

Historica Canada Education Portal

International Terror

Overview

Since the attacks in the U.S. on 11 September 2001, terrorism has been on everyone's mind. This lesson will enhance students' understanding of terrorism.

Aims

Students will look at the causes of terrorism, the aims of terrorists, and the historical development of international terrorism (including terrorism within Canada).

Background

Events in recent history have torn the topic of terrorism from the movie screens and the International section of the newspaper and thrust it into our homes and our daily lives. With attacks on New York and Washington, we in North America are experiencing the fear, anger, and frustration that other people living in an atmosphere shrouded by terrorism have known for some time.

Now it is time for us to try to understand the causes of terrorism, the aims

of terrorists, and the historical development of international terrorism (including terrorism within Canada). It is also the time to engage in discussion about what we can do to prevent terrorist attacks, and to correct the conditions that breed terrorists and those sympathetic to their aims.

These are very large and difficult questions, but by becoming educated and informed, we can begin to develop the understanding that can lead us to action and change.

Activities

Time Allowance: about 3 - 5 hours

Procedures:

1. Mind Mapping

In order to begin to understand the range of topics that fall within the question of international terrorism, teachers and students may find it useful to generate a Mind Map on the topic.

With "Terrorism" at the centre, the mind-map could expand into such sub-topics as "terrorist organizations," "motives for terrorism," "aims of the terror attacks," "causes of terrorism," "social effects of terrorist activities," "political effects of terrorism," etc. Students should feel free to suggest wide-ranging connections to the topic.

In the highly-charged atmosphere surrounding this topic, teachers will have to exercise some control over the discussion to prevent racist or inflammatory comments. As the discussion begins, it may be necessary

to talk about the dangers of characterizing large groups of people from the actions of a very few. Make it clear that the aim of the discussion is to see the topic in new ways.

The Mind-map exercise should stimulate a free-ranging discussion that begins to lead beyond simplistic responses. The discussion should lead to more questions, rather than easy answers.

2. Further Study

Based upon the Mind-map introduction, students can begin to research different aspects of the subject. Together, the class can generate a list of topics for further study. It may be fruitful to propose the topics as questions, such as:

- How and where has terrorism appeared in the past?
- What are the terrorist organizations active today?
- What do terrorists hope to accomplish?
- What motives do terrorists give for their actions?
- What leads people to become terrorists?
- Have there been effective actions to stop terrorism?
- In what ways is terrorism similar to and different from more conventional warfare?

In groups or as individuals, students should select a topic from the list generated by the class. The students should research their topic using a variety of sources, including the Web sites included in this lesson.

Evaluation:

Besides giving their essays to the teacher, students may present their findings to the class. As various students share what they have learned,

the class can discuss the topic in more informed terms.

Students who are affected personally by the topic will find it helpful to express their concerns in action. Volunteering in relief efforts, participating in raising funds and supplies for relief agencies, supporting letter-writing campaigns, etc. are ways that individuals can turn their personal commitment into public action. Sites on the web, like those listed in this lesson, offer avenues for such participation.

Resources

[Anti-Terrorism Act - The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[Terrorism - The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

[The Terrorism Research Center](#)

Profiles of known terrorist groups operating around the world.

[Arms Control and International Security](#)

[Symbolic Politics](#)

"Beneath the brutality, the posturing and the theatrics of a kidnapping or a hostage-taking is a subtle political process..." A University of Guelph professor looks at how terrorist actions alter the political environment.
New Internationalist.

[Terrorism – the Facts](#)

"There has been a dramatic increase in political terrorism by independent groups and by governments over the last century. But the statistics are unreliable and often speculative." *New Internationalist.*

