 Investigating modern history – the contestability of the past program

Approximately 3 weeks (10 indicative hours)

This document references the [Modern History Stage 6 Syllabus](https://syllabus.nesa.nsw.edu.au/modern-history-stage6/) © 2017 NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales.

Unit description

Students investigate problems relating to the contestability of the past, focusing on sources available to historians. Students are contesting who was responsible for the sinking of the Lusitania and the deaths and injuries to all on board. The historical concepts and skills content is to be integrated as appropriate.

Focus questions

* Who was to blame for the sinking of the Lusitania?
* Were the Germans right in sinking the Lusitania?
* How have primary and secondary sources assisted our understanding of the Lusitania?
* How did perspectives change when looking at the sinking of the Lusitania?

Outcomes

A student:

* MH11-6 analyses and interprets different types of sources for evidence to support an historical account or argument
* MH11-7 analyses and interprets different types of sources for evidence to support an historical account or argument
* MH11-8 discusses and evaluates differing interpretations and representations of the past
* MH11-9 communicates historical understanding, using historical knowledge, concepts and terms, in appropriate and well-structured forms
* MH11-10 discusses contemporary methods and issues involved in the investigation of modern history

Related Life Skills outcomes – MHLS6-1, MHLS6-2, MHLS6-8, MHLS6-9, MHLS6-11, MHLS6-12

Historical concepts and skills

The following skills, which incorporate the concepts of causation, continuity and change, perspectives, significance and contestability, are to be integrated with the content of the Year 12 course.

Analysis and use of sources

* Explain the meaning and value of sources for an historical inquiry (ACHMH007, ACHMH009)
* Analyse sources to identify and account for the different perspectives of individuals and groups in the past (ACHMH010)
* Analyse and synthesise evidence from different types of sources to develop reasoned claims (ACHMH009)
* Identify and analyse problems relating to sources in the investigation of the past (ACHMH011)

Historical interpretation

* Identify and analyse the varying causes and effects of events and developments in order to construct historical arguments (ACHMH001)
* Analyse and evaluate contested interpretations and representations of the past (ACHMH011, ACHMH012)

Historical investigation and research

* Use evidence from a range of sources to inform investigation and research (ACHMH005)
* Acknowledge sources appropriately (ACHMH015)

Explanation and communication

* Develop texts, particularly historical accounts and arguments, supported by relevant evidence from sources (ACHMH013)
* Communicate historical understanding, using historical knowledge, concepts and terms, in forms appropriate to purpose and audience (ACHMH014)

Assessment

Formative and summative forms of assessment.

* Formative assessment completed throughout the unit of work and found under the table heading ‘Evidence of learning’.
* Summative assessment – historical debate essay in an examination

| Outcomes/content | Teaching and learning | Evidence of learning |
| --- | --- | --- |
| how historians test hypotheses about the past through the corroboration of sources (ACHMH102)  Teaching time – 1 hour | Recap basic source analysis and lead students to “How do historians chose which sources to trust?”  What motivates perspective? Introduce context and how context can impact perspective/interpretations.  Students engage in a teacher-led discussion to define ‘contestability’ and ‘perspective’ with practical examples e.g. good v evil, right & wrong.  Examples may be provided which illustrate the application of contestability e.g. the History Wars and Ned Kelly hero/villain as examples of contestability from Stage 5 to make connections.  Present student with initial [image of the sinking of the Lusitiania](http://i1.mirror.co.uk/incoming/article5631484.ece/ALTERNATES/s615/Lusitania.jpg) to have them hypothesise about what they think happened and brainstorm ways that historians can find out what happened  Source – [New York Times](https://c1.staticflickr.com/9/8321/7904041406_3d392b2082_b.jpg) | * Use source analysis scaffold. * Have students come up with a list of requirements to make a source trustworthy/reliable. * Students brainstorm ideas based on prior knowledge * Informal assessment: Have students recap areas of debate either orally and/or using text. Formally define key terms such as contestability, authenticity, perspective * Students to predict what they think happened in the image, recognised prior learning to connect with knowledge of WWI/U-Boats etc. Discuss historical context of what is happening at the time * Students brainstorm ways Historians can learn about this event and compile list of questions/possible areas of contention * Students to discuss the New York Times front page and add to their initial hypotheses about areas of contestability/contention surrounding this incident |
| the importance of understanding the historical context in the interpretation of sources  (ACHMH048)  Teaching time – 1 hour | Sinking of the Lusitania – [The Gorlice-Tarnów Offensive I The great war – Week 41](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7z1zThGXxg)  Imperial War Museum Article: [How a German Medallion became a British propaganda tool](https://web.archive.org/web/20170930104640/http:/www.iwm.org.uk/history/how-a-german-medallion-became-a-british-propaganda-tool)  Students to engage with a range of propaganda sources  e.g. [Take up the Sword of Justice](https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=dO%2FN2ZtZ&id=B72CC357016B8393011A6B4CD4C9819F683750E8&thid=OIP.dO_N2ZtZCc1KgPulobjsJAC8Es&q=lusitania+propaganda+posters+free+to+use&simid=608021633792150574&selectedindex=12&mode=overlay&first=1)  [Cold Blooded murder](https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=CtyP564y&id=BF92647F67A4EB966FF49ADDCE59F2A2204256AD&thid=OIP.CtyP564yDSVXU62yubA9UAC8Es&q=lusitania+propaganda+posters+free+to+use&simid=608041330510201312&selectedIndex=10&ajaxhist=0)  [Freedom from the seas](https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=%2FEuJSF9H&id=836B32FCE67992261BE07B7718B2813DF343BC18&thid=OIP._EuJSF9HB2qUg8qwH4N_mwDMEs&q=lusitania+propaganda+posters+free+to+use&simid=608016870663851004&selectedindex=17&mode=overlay&first=1)  [Irishmen Avenge the Lusitania](https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=dZi7ekSQ&id=9A0D0C916F3256340AE101C19C926057315B4BDA&thid=OIP.dZi7ekSQp8pGY1DFoZbZNgDTEs&q=The+Sinking+of+Lusitania+Propaganda&simid=608043701330444488&selectedIndex=1&ajaxhist=0) | * Students gain understanding of context and an overview of the incident to enable them to put sources in their historical context. Note-taking and comprehension skills. * Students able to identify the two uses/interpretations of the Memorial Coin, issued by the Germans in commemoration, but used as propaganda by the British. * Students to research various propaganda sources about the Lusitania – consider perspective, motive and usefulness of propagandist material from the time to assist with historical understanding/context. * How do these propaganda posters perpetuate the belief that the Germans are to blame? What facts support their perspective? |
| problems associated with the evaluation of sources: authenticity, and reliability and usefulness for particular historical inquiries (ACHMH008)  Teaching time – 2 hours | German Perspective  [Map showing the extent of U-boat attacks](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/map-shows-full-extent-devastation-wrought-uboats-world-war-i-180955191/) throughout Europe and the Atlantic  Show [image of the Lusitania Coin](https://www.flickr.com/photos/rpmarks/6702754423)  [German Warning along with Cunard advertisement](https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=qa%2bg0P9M&id=8CBD5FE0DDFC81C149AA8C31ACCD85D105A1DD0C&thid=OIP.qa-g0P9Mi-wXOQIhfQJeEwEGEs&q=free+images+lusitania+warning+cunard&simid=608036120711463267&selectedIndex=9&ajaxhist=0) in the shipping news  [Response from US President Wilson](http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/bryanlusitaniaprotest.htm) to the sinking  Memory as Historical Source. Find a website/source that can be used looking at memory as a historical source and eye witness accounts.  How does this perspective compare and contrast to the Allied perspective?  [Article about the Imperial War Museum](http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/ten-mustsee-objects-from-londons-imperial-war-museum-on-show-in-the-ww1-centenary-exhibition-at-melbourne-museum/news-story/12ee057a16663aca1523897d065866de) including the use of the Lusitania Bell in the collection sent to Melbourne Museum in the centenary. | * Students using a blank map of the world’s oceans will shade major areas of attacks made by German U-boats. Students will then discuss why Germans thought the sinking of military and civilian convoys was necessary (to strangle Britain and other Allied powers of resources they knew were being smuggled via civilian vessels). * Students will construct a dossier on the German Captain who sank the Lusitania [using the uboat site](http://uboat.net/wwi/men/commanders/322) * This dossier will contain basic details including name, date of birth, rank etc. It will also contain a list of evidence for and against the captain. Students will examine the contestable issue of whether the Captain was just a dutiful soldier or a war criminal. * Students compile a list of eye witness reports detailing the sinking of the Lusitania and the rescue efforts afterwards. They will then look at how these reports contradict each other and the validity of each. * Students to discuss the motivation of the German government placing this “warning” and the validity of whether it excuses German actions? Culpability of the owners of the Cunard company/should the British escorted the Lusitania for protection? Was this protection needed as per the source? * Students to write a PEEL paragraph comparing perspectives? * Students to compile a list of reasons why to include the Lusitania bell in the collection to be sent to Australia prior to reading the article. List to then be refined and compared to the article. * Why the Lusitania is significant historically? (catalyst for future events). |
| problems associated with the evaluation of sources – authenticity, and reliability and usefulness for particular historical inquiries  (ACHMH010)  Teaching time – 3 hours | Allied Perspective of the sinking of the Lusitania.  [Podcast with oral testimonies](https://web.archive.org/web/20170826034856/http:/www.iwm.org.uk/history/podcasts/voices-of-the-first-world-war/podcast-26-the-submarine-war) of the sinking of the Lusitania  Teacher to add an additional resource if necessary for problems associated with the reliability and usefulness of sources. | * Students able to construct timeline of events using oral histories. * Question for students: how does this podcast significant when examining the sinking of the Lusitania? * Students able to determine the usefulness and reliability of the oral history. Discussion surrounding the use of hindsight and blame. |
| the role of sources and evidence in the evaluation of different theories about the past  Teaching time – 3 hours | Evaluate sources in helping to answer the issue of contestability surrounding the sinking of the Lusitania.  Use the sources that you have used during the unit to make a judgement/evaluation about which sources are most useful to an historical inquiry about different theories of the past  “History is contestable – not all sources are equal.” Using sources from previous lesson, address the quote as an essay with or without scaffold. | * Students are to evaluate the sources examined in class to start making judgements about how the sources support or disprove the differing theories surrounding the sinking of the Lusitania. * Make a table of pro/anti contestability table – place each source in a column to ascertain what evidence they provide to support each theory * \*\*selection of appropriate sources – discussion of how Historians select sources to support their theory. * Following discussion, complete an extended response on how historians select sources to support their theories. |

Resources

* [Imperial War Museum](https://web.archive.org/web/20170826034856/http:/www.iwm.org.uk/history/podcasts/voices-of-the-first-world-war/podcast-26-the-submarine-war)
* [The First World War](http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/bryanlusitaniaprotest.htm)
* [The Herald Sun Online](http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/ten-mustsee-objects-from-londons-imperial-war-museum-on-show-in-the-ww1-centenary-exhibition-at-melbourne-museum/news-story/12ee057a16663aca1523897d065866de)

Reflection and evaluation