home about things related to her work, her children, and the feelings she had about how her life had changed.) Be sure to get specific facts about who, what, when, where, why, and how when you conduct your interviews.

Doing the Interview:

Interviewing is tricky business. It requires one to listen, write, and think about the information all at once. This can be difficult. If you can an inexperienced interviewer,

you might consider asking the person you are interviewing if you can make an audio or video tape of the interview so you can refer to it later. If this is not possible, take your time while interviewing, checking for accuracy frequently as you take notes. Don't be afraid to ask people to repeat themselves. Finally, if the person being interviewed has letters or excerpts from letters they would be willing to share, try to get copies of these so they can be included in the articles.

Using the Information:

After you have completed your interview, go to work writing your story. As you do this, you may find that you need to conduct **ADDITIONAL RESEARCH**. For example, if the person you interviewed talks about life in an internment camp or being involved in a specific battle or conflict, you will want to learn more about that so you can accurately portray it as you write your article. This would also be a good time to gather relevant pictures to accompany the story. Use the *Perilous Fight* website along with other Internet resources and library materials to learn about key events, people, places, and things. Pay particular attention to the timeline and subcategories that can be searched at the *Perilous Fight* website.

As you write your articles, be sure to give readers the historical background they need to understand how the person being interviewed experienced WWII. In addition to focusing on facts, spend time talking about the short and long term effects the war had on the person being interviewed. If possible, see how these experiences shape their feelings about the conflicts America is currently facing throughout the world. Finally, if you have received letters or excerpts to use, make them part of the story, not just something that is included because you had access to it.

Articles should be typewritten and should be at least one page in length. In addition, pictures should be used whenever possible to help illustrate what the story is about. Make two copies of your stories so you can give one to the people that were interviewed.

Sharing Your Work:

Be prepared to share your work with the people you interviewed, your classmates, and others interested in learning about WWII. You may be asked to do this by reading your article aloud or by allowing others to read it.

The Perilous Fight Lesson Plan: Mind Map Sample

To Use: The four main themes of the film/website are listed below in the outer circles. Students should be encouraged to place their brainstorming ideas around the outer edge of the circle that it is best applied to. See The Psychology of War circle for examples. Under each example (i.e. War Atrocities) additional detail lines could be added (i.e. POW camps, concentration camps, etc.) Use as much detail as possible to create a full web of information.

