

**Terrorism Lesson Ideas Using the Newspaper with the US Institute of Peace “Teaching Guide on International Terrorism: Definitions, Causes and Responses”** (a compilation of ideas from NIE professionals) Download guide at: [http://www.usip.org/ed/teaching\\_guides/terrorism.pdf](http://www.usip.org/ed/teaching_guides/terrorism.pdf)

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- Discuss why people commit acts of violence like the ones that occurred on September 11, 2001. What might make individuals, groups, or nations commit such violent acts? (It is important to emphasize that the goals of individuals such as bin Laden may not be representative of the goals of groups.) To have a world of peace, how can we prevent conflict—at home, at school, in our communities, and around the world? Brainstorm ideas and have students write letters that can be posted on a class or school bulletin board.
- Find an example of international terrorism in the newspaper. In what country did the incident take place and what group has claimed responsibility for the incident? What are the goals of the group and how effective do you think the tactics the terrorists used will be in accomplishing those goals?
- Use the newspaper to show how ethnic or political groups might accomplish goals without using terrorist measures. What organizations and forums exist that would allow reasonable solutions?
- Use the newspaper to find organizations and events that you feel have decreased possibilities of future terrorist incidents. What may have increased the possibility of future incidents?
- Write out and discuss: How have the terrorist attacks affected you personally? Have any activities, travel destinations or methods of transportation been changed by or for you as a result of the 9/11 attacks? With the benefit of hindsight, do you feel that any of these modifications were logical or necessary? If you feel there has been no effect, explain why you have escaped direct effects in your life.
- Discuss the following: As a result of the attacks on September 11, do you feel that lessons, current events discussions and other activities should be made increasingly positive so that student fears and concerns might be minimized? Illustrate these trends with stories in various editions of the newspaper.
- What separates acts of terrorism from similar acts that might take place in wartime? Does wartime legitimize acts of violence that might be judged as terrorism? Find examples of both these conditions in the newspaper.
- Find examples in the newspaper of people practicing conflict resolution and approaches to find peaceful solutions to different problems. Itemize and discuss various approaches being used.
- They could look in the newspaper for groups and organizations that help to make people feel safe. Including articles on police, watchdog groups, neighborhood crime watch, organizations that help and protect battered women. etc. Usually these organizations are featured in a "Neighbors" section or a clubs and organizations section. How do these groups help people feel safe. Write a letter thanking them and find out more information by calling this organization.

#### Lesson I

Once the students have their definition of terrorism, have them find an article in the newspaper dealing with terrorism and apply their definition to the story. (Who are the terrorists? Who are the victims?, etc.)

Look in the letters to the editor section. Are there any letters about terrorism in the world? What feels are expressed in those letters?

### Lesson II

Find at least one article in the newspaper that deals with terrorism. What do you believe is the cause for the described terrorism (psychological, ideological or strategic)? Explain your reasoning.

### Lesson III

Find an article in the newspaper dealing with terrorism other than the attacks on the U.S. on September 11th, 2001. Would any of the responses you came up with be applicable to that situation?

Write a letter to the editor expressing your alternative response.

### Lesson I

1. Do you remember seeing the newspaper on or in the week following September 11? How did your newspaper cover the terrorist attacks? What kinds of stories were published? How were people in your community impacted personally by the terrorists' actions?

2. Using articles following September 11, or coverage during the week of September 11, 2002, as a class answer the questions above to come up with a definition of terrorism. Who does terrorism impact? What are characteristics of terrorism? How have communities responded to terrorism? How have the U.S. or other nations responded to terrorism?

3. Using the world section of your paper, find examples of terrorism as defined by the "Definitions of Terrorism" handout. Why is targeting innocent people part of the definition of terrorism?

### Lesson II

4. Look in the paper for people who are frustrated or are experiencing injustice. How are these people dealing with their frustrations? What is a terrorist method of dealing with frustrations or injustice? Why might a terrorist feel this is an effective way to deal with frustrations? How do you think we should deal with frustrations? Think of something you're frustrated about and develop an action plan of how you're going to deal with it.

5. Which of the three possible causes of terrorism do you think relate to September 11? Do you think one of the perspectives is a dominant cause, or do you think it was a combination of the perspectives? Write an editorial about the probable causes of September 11 terrorist attacks, and why you think this is true. Can you find an example in the newspaper of an individual or group motivated by one of the perspectives?

6. Do you feel you understand Osama Bin Ladin's thought process better after reading the profile? Did you find aspects of the profile that you disagreed with? Did you want to learn more perspectives on Islam after hearing Bin Ladin's perspective on Islam? Look for an example in the paper of someone trying to understand someone else's perspective.

### Lesson III

7. From your classroom brainstorming, pick one of the four best ideas from the chart. Write an article covering the government after implementing this idea. What positive impact has this response made on the nation? On relations with terrorists? Has your idea lowered the level of violence and protected innocent people?

8. How can we safeguard against terrorism in other ways than increased security measures? How can we improve relations and communication with countries who have resorted to terrorism in the past? Look for ways in the newspaper that people have attempted to relate and communicate better, whether it's involving family relations, city events, or political relations.

Lessons ideas correlated to pages in the USIP Terrorism Guide

On page 3, Introduction:

1. Using your paper today, list the acts of violence you found.
  - a) Now, divide your list into acts of violence and acts of terrorism as explained in this Introduction.
  - b) Do all of your classmates agree with your lists?
2. Using your lists further, what do you think the rationale behind the acts of violence and terrorism you found were?
3. The Introduction sites several acts of terrorist activity.
  - a) What were the circumstances of these acts?
  - b) Who were the perpetrators?
  - c) Who were the victims?
4. We Americans know of several acts of terrorist activity within the US in the last decade.
  - a) As a class, make a list of these terrorist acts. (Oklahoma City, Atlanta Olympic games...)
  - b) Again, who were the terrorists? Who were the victims?
  - c) Was there any "connections" made by government officials with these people and their actions?
  - d) Where did you find your information?
  - e) If your information came from varied sources, were they similar in their viewpoints? On what points did they vary? Is this "nit picking?"
5. Why do you think the "Average" American does not remember these acts of terrorism?
  - a) How do you define "Average" American? Find examples of your "Average American" in your newspaper. What differences do your examples make in your answer?
6. Are we Americans terrorists for attacking and declaring war on a 3rd world country much smaller and not as militarily as mighty as we?
  - a) Site news examples for your reasoning.
  - b) What difference does your views make in this instance?
  - c) Again, give examples of news stories that have helped shape your opinions on this subject.

Page 10 - Causes of Terrorism:

1. Using your daily newspaper, make a list of disagreements mentioned.
  - a) What part of the newspaper listed the most disagreements?

- b) Divide your list into "citizen profiles."
- c) What criteria did you use to make your "citizen profiles." Is this wrong for us to make such decisions about others? Why or why not?
- d) Now, using your first list, divide the disagreements into psychological, ideological and strategic perspectives. (Sometimes road rage on city streets can be ideological - other times purely psychological.)
- e) Does an altercation between an elderly man and a teenager over loud music coming from a car fit any of your criteria for disagreements?
- f) Does an arrest stemming from a stop for driving drunk fit any of the criteria?
- g) Do the above 'disagreements' qualify as acts of terrorism? State your ideas in a letter to the editor.

2. In the "Strategic Perspective" it states "Terrorism is sometimes seen as a logical extension of the failure of politics."

- a) What are they talking about?
- b) What kind of politics are they discussing? Republicans vs Democrats? Dictatorships vs democracies?
- c) What are you basing your opinions upon? Where did you get your information?

3. Many people fail to vote because of "the failure of politics."

- a) Make a list of the failures you see in politics.
- b) Do you think your parents and teachers see the same acts as failure? Why or why not? Did your parents and teachers vote in the last election?

Page 11 - Conclusion:

As a class, make a list of adjectives describing a terrorist. Would this list change for an International terrorist? How many of the adjectives would have described McVeigh (Oklahoma bombing)?