

The World War II Foundation Multidisciplinary Integrated Curriculum

"Valor & Virtue: A World War II Journey"

Part VII: Cultural and Global Awareness

Critical Thinking and Reflection component of the "Valor & Virtue: A Journey Through World War II History" curriculum can profoundly deepen students' understanding and engagement with the complexities of the war. These documentaries serve as powerful tools to explore the personal and ethical dimensions of World War II, offering students a nuanced perspective on historical events. Here's a detailed outline for incorporating these documentaries into the curriculum:

Unit 1: The Human Impact of War (Pages 3-5)

Objective: To explore the personal experiences and ethical dilemmas faced by individuals during World War II, using [*Her War, Her Story: World War II*](#) and [*Survivors of Malmedy*](#) as primary resources.

Activities:

- **Documentary Analysis and Discussion:** After viewing [*Her War, Her Story: World War II*](#), students will engage in guided discussions to analyze the roles and contributions of women during the war, the challenges they faced, and the legacy of their participation. Similarly, [*Survivors of Malmedy*](#) will prompt discussions on the rules of war, the treatment of prisoners, and the long-term effects of wartime atrocities on survivors and societies.
- **Primary Source Comparison:** Students will research additional primary sources related to the themes of the documentaries, such as letters from women serving in various capacities during the war or official reports on the Malmedy massacre. This activity encourages students to synthesize information from multiple perspectives and to critically evaluate the reliability and bias of sources.
- **Reflective Essays:** Students will write reflective essays on the ethical implications of the events depicted in the documentaries. They could explore questions such as the moral responsibilities of soldiers and leaders in wartime, the impact of war on civilian populations, and how societies remember and reconcile with the past.

Unit 2: Ethics and Decision-Making in War (Pages 6-7)

Objective: To critically assess the decision-making processes and ethical considerations in wartime actions and policies, drawing on specific examples from the documentaries.

Activities:

- **Debate on Ethical Dilemmas:** Organize debates on controversial topics presented in the documentaries, such as the justification for strategic bombings or the fairness of post-war trials. This activity encourages students to articulate and defend their positions using evidence and to consider opposing viewpoints.
- **Role-Playing Exercise:** Students participate in a simulation exercise where they take on the roles of historical figures involved in the events of the documentaries. They must make decisions based on the information and circumstances of the time, later reflecting on the outcomes and ethical considerations of their choices.
- **Group Project - Ethical Analysis:** In small groups, students will conduct an in-depth ethical analysis of a specific event or policy from World War II, incorporating insights from the documentaries. The project culminates in a presentation where they must argue their ethical stance, supported by historical evidence and ethical theory.



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Assessment and Reflection

- **Critical Thinking Portfolios:** Students compile portfolios that include their essays, project reports, and reflections on the documentaries and related activities. This portfolio serves as a comprehensive showcase of their analytical skills, ethical reasoning, and personal growth throughout the unit.
- **Peer Feedback Sessions:** Implement structured sessions where students present their projects and receive feedback from their peers. This process encourages constructive criticism and self-reflection, enhancing students' critical thinking and communication skills.
- **Self-Reflection Prompt:** At the end of the unit, students complete a self-reflection prompt, assessing their development in understanding the complexities of World War II and their ability to engage in critical analysis and ethical reasoning.

Relevant "Front to the Films" Podcast Episode:

Community Engagement and Oral History Projects:

- "Echoes of Valor: A Conversation with Tuskegee Airman, Harry Stewart"

By thoughtfully incorporating [*Her War, Her Story: World War II*](#) and [*Survivors of Malmedy*](#) into the curriculum, students are encouraged to delve deeper into the human experiences and ethical complexities of World War II. This approach not only enriches their historical knowledge but also fosters critical thinking, empathy, and a nuanced understanding of the past's relevance to contemporary ethical dilemmas.

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Lesson Plan

Part VII: Cultural and Global Awareness

Unit 1: The Human Impact of War

Objective:

To explore the personal experiences and ethical dilemmas faced by individuals during World War II, using [*Her War, Her Story: World War II*](#) and [*Survivors of Malmedy*](#) as primary resources.

Activities:

- **Documentary Analysis and Discussion:**
 - [*Her War, Her Story: World War II*](#):
 - Watch the documentary to understand the roles and contributions of women during WWII.
 - Engage in guided discussions to analyze:
 - The challenges faced by women in various wartime roles.
 - The legacy of their participation on post-war society and gender dynamics.
 - [*Survivors of Malmedy*](#):
 - Watch the documentary to explore the ethical dimensions of wartime atrocities.
 - Facilitate discussions on:
 - The rules of war and treatment of prisoners.
 - The long-term effects of wartime atrocities on survivors and societies.
 - How societies remember and reconcile with past atrocities.
- **Primary Source Comparison:**
 - **Research Guidelines:**
 - Provide students with research guidelines to find additional primary sources related to the themes of the documentaries.
 - Examples include:
 - Letters from women serving in various capacities during WWII.
 - Official reports and testimonies related to the Malmedy massacre.
 - Diaries or memoirs of individuals directly affected by wartime events.
- **Analysis and Synthesis:**
 - Students analyze and compare the primary sources with the documentaries, considering:
 - The reliability and bias of each source.
 - How different perspectives contribute to a nuanced understanding of historical events.
 - What the sources reveal about the personal and ethical dimensions of the war.
- **Reflective Essays:**
 - **Essay Topics:**
 - Students will write reflective essays on the ethical implications of the events depicted in the documentaries.



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- Suggested essay topics include:
 - The moral responsibilities of soldiers and leaders in wartime.
 - The impact of war on civilian populations and the legacy of women's contributions.
 - How societies remember and reconcile with past atrocities.
- **Essay Guidelines:**
 - Provide guidelines that encourage critical thinking and deep reflection:
 - Introduction: Clearly state the essay's thesis and main arguments.
 - Body: Support arguments with evidence from documentaries and primary sources.
 - Conclusion: Summarize key insights and provide a thoughtful reflection.
- **Collaborative Reflection and Feedback:**
 - **Group Reflection Session:**
 - After completing the essays, facilitate a group reflection session to discuss:
 - How personal experiences and ethical dilemmas influenced historical events.
 - The importance of primary sources in shaping historical narratives.
 - The role of critical thinking and reflection in understanding WWII.
 - **Peer Feedback:**
 - Encourage students to share their essays and provide constructive feedback to peers.

Resources:

1. Documentaries:

- a. [Her War, Her Story: World War II](#): Narrated by actress Jane Lynch. The individual stories of more than two dozen women caught up in World War II, from the American Home Front to Auschwitz Concentration Camp in Poland. Included in this hour-long film are also the personal stories of the incredible women who served in uniform in the military or were “Rosie the Riveters” at home building the tools of war, whether they were black or white. This documentary focuses on the role of women in history’s most violent conflict, from the perspective of those who served, witnessed or were caught up in a war that proved women were the equal of men when it came to patriotism, service or in some cases, self-preservation during watershed moments which called for steadfastness.
- b. [Survivors of Malmedy](#): Narrated by Jason Beghe. The story of the World War II massacre of 84 American soldiers in the Malmedy, Belgium area on December 17, 1944, during the opening days of the famous “Battle of the Bulge.” On December 17, 1944, after a short battle, 150 American GI’s were taken prisoner just outside the Belgian town of Malmedy and herded into a field by an infamous German SS division led by one of the Nazi’s most brutal commanders. The unarmed American POWs were gunned down. It was the largest single massacre of



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American troops in Europe in WWII. Those still alive after the initial shooting in the brutal cold were killed by SS soldiers ordered into the field to execute any Americans still breathing. Some American soldiers played dead. Some ran. Some escaped to nearby houses. In the end, more than 50 Americans did escape the infamous Malmedy Massacre. Today just two survivors remain. Narrated by Jason Beghe (NBC's Chicago P.D.).

2. Primary sources, including letters, diaries, reports, and memoirs.
3. Essay templates and reflection guidelines.

Assessment:

- Assess the quality and depth of documentary analysis in discussions.
- Evaluate the reliability and synthesis of primary sources.
- Review the clarity, critical thinking, and reflection in essays.
- Essay: Why did the Germans shoot and kill the 84 Americans at Malmedy? Be specific. What were the events that led up to the mass killing on December 17, 1944?

Implementation Timeline:

- **Week 1:** Watch documentaries and engage in analysis discussions.
- **Week 2:** Conduct primary source research and comparative analysis.
- **Week 3:** Write reflective essays and participate in group reflection.
- **Week 4:** Peer feedback and essay revision.

Extension:

- **Guest Lecturers:** Invite historians or veterans to discuss the ethical dimensions of WWII.
- **Community Essay Showcase:** Host a public event where students present their reflective essays to the community.

Incorporating documentaries like [*Her War, Her Story: World War II*](#) and [*Survivors of Malmedy*](#) into the curriculum allows students to gain a multidimensional understanding of WWII, fostering cultural and global awareness, ethical reasoning, and critical thinking skills.



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Lesson Plan

Part VII: Cultural and Global Awareness

Unit 2: Ethics and Decision-Making in War

Objective:

To critically assess the decision-making processes and ethical considerations in wartime actions and policies, drawing on specific examples from the documentaries.

Activities:

- **Debate on Ethical Dilemmas:**
 - **Debate Organization:**
 - Organize debates on controversial topics presented in the documentaries, such as:
 - The justification for strategic bombings (e.g., Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Dresden).
 - The fairness of post-war trials (e.g., Nuremberg Trials).
 - The treatment of prisoners of war and civilians (e.g., Malmedy Massacre, Japanese-American internment camps).
- **Research and Argument Preparation:**
 - Divide students into teams and assign them positions to defend or oppose each ethical dilemma.
 - Teams research historical evidence and ethical theories to support their arguments.
- **Debate Execution:**
 - Conduct formal debates, encouraging students to articulate and defend their positions while considering opposing viewpoints.
- **Role-Playing Exercise:**
 - **Scenario Creation:**
 - Create a simulation exercise where students take on the roles of historical figures involved in the events of the documentaries.
 - Possible scenarios include:
 - The planning of the Normandy landings.
 - The Manhattan Project and the decision to use atomic bombs.
 - The treatment of Holocaust survivors and displaced persons.
 - **Decision-Making Process:**
 - Students must make decisions based on the information and circumstances of the time.
 - Guide students through historical context and ethical considerations relevant to their roles.
 - **Reflection and Discussion:**
 - After the exercise, facilitate a reflection session where students analyze:
 - The outcomes and ethical implications of their choices.
 - How historical circumstances influenced decision-making.
- **Group Project - Ethical Analysis:**
 - **Topic Selection and Research:**



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- In small groups, students will select a specific event or policy from World War II for ethical analysis, incorporating insights from the documentaries.
- Example topics include:
 - The firebombing of Tokyo.
 - The treatment of collaborators post-war.
 - Medical experimentation in Nazi concentration camps.
- **Ethical Analysis Guidelines:**
 - Provide guidelines that encourage in-depth research and critical thinking:
 - Introduction: Clearly state the ethical question and its historical context.
 - Body: Analyze the event or policy using historical evidence and ethical theories.
 - Conclusion: Provide a well-argued stance on the ethical implications.
- **Group Presentation:**
 - The project culminates in a group presentation where students:
 - Argue their ethical stance, supported by historical evidence and ethical theory.
 - Answer questions from peers and defend their arguments.

Resources:

- Documentaries: [*Her War, Her Story: World War II*](#), [*Survivors of Malmedy*](#), *Navy Heroes of Normandy*, *Eagles of Mercy*.
- Historical archives, memoirs, and scholarly articles on WWII events and policies.
- Ethical frameworks and theories for analysis.

Assessment:

- Evaluate the quality and depth of research in debates and presentations.
- Assess clarity, creativity, and persuasiveness in role-playing exercises and debates.
- Review group projects for critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and historical accuracy.

Implementation Timeline:

- **Week 1:** Watch documentaries and assign debate topics.
- **Weeks 2-3:** Research and preparation for debates and role-playing exercises.
- **Week 4:** Conduct debates and role-playing exercises.
- **Weeks 5-6:** Group project research and ethical analysis.
- **Week 7:** Group project presentations and reflection.

Extension:

- **Guest Lecturers:** Invite ethicists, historians, or veterans to discuss ethical decision-making in WWII.
- **Community Debate Showcase:** Host a public event where students debate ethical dilemmas with feedback from guests.

By critically assessing ethical dilemmas and decision-making processes during WWII, students will gain a nuanced understanding of the complexities of war while honing their critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and communication skills.

