

Unit II: From Playground to World Stage

Grade Levels: 9-12

Time: 2 block schedule periods (80 minutes) or four standard instructional periods (40 minutes)

Lesson III-5: Defining Terrorism

Objectives:

Students will be able to examine multiple definitions of terrorism and identify areas of agreement and disagreement. Students will be able to categorize violent acts that can be categorized as terrorist acts, as well as those which are not, according to a U.N. definition of terrorism.

Students will be able to interpret and analyze multiple sources of evidence about acts of violence to determine if they can be labeled “terrorist” acts.

Students will be able to make informed decisions regarding how terrorist acts do or do not constitute violations of international law, and how perpetrators of such terrorist acts should be addressed within the judicial system.

Key Terms:

Terrorism

Humanitarian Law

National Security

Human Security

Materials:

- Dworkin, Anthony. Terrorism in Gutman, Rieff and Dworkin, *Crimes of War: What the Public Should Know 2.0*. London, W. W. Norton, 2007: 396-399.
- Hess, Diane and Jeremy Stoddard. 9/11 and Terrorism: The Ultimate Teachable Moment in Textbooks and Supplemental Curricula. in *Social Education*, September 2007, pp. 231-236.
- United Nations, *Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change*, New York, The United Nations, 2004. <http://www.un.org/secureworld/> or <http://www.un.org/secureworld/report2.pdf>
- Wechsler, Lawrence. International Humanitarian Law: An Overview, in Gutman, Rieff and Dworkin, *Crimes of War: What the Public Should Know 2.0*, London, W. W. Norton, 2007: 22-28.
- United Nations, *Human Development Report 1994*, New York, The United Nations, 1994. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1994/>
- Worksheets as noted in the lesson methodology.

Activities/Procedures:

Day One

1. Introduce the topic of terrorism by asking students to place three examples of terrorist acts on a file card. Number the file cards and correlate the numbers to the student names in the class. Then ask each student to define the term “terrorism” and write that definition down in his/her notebook.
 2. Collect the file cards and then redistribute them to the class making sure that each card contains at least three examples of what each student has identified as terrorist acts. Make sure that the students DO NOT receive their own original list back.
 3. Place the students in groups of 3-4, again insuring that their own cards do not reappear in their small working group. Pose this question to the class (write it on the board or distribute it on a half-sheet of paper). “What do the lists you have in your small group have in common?” Once you’ve determined which responses are in common, make a second list of those that were not repeated by anyone in your group. Now, discuss the common examples by completing this worksheet and making sure that each member of the group provides input to the worksheet responses. One worksheet should be completed for each common example.
- Worksheet: Contains requests for this information.

Location of terrorist act
Date(s) of terrorist act
Perpetrators of terrorist act
Victims of terrorist act
Purpose(s) of terrorist act
Non-human consequences of terrorist act
Response to terrorist act by government or others

4. After each group has completed a separate worksheet for each common example, they should move on to the non-repetitive examples and do the same. This may require that they ask questions of the individuals in other groups who suggested those examples, or the teacher can draw this information out through questioning from the full class.
5. Each small group should now examine the completed worksheets and construct a list of attributes that appear in at least two of the examples, again drawing upon the items in the worksheets. For example, are their locations where more than one terrorist act has taken place? Do the same perpetrators appear for more than one example?
6. As each group completes their work, they should compile a list of the common attributes, which will be shared with the full class as the final activity for the day.
7. Homework: Each student will investigate a specific example from those identified in today's activity. Using a similar worksheet (but with the goal of gathering more detail, and now listing reliable sources for their information), each student will complete the worksheet and provide more detailed responses, listing sources on the second worksheet. This should be completed for day two. If implemented within a block schedule format, the teacher can have students use time to work in pairs to do their investigation, and then move on directly to Day Two, part 2 after sharing their findings with the full class.

Day Two

1. After homework has been checked for completion, the teacher will ask for examples of the second worksheet to be shared with the entire class. Questions should be posed by the teacher and/or students about the quality and reliability of sources used for this second worksheet, as well as what frame of reference or point of view was evident in the source for their work.
2. The teacher should now distribute worksheet three, which contains a range of definitions of terrorism. Those definitions are listed below.

(From Hess and Stoddard article)

"Terrorism is the use of violence against people or property to try to force changes in societies or governments."

(The Americans text)

"Terrorism is the use of violence by nongovernmental groups against civilians to achieve a political goal."

(Democracy in Action text)

"There is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. Countries define the term according to their own beliefs and to support their own national interests." (Constitutional Rights Foundation)

The teacher should now ask each student to determine if their worksheet example can be classified as a terrorist act by one or more of the definitions shown on the worksheet. If so, then the student is required to determine what attributes in their example do or do not match the parameters of the definition.

After each student has taken approximately 5-7 minutes to write down how their example(s) do or do not match each of the definitions, the teacher should facilitate a question-answer session where students present their findings

and defend their judgments, providing evidence from their examples to support their claims. The teacher needs to make sure that students provide both examples and counter-examples, so that the definitions can be validated, or shown to be invalid.

After this questioning strategy has been implemented, the teacher should hand out worksheet number four, which has a list of both recent and more historic examples of violence directed against individuals and groups. Students should then be asked to determine if these examples can be classified as terrorist acts using definitions from the third worksheet.

List of examples: (Drawn from Hess and Stoddard article and other sources)

- Columbine High School killings, 1999
- Bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, 1997
- Bombing at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Montgomery AL, 1963
- The activities of the Unabomber, 1975-1995
- Rocket attacks on Southern Israel by Hamas, 2008-09
- Activities of the Ku Klux Klan during Reconstruction
- The assassination of U. S. President William McKinley, 1901
- The Boston Tea Party, 1773
- Bombing of abortion clinics, 1980 to present
- Attack on the U. S. S. Cole, 1993
- John Brown's Raid on the U. S. Armory in Harper's Ferry, VA, 1859
- Attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, 2001
- Hijacking of the Achille Lauro luxury liner by Palestinian armed group, 1985
- Killing of Israeli Olympic Athletes by Black September group, 1968

The teacher should now make a master list (categorized by definition) of the examples from worksheet #4 and discuss with the class their rationales for placing/classifying one or more of these examples under each definition. It is important for the teacher to make sure that the student(s) publicly offer their rationales and precisely link attributes of the definition to the specific examples being proposed. The teacher should also make sure that examples which are NOT listed under a specific definition are discussed, and have students explain why those examples did not fit a particular definition.

This should end day two in the traditional schedule format. For schools using a block schedule, the teacher can move on to steps 1 and 2 under Day Three at this time.

Day Three

1. After students enter the room, they should be given the UN definition from the Dworkin article, Terrorism, from the Gutman, Reiff and Dworkin book. That definition is shown below.

Definition (2004): Terrorism is defined as "any action...that is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or noncombatants, when the purpose of such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act."

2. Students should be asked now to return to the first example they investigated, and judge whether it constitutes terrorism under this U.N. definition. Provide some time for students to analyze their example against the definition, and be alert to the need to clarify terms (example, noncombatants) in the definition.
3. The teacher should facilitate a discussion about their findings, and then ask the students to compare the U.N. definition to the three definitions used in worksheet number three. How similar and/or different are the definitions? What do they have in common, and in what ways is the U.N. definition more or less precise than the others?
4. At this point, the teacher should introduce the concepts of “humanitarian law”, “human security” and their meanings. Use the Gutman, Rieff and Dworkin book as a resource (pp. 22-28, article by Lawrence Wechsler) to provide content on humanitarian law, as well as examples (Geneva Conventions, Nuremberg Tribunals, Tribunals on the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and others). Students should copy down the definition and examples as they are provided. For the definition of human security, consult the U.N. Human Development Report from 1994, where a definition and examples are supplied.
5. The teacher should now ask this question: “How might terrorism be considered a violation of humanitarian law and a threat to human security, and if so, how would one know?” Students should be directed to a set of documents (Geneva conventions, other U.N. conventions dealing with protection of human life), and then be given a specific case to investigate that provides content they can use to answer the question. For example, was the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993 a terrorist act and did it violate international standards of humanitarian law? If so, how could the perpetrator be brought to justice, in what context, and if found guilty, what penalty or penalties should be assessed? In what way(s) should the human and material damages from the terrorist act be addressed and/or compensated?
6. The teacher can determine if this activity requires individual or pair involvement, and the final assessment of student performance for the lesson can then be assigned. Each student or pair will prepare a position paper that answers the question, and proposes a process for bringing perpetrators to justice as well as addressing the short and long-term consequences for human and material damages.

Day Four

1. Students should share their findings in a round-table discussion, and the teacher should invite questions from students to their peers regarding their findings and recommendations.
2. After all findings and recommendations have been discussed, the teacher should invite students to prepare a master list of their recommendations that will be condensed into a proposal for an international counter-terrorist program. This proposal should be sent to the relevant U.N. body dealing with terrorist activities, and to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, as well as to both U. S. Senators from N.J. for consideration by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. This constitutes the final component of the lesson, and can constitute a second assessment of student performance by the teacher if desired.

Evidence of Understanding (Assessments of Student Performance)

1. Completed position paper—evaluated against criteria of relevance, use of evidence to support one’s argument, clarity of expression, and application of relevant concepts and definitions.
2. Letter to U.N./U.S. Senators: same criteria as for A, but including the criteria of comprehensiveness, as this should reflect the full class’ consensus of what constitutes meaningful recommendations.

Extension Activities: Taking Action and Giving Service

1. Students can examine other historic examples of possible terrorist acts, and implement simulated judicial proceedings or role plays/sociodramas where the perpetrators, victims and legal participants present their perspectives on the case before a tribunal.
2. Students can engage in online dialogues and possibly video conference with experts from the Gutman, Rieff and Dworkin book to discuss their findings on the topic, and then record their ideas in an online discussion forum that can be archived for future use.