

Best Practices in Technology

Title: *Axis and Allies World War II Simulation*

Subjects: History, Geography, Civics, and Economics

Intended Grade Levels: 5 - 12

Description/Narrative:

This is a unit plan that I made this year (2000) that uses the Axis and Allies computer game (made by Hasbro Interactive/Microprose software, ISBN 1-58228-110-6) to re-create World War II in the classroom.

Before beginning this unit, the teacher should be very familiar with the software. Axis and Allies was originally a board game, similar to a cross between Risk and Monopoly. It covers social studies curriculum extremely well, including use of Economics and World Geography. History is re-created using the program, and alternative outcomes are possible (an Axis victory,) but many key battles are recreated often, including North African campaigns, D-Day, and American island hopping.

Other activities that can be worked into the simulation include in-depth reports by individuals or groups, interviews with veterans, family history (many students have grandparents or great-grandparents who were in the war), making a movie as a group, or learning about the music, dance, and culture of the 40's.

Curriculum Benchmarks:

This unit can be used to teach history, economics, civics, and world geography. I used it to teach the Core Democratic Values (what countries are like without them, i.e., Germany, Russia). Geography included world geographic facts and locations, and especially how geography affected the outcome of WWII (England as an island nation, America's location, etc.) Economics are an extremely important factor in the game, and students are guaranteed to experience scarcity and opportunity cost first hand.

I have not cross-referenced my curriculum objectives with the Michigan Framework, but here are the objectives I hoped to meet:

- I. Students should identify the causes of World War II
 - A. The rise of German and Japanese Nationalism.
 - B. The Armistice of 1918 effectively destroyed the German economy.
 - C. Adolph Hitler was to restore Germany to glory through military conquest.
- II. Students should identify the major players in World War II, and the reasons for their entry into the war.

- A. Germany: Axis power, primary initiator of World War II. Germany began invading neighbor countries in 1939 to expand their borders and establish a position of power in the world.
 - B. Japan: Axis power, primary initiator of World War II in the Pacific. The Japanese Empire attempted to establish dominance of the entire Pacific area. They were secretly allied with Germany until the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, when both Japan and Germany declared war on the U.S.
 - C. Great Britain: Allied power. Resisted German attempts to conquer mainland Europe, and the British Isles. The British Empire was one of the most powerful empires in the world at the beginning of World War II, but was nearly invaded by Germany in 1941.
 - D. United States of America: Allied power. Secretly supported England in 1940 and 1941, as most Americans did not want to fight in World War II. After the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941, America declared war on both Japan and Germany. America, due to its location on the North American continent, was the only country to escape World War II without being directly attacked (with the exception of Pearl Harbor.)
 - E. The Soviet Union: Allied power. Russia was poorly organized, poorly equipped, and economically inferior to every other player in World War II. The Germans looked at Russia's Red Army with contempt. Germany advanced far into Russia, expecting to take the capital city of Moscow. Fierce Russian resistance, tremendous Soviet production efforts, and the onset of winter cut off the German army at Stalingrad. Hitler's attempt to fight both England and America in the West, and the Soviets in the East, proved to be too much, as Soviets forced their way back, until they conquered the German capital city of Berlin.
- III. Students should identify the major leaders of each country, and the type of government.
- A. Adolph Hitler, Germany. Dictatorship
 - B. Winston Churchill, Great Britain, Democracy
 - C. Joseph Stalin, Soviet Union, Dictatorship
 - D. Hirohito, Japan, Emperor (Dictatorship) (Military actually ran things)
 - E. Franklin D. Roosevelt, United States, Democracy
- IV. Students should identify the role of geography in the outcome of World War II.
- A. Germany's two front war.
 - 1. English Channel problems
 - 2. Russian winter
 - B. Japan's remote location.
 - 1. Attacks in Europe unrealistic.
 - 2. Moves throughout Asia, Pacific Islands.
 - 3. Need to immobilize United States Naval forces.

- C. America's remote location
 - 1. Difficult to enter the war.
 - 2. Navy is VERY important.
 - 3. Aircraft used extensively in Europe before troops arrive.
 - 4. Completely immune to attacks by Germany and Japan.
 - 5. Factories are able to produce goods without interruption.

- V. Students should identify the role of economics in the outcome of World War II.
 - A. Countries needed to out-produce their enemies.
 - B. The United States was able to build weapons without interruption.
 - C. The effect of scarcity on a country's ability to carry out warfare.

- VI. Students should identify several of the major battles of World War II.
 - A. The Fall of France
 - B. The Battle for Britain
 - C. Stalingrad/Lennigrad
 - D. Pearl Harbor
 - E. D-Day
 - F. The Battle of the Coral Sea/Midway
 - G. Island Hopping/Iwo Jima
 - H. The Fall of Berlin
 - I. The dropping of the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

- VII. Students should identify the outcomes of the war.
 - A. The destruction of the Japanese Empire.
 - B. The Decline of Europe as a world power.
 - C. The establishment of the United States and the Soviet Union as the dominant world superpowers.
 - D. The beginning of the cold war.

- VIII. Students should examine a person, event, or country in depth by doing a report on the topic of their choice.

- IX. Students should participate in the actual simulation, by playing a part in the government of one of the five powers.
 - A. President (coordinator of the war effort)
 - B. Vice President (assist or replace president)
 - C. Ambassador (to allied, or enemy countries)
 - D. Battlefield Commander (in charge of all combat)
 - E. Industry Expert (in chare of buying all new equipment.)

Materials/Hardware/Software:

Axis and Allies requires a Pentium computer with a CD-ROM. It can be networked with up to four more computers. I had five Pentiums networked, with students working in groups of five. Each student had a particular job (president, vice president, ambassador, industry expert, or battlefield commander). This kept anyone from being left out.

Alternatively, students could use the computer as a stand-alone machine in groups of five, with each student taking on the roll of one country. The only problem with this is that if a student is absent, it makes it difficult to continue unless someone takes his or her place.

Finally, the whole class could use one computer, especially if a video projector is used. This is a good alternative if five computers or networking are unavailable.

Supplemental materials are a must for this unit, and the students should have a relatively good understanding of World War II before the simulation starts (what happened, when it happened, the major countries involved, why it happened, etc.) I also used the simulation to compare and contrast our game with the real war. (What happened today that really happened in World War II? Why do you think it happened again? What happened that was different?) I created my own books, one for each country (Germany, Japan, the UK, Russia, and the US), but there are a wealth of materials out there, including books, videos, audio, computer/CD ROM, and internet materials.

Detailed Timeline:

This is a rough timeframe that I used for this simulation.

Week 1: Overview of the War (I made a PowerPoint® slide show of Internet pictures. Videos may work well, too!)

Week 2: Learn to play the game. Introduce units, the world geography involved, and economic factors. We also played a scrimmage against the computer, and finally against each other.

Week 3: Learn about Germany, begin simulation.

Week 4: Learn about Russia, continue simulation.

Week 5: Learn about Great Britain, continue simulation.

Week 6: Learn about Japan, continue simulation.

Week 7: Learn about the USA, continue simulation.

Week 8: Wrap up, group or individual projects, etc. End simulation.

Teacher Preparation:

You should know everything there is to know about the game, and should play it yourself against the computer at least five or six times. Also, you will need to locate all supplemental materials to be used, unless you have a good textbook already.

Prerequisite Student Skills:

My students had little to no knowledge of World War II before this unit. At least a week should be spent looking at what really happened in the war before trying to re-create it, to avoid confusion. Computer skills are minimal; point and click, mostly. The game is very self-explanatory, and graphics are simple and easy to understand.

Activities/Procedures:

Three days a week on information, two on the simulation, or three days simulation and two on information, if you wish. It takes about an hour to go through one round, so I did one turn a day. Reflections and debriefing is a must! I have the students keep a journal, in which they write what good things happened, the bad things, and what their plan is. This is also a chance for team collaboration.

Also, after each turn, do some compare/contrast activities. What happened today? Did this really happen in the war? Why or why not? Etc...

Assessment/Evaluation:

This will depend on what kind of materials you use. I had one test each week, over the materials that were covered. The students also kept a journal after each round, in which they wrote down the good things that happened, the bad things, and their plan for the next turn.

Assessment will vary, depending on grade level. I did this with three fifth grade classes, but I expect that it would work even better with high school students.

Follow-up Activities:

Interview a vet? Make a movie or report about a country? Write a skit about the war? Read a historical or fictional book about World War II? Class party with a 1940's theme?

Results:

This unit has been, by far, the most successful unit that I have ever taught. The students have never been more interested in a subject. Many of them have gone out to purchase the game, or to learn about World War II on their own. All of the work it took has been worth it.

To see our class web page, click on <http://www.cccmsu.org/meadmarc/wwii/index.htm>

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