

The United States as a World Power & Member of the United Nations

Grade level: 11-12

For educators, articles are building blocks, and thematic guides help build the house. Using three or four related full text articles, a cohesive thematic study builds on factual knowledge and draws students into activities that:

- Build vocabulary
- Build expository writing skills
- Spark discussion and debate
- Encourage higher level thinking skills
- Promote literacy for both literature and information technology

Introduction

Taking its first steps in the Third Millennium with the rest of the world, the United States government is paving a new road with an uncertain destination. It is a lone superpower in a post-Cold War world. Its greatest threat is an untenable and unpredictable foe, an ideology - terror. The reality of its position in the world makes the United States a leader. It is also an active member of a global "family," the United Nations (UN), an organization it also helped establish. Assessing and defending its sovereignty, as well as participating in efforts to promote international cooperation and resolve conflict involves a careful balance of discussion, debate and action. Balancing these responsibilities is difficult in a world of particular instability. In this unit, student will examine the United Nations as an organization, with special focus on the Security Council, its interaction with the United States and vice versa in the context of the Iraq conflict 2003.

Curriculum Standards

Massachusetts Frameworks, History and Social Studies

World History II: The Rise of the Nation State to the Present

The Great Wars, 1914-1945

- Describe reasons for the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 and summarize the main ideas of the Doctrine of Human Rights (LS 29).

The Contemporary World, 1989-2001

- Describe America's response to and the wider consequences of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, DC (LS 48).

U.S. Common Core State Standards

English Language Arts Standards » History/Social Studies » Grade 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.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6: Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8: Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.
- 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.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.10: Read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Objectives

1. Explain the relationship between the League of Nations and the United Nations.
2. Present an historical perspective of the role of the United States in the establishment and activities of both institutions above.
3. Identify differing opinions regarding the role and effectiveness of the United Nations in a post-Cold War world.
4. Identify points of commonality and contention among UN member states and the United States, in the context of a regional conflict.

Materials

- The following MAS Ultra: School Edition database articles through Explora:
 - “This Isn’t About Iraq Anymore” (Lexile 930)
 - “Time to Modernize the UN and NATO” (Lexile 970)
 - “America and the League of Nations: Lessons for Today” (Lexile 1030)
 - “President Says Saddam Hussein Must Leave Iraq” from Vital Speeches of the Day (Lexile 1070)
 - Research Document from Essential Documents in American History: “Exposition of the League of Nations” Text of exchange between President Wilson and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee” (Lexile 1150 – 49 pages in length)
- Computers
- Globe
- Index Cards

Skills Practiced

- Synthesizing information
- Comparing and contrasting
- Engaging in debate, exchange, and discussion
- Identifying main ideas
- Paraphrasing
- Recognizing cause and effect
- Researching
- Using the internet

Co-curricular Applications

- World History
- Writing
- Reading
- Geography
- American History

Vocabulary

Reading the articles in this unit offers an excellent way for students to learn new words and see those words used in context. Review the following terms and definitions with students before they read. As they read, encourage students to write down other unfamiliar words they encounter and to use context clues and/or a dictionary to find the words' meanings.

- **consensus** - a collective opinion
- **economic sanctions** - punitive measures that decrease or deprive a nation of income normally gained through commerce
- **engagement** - to enter into discussion, conflict or battle, depending on the circumstances
- **impolitic** - unwise, not expedient
- **isolationist** - a political view that calls for a nation to focus on its needs or importance, ignoring the wider world around it
- **mitigate** - to make less severe, to moderate multilateral - pertaining to more than two nations NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- **national sovereignty** - a nation's or city-state's complete independence and self-governance
- **preemption** - acting to prevent something from happening
- **separatism** - a political view advocating separation from an established region or country

Procedure

1. Introduce the unit by sharing the information in the Introduction and Building Vocabulary with students.
2. Have students read "America and the League of Nations: Lessons for Today." As students read, have them look for the answers to the following questions:
 - a. What enduring challenges confront both the League of Nations and the United Nations?
 - b. How did America rise to prominence with regard to international cooperation and council?
 - c. What are some of the reasons the League of Nations failed to attain its goals?

When students are finished reading, ask volunteers to share their answers to the above questions. Point out that the failure of the United States to join the League of Nations was one of the reasons it failed to succeed. Ask students what this indicated about the place of the United States in the world order at the time.

3. Back to the Future: UN Security Council Members, Who Are They and How Did They Become so Influential?

In this activity, students will broaden their understanding of the current UN debate over Iraq by examining the founding structure of the UN Security Council, its scope and powers.

To begin, ask students if they can name the five countries that make up the permanent membership of the UN Security Council. (They are China, Russia, France, Great Britain, and the United States.) Explain to students that in addition to the permanent members, the Security Council includes ten additional members, for a total of 15.

4. **4a.** Take three index cards and write on one “founding history,” on the second “mission,” on the third, “membership.” Turn the cards upside-down and mix them up. Divide students into three groups. Ask one person from each group to choose a card lottery style. This will be their group assignment, to research that part of the UN. Instruct them that they will work together to research the topic, and each group will make an in-class presentation of their findings. Each person in the group will have a role in presenting, preparing visual aids, etc. Students will also prepare a written report on the topic. The reports can be written individually, or one group report can be presented that includes each student’s collaborative effort. When class presentations are given, students listening to presentations should take notes and be prepared to ask questions.

4b. UN Security Council: How do the five permanent members come to be named to the positions? Why those five? Students can research the answers at <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/index.shtml>.

Invite advanced readers to research this topic by reading sections 1-6 of the article “Charter of the United Nations” from Essential Documents in American History. To find this article using the MAS Ultra-School edition search page, enter the title in the keyword search box, and enter Essential Documents in American History in the publication box.

5. **5a.** In this activity, students will encounter a striking 21st century example of the United States demonstrating its role as a world power. First, direct students to read “President Says Saddam Hussein Must Leave Iraq,” from *Vital Speeches of the Day*, a journal on MAS Ultra. This speech by President George W. Bush can be read online or printed out and distributed among students. Then, ask students to read the speech again, focusing special attention to paragraphs 8-11, beginning with “The United States of America has the sovereign...”

Ask students to analyze the text and explain in writing what message President Bush is conveying to the United Nations about America’s position on this issue. How is the message conveyed? Is it strong, or vague, firm or passive? Students must support their opinions with evidence from the text.

“The United States of America has the sovereign authority to use force in assuring its own national security. That duty falls to me, as Commander-in-Chief, by the oath I have sworn, by the oath I will keep.

Recognizing the threat to our country, the United States Congress voted overwhelmingly last year to support the use of force against Iraq. America tried to work with the United Nations to address this threat because

we wanted to resolve the issue peacefully. We believe in the mission of the United Nations. One reason the U.N. was founded after the Second World War was to confront aggressive dictators, actively and early, before they can attack the innocent and destroy the peace.

In the case of Iraq, the Security Council did act, in the early 1990s. Under Resolutions 678 and 687 – both still in effect – the United States and our allies are authorized to use force in ridding Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. This is not a question of authority; it is a question of will.

Last September, I went to the U.N. General Assembly and urged the nations of the world to unite and bring an end to this danger. On November 8th, the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1441, finding Iraq in material breach of its obligations, and vowing serious consequences if Iraq did not fully and immediately disarm.

5b. Now ask students to examine the last three paragraphs of the speech, beginning with “As we enforce...” Point out there is something missing from these paragraphs that was included in paragraphs 8-11. Ask them to identify the missing element (There is no mention of the United Nations). Ask them to indicate what they believe the significance of that is, from the point of view of statecraft and diplomacy, not personal politics.

An example of a correct answer would be that in this speech, the president is publicly differing with efforts to date that have not curbed Iraq. His comments aim to justify that, and a decision to pursue alternative efforts. By what authority? As a leader of a sovereign nation that perceives a true threat against its sovereign security, and of a free and democratic nation obliged to by history to defend liberty.

“As we enforce the just demands of the world, we will also honor the deepest commitments of our country. Unlike Saddam Hussein, we believe the Iraqi people are deserving and capable of human liberty. And when the dictator has departed, they can set an example to all the Middle East of a vital and peaceful and self-governing nation.

The United States, with other countries, will work to advance liberty and peace in that region. Our goal will not be achieved overnight, but it can come over time. The power and appeal of human liberty is felt in every life and every land. And the greatest power of freedom is to overcome hatred and violence, and turn the creative gifts of men and women to the pursuits of peace. That is the future we choose. Free nations have a duty to defend our people by uniting against the violent. And tonight, as we have done before, America and our allies accept that responsibility.”

Extension Activities

1. In 2003, divisive debate among the permanent members of the UN Security Council came to the fore. Does this mean that the UN is irrelevant, or is just a bump in the diplomatic road? Assign “This Isn’t about Iraq Anymore,” and “Time to Modernize the UN & NATO.”

Pre-Reading:

- Remind students of the differences between the UN and the NATO alliance.
- Encourage logical, focused debate on the merits of the articles, to elicit student views on the subject of the current state of the UN.

Questions to consider:

- Should the UN be modernized? If so/not, how/why?
 - Should membership changes take place?
2. Is the Security Council a help or hindrance to international peace and cooperation?
 3. Should the UN be disbanded? How have relations with the United States and the countries of Europe changed within the UN structure? This activity can be assigned as a report in which students choose to argue one side or the other, and/or be the topic of class debate.
 4. Think About It - In your opinion, does the membership reflect the state of the world today?
 5. Do you favor the premise of permanent membership on the Security Council?
 6. If you could promote one UN member country to permanent membership on the Security Council, which would it be? Why?
 7. Taking questions 2-4 to the next level might involve inviting students to participate in a Model UN program. For more information, consult www.unausa.org.

Internet Resources

- UN Security Council, <http://www.un.org/en/sc/>
- Model UN, <http://www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un/how-to-participate>

Evaluation

Students will be graded on their answers to the discussion questions, group work and their written work. They can also be graded on their participation, behavior, and cooperation.

Rubric

Teachers and teacher educators identify rubrics as a set of criteria used for particular assignments, projects, and other tasks. To aid in the assessment procedure, there are three steps recognized by the measurement community to an assessment:

1. Students respond to questions
2. Analysis/scoring of performance on those questions
3. The interpretation of those results

If a rubric is a set of criteria, then the assessment tools should be based on these criteria and take on forms such as checklists, essays, problem sets, portfolios, etc.

Resources for rubrics:

- <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>
- <https://www.schrockguide.net/assessment-and-rubrics.html>