

Making Sense of World Conflicts

Lesson plan 1: Finding out about armed conflict

Age group: 14–17

Objectives

To explore and extend knowledge about armed conflict.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will have anticipated responses and tested ideas and conclusions; and developed information-processing skills.

You will need

Source material: copies of the **Armed conflict quiz** (below) for each pupil.

What to do

Starter

1. Hand out the **Armed conflict quiz** (below), and ask pupils to do it either individually or in pairs. Tell them that it is not a test and not to worry if they don't know the answers – they should guess. It is a way of both finding out what they know about conflict in today's world and giving them some information when they get the answers. Give them about ten minutes to do the quiz.

Activity

2. Go through the answers to the quiz and discuss any particular points that need clarifying. Discuss anything that surprised pupils. Were any misconceptions demonstrated through doing the quiz? How do misconceptions arise?
3. Ask pupils what the quiz can tell us about changes in armed conflict. Are today's armed conflicts more or less likely to affect civilians than in the past? Draw out the point that present-day armed conflicts are far more likely to involve and affect civilians.
4. Brainstorm the armed conflicts that pupils know about that are happening at present.
5. Ask pairs of pupils to research and map or list present-day armed conflicts. Information, lists and maps of contemporary armed conflict can be located on the Peace Pledge Union website (<http://www.ppu.org.uk/war/index.html>) or through search engines.

6. Are there any surprises about the location of conflicts? Are there any surprises about the number of conflicts? Are any of these armed conflicts not reported in the news? Why would conflicts get 'forgotten'?

7. Discuss where pupils had gaps in their knowledge and why that might be. Refer back to the work done on conflict in the news (if appropriate). Discuss how much we learn about conflict and war from the media. How important is it to know about conflicts in the world?

Closing discussion

8. How can we find out more about armed conflicts and wars? Discuss which sources are likely to give: the most factual information; the most interesting; the most up-to-date; the most neutral; the most biased etc.

9. Pupils should list three things that they have learned about armed conflict in the world today and give the source.

Making Sense of World Conflicts

Worksheet: Armed conflict quiz

1. Out of approximately 193 countries in the world, how many countries experienced armed conflict in 2002?
 - 21
 - 42
 - 67
2. What proportion of the world's countries spent more on the military than on health-care (in 2002)?
 - one-fifth (1 in 5)
 - one-third (1 in 3)
 - half (1 in 2)
3. According to the United Nations figures for 2002, which of these three countries spent the most on arms and weapons per head of the population?
 - Israel
 - Kuwait
 - Saudi Arabia
4. Between 1997 and 2001 what percentage of developing countries experienced a civil war?
 - 26%
 - 41%
 - 56%
5. In World War One, what percentage of casualties were civilians?
 - 14%
 - 67%
 - 90%
6. What percentage of casualties were civilians in World War Two?
 - 14%
 - 67%
 - 90%
7. What proportion of those killed in conflict since 1989 have been non-combatants (civilians)?
 - 14%
 - 67%
 - 90%

8. In 2003 which country in the world had the most refugees?

- Iran
- The UK
- Pakistan

9. How many children are estimated to be involved in conflicts worldwide (2002)?

- 3,000
- 30,000
- 300,000

10. Article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that you have a right to protection in times of war and should not have to be in an army or take part in a battle under what age?

- 12
- 15
- 21

Making Sense of World Conflicts

Worksheet: Answers

Most of these statistics come from *Shattered Lives: The case for tough international arms control* (Oxfam International/Amnesty International 2003). Oxfam's website has more details of this report.

1. 42 Since 1989 – the end of the Cold War between East and West – there have been more than 120 wars worldwide. In the mid-1990s the number of wars increased sharply but the annual total has begun to decrease since the turn of the century.

2. One-third An average of 22 billion US dollars a year is spent on arms by countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America – a sum that would otherwise enable those countries to be on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals of achieving universal primary education, as well as targets for reducing infant and maternal mortality. From 1998 to 2001 the USA, the UK and France earned more income from arms sales to developing countries than they gave in aid.

3. Kuwait The USA is the fifth biggest spender on arms per head of the population. The UK is the eighth.

4. 56% Wars today are concentrated in the poorest countries and these countries can very easily get caught up in a cycle of poverty and conflict.

5. 14%

6. 67%

7. 90% This is the figure since the end in 1989 of the 'Cold War' which marked a change in the types of conflicts waged and how they were financed and waged.

8. Iran At the end of 2002, around 22 million people across the world were internally displaced – that is, they had to move within their own country to find security. There were 13 million refugees and asylum seekers seeking protection outside their own countries, most of them women and children.

9. 300,000 It is estimated that roughly 300,000 children under the age of 18 are still participating in armed conflicts around the world. The UK was the last country in Europe to use child soldiers in wars – in 2002 the UK government committed itself legally to end the deployment of under-18s in military activities.

10. 15 Part three of *Article 38* of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states: 'Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of 15 years into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of 15 years but who have not attained the age of 18, parties shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest.'