

Title:

Films about World War II

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Abstract:

Designed for history students, grades 9 through 12, this unit's central question focuses on how filmmakers have changed their view of the Second World War. Students will create portfolios or their own documentary to investigate the various screen interpretations of the wartime era. The final assessment ends with a community forum in which students, teachers, parents, veterans, and others will come together to recognize the "strangeness of the past."

State Standard(s):

B.12.1 Explain different points of view on the same historical event, using data gathered from various sources, such as letters, journals, diaries, newspapers, government documents, and speeches.

B.12.4 Assess the validity of different interpretations of significant historical events.

Essential Historical Question:

How has the depiction of World War II in film changed in the decades following the conflict?

Perspectives on the Question:

Historical actors on the home front and the battle fronts	How do you feel the movies portrayed events related to W.W. II?
Filmmakers during various time Periods: 1940's - 1950's 1960's - 1970's 1980's 1990's - Present	How did the views/influences of current events change during the respective time periods?

Learning Targets:*Knowledge*

- Terms, Themes, Events
 - Franklin D. Roosevelt
 - lend-lease
 - Axis & Allies
 - Home front
 - Manhattan Project
 - Holocaust

D-Day
Pearl Harbor
Total War
Dictators
Draft
John Wayne

Skills and Processes

- Analyzing
- Synthesizing
- Constructing
- Applying
- Researching
- Evaluating
- Exploring

Reasoning and Critical and Creative Thinking

History Thinking Standard 3: The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation.

Dispositions and Attitudes

- Students will employ critical thinking skills when analyzing differing perspectives of an historical event.

- Students will recognize the “strangeness of the past” and respect the interpretations to make them applicable to their world.

Instruction:

Preliminary Activities:

Introduction to the World War II unit.

View 20-second video clips from the following films:

- *Saving Private Ryan*
- *Sands of Iwo Jima*
- *The Longest Day*
- *Tora! Tora! Tora!*
- *Memphis Belle*

Question: What is the difference between these movies?

Introduce documentary format and philosophy.

New Learning Activities:

Introduce project (documentary or portfolio).

- Pose the question: Which version is correct?
- Show longer clips.

Discuss the “strangeness of the past.”

- Why was each film made?
- Were their social or political agendas present?
- Was it an anniversary of the event?

Analyze the various decades: 1940s-1950s; 1960s-1970s; 1980s; and 1990s-present.
Introduce the project: make a documentary or portfolio from a contemporary perspective.

Post-Learning Activities:

- A forum will be established to present the best projects. The forum will include the following groups: Veterans, parents, community members, senior citizens, and peers.
- A panel will be made up of Veterans, senior citizens, project participants, and parents.
- The presentation of the best projects will be followed by a question and answer session conducted by the panel.
- The forum will end with a musical concert/dance presented by the school jazz band.

Assignment:

Students will create either a documentary or portfolio synthesizing a plethora of interpretations.

Assessment:

Goal of Performance or Product:

Students will recognize the “strangeness of the past” and respect the interpretations to make them applicable to their world.

Role of Student:

- Researcher
- Film Critic
- Observer
- Reporter
- Filmmaker
- Interviewer

Audience of Performance or Product:

A community forum will be held, inviting parents, community, peers, and Veterans.

Situation:

- Students will experience public speaking in front of a large group.
- Students will be actively taking on the role of an historian.

Criteria Used to Evaluate Performance or Product:

- Documentary or portfolio

➤ Grasp of concepts

Resources:

Primary Sources:

Andrew Carroll, *War Letters* (2001)

Ron Gragg, *From Foxholes and Flight Decks: Letters Home from World War II* (2002)

Smith Family Papers, Area Research Center, GB Mss 20.

Secondary Sources:

John Keegan, *Second World War* (1990).

Steven Mintz and Randy Roberts, *Hollywood's America: United States History Through Its Films* (2001).

Allan M. Winkler, *Home Front U.S.A.* (2002, 2nd Edition).

Films:

1940's

Casablanca (1942)

Sahara (1943)

Bataan (1943)

They Were Expendable (1945)

The Best Years of Our Lives (1946)

Command Decision (1948)

Sands of Iwo Jima (1949)

1950's

Stalag 17 (1953)

To Hell and Back (1955)

Mister Roberts (1955)

Bridge on the River Kwai (1957)

Young Lions (1958)

Run Silent, Run Deep (1958)

1960's-1970's

Guns of Navarone (1961)

War Lover (1962)

Battle of the Bulge (1965)

Dirty Dozen (1967)

Kelly's Heroes (1970)

Tora, Tora, Tora (1970)

Midway (1976)

A Bridge Too Far (1977)

Force 10 From Navarone (1978)

1980's

Big Red One (1980)

Victory (1981)

Dirty Dozen, The - The Next Mission (1985)

Present Era

Memphis Belle (1990)

Schindler's List (1993)

Tuskegee Airmen (1996)

Saving Private Ryan (1998)

U-571 (2000)

Enemy at the Gates (2001)