“Not all of them were on the front lines, of course, or even in a critical rear-echelon position, but they were fused by a common mission and a common ethos. I am in awe of them, and I feel privileged to have been a witness to their lives and their sacrifices... **This is the greatest generation any society has produced**.”

-Tom Brokaw

I refuse to celebrate them as "the greatest generation" because in doing so we are celebrating courage and sacrifice in the cause of war… I would propose other choices if we are to educate the young people of our time in the values of peace and justice.

-Howard Zinn

What was the greatest generation that has ever existed in society? News anchor Tom Brokaw claims that it was the American men and women who fought WWII at home and abroad. Brokaw believes that in their united fight against Nazism, the Americans represented the values of self-sacrifice and patriotism. Historian Howard Zinn disagrees with Brokaw’s claim that this was the greatest generation because they fought and won the last world war. Zinn believes that all war is unjust and that the title of the “greatest generation” belongs to a generation that promoted peace instead of war.

In this unit, we will look at WWII from different perspectives to decide if WWII was a “just war”. You will have three quizzes throughout our research of WWII. You will have two final products:

1. A group project in which you will produce a documentary on who you believe is the Greatest Generation of Global History
2. A thematic essay comparing WWII to another event in history that addresses one of these themes: human rights, conflict, political systems, or nationalism.

**Group Project**

After we view WWII through the lens of Brokaw and Zinn, we will explore global history to determine which “generation” was the greatest. Was it the humanists and artists who spearheaded the Renaissance? The reformers who brought about the Protestant Reformation? The *philosophes* who published during the Enlightenment period? The revolutionaries who overthrew the Old Regime in France?

In groups of four, your group will produce a 5-7 minute documentary film that is intended to persuade the audience to believe that your generation was indeed the greatest in global history based on the theme of human rights, conflict, political systems or nationalism.

The finished film needs to include at least one interview, talking heads, and historical anecdotes. The film may also include re-enactments. 10 sources should be cited: 4 primary sources, 6 secondary sources from scholarly journals and books.

Group Project Rubric

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Outcome | Exceeds | Meets | Not Yet |
| **Conclude** Infer meanings, analyze information and develop valid ideas based on evidence and analysis. | Group developed conclusions by looking at different sources and synthesizing ideas to support their claim for the greatest generation in global history. Multiple counterclaims were addressed and analyzed in the documentary. | Group developed conclusions by looking at different sources and synthesizing ideas to support their claim for the greatest generation in global history. A counterclaim was addressed in the documentary. |  |
| **Investigate** Ask and refine a researchable question, design a valid experiment or inquiry and gather appropriate info to complete the inquiry. | Multiple primary and secondary sources were researched in pursuit of answering the driving question. Multiple people were interviewed for the film, including local experts. | Multiple primary and secondary sources were researched in pursuit of answering the driving question. At least one person was interviewed in film. |  |
| **Collaborate** Work effectively with others to achieve common goals. | Student acted as a leader to ensure that the driving question was answered clearly by group. Student listened and showed willingness to compromise in order to produce the best possible film. | Student contributed to group’s success in answering driving question. Student listened and showed willingness to compromise in order to produce the best possible film. |  |
| **Plan** | Student frames and clarifies goals and makes deliberate plans for how to achieve them. Seek and obtain feedback and assess progress, make adjustments, as needed, to achieve goals. Persevere in the face of difficulty to search for multiple solutions. | Student frames and clarifies goals and makes deliberate plans for how to achieve them. |  |

**Thematic Essay**

Directions: Write a well-organized essay that includes an introduction, several paragraphs addressing the task below, and a conclusion.

**Theme:** Justice and Human Rights

Throughout history, the human rights of certain groups of people have been violated. Efforts have been made to address these violations.

**Task:**

* Define the term “human rights”
* Identify two examples of human rights violations that have occurred in a specific time and place
* Describe the causes of these human rights violations
* For both violations identified, discuss one specific effort that was made or is being made to deal with the violation

You may use any example from your study of global history. Do not use the United States in your answer. Some suggestions you might wish to consider include: Christians in the early Roman Empire, native peoples in Spain’s American colonies, untouchables in India, blacks in South Africa, Jews in Nazi Germany, Muslims in Bosnia, Kurds in Iraq or Turkey, or Tibetans in China.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Outcome | Exceeds | Meets | Not Yet |
| Communicate | Ideas and information understood, mindful of audience, purpose and setting. Student richly supports thesis with many relevant facts, examples, and details. | Ideas and information understood, mindful of audience, purpose and setting. Student supports thesis with relevant facts, examples, and details. |  |
| Argue | Evidence supports a strong thesis and all sub-theses. Evidence is pulled from notes and a variety of sources. | Evidence supports thesis and sub-theses. Evidence is pulled from notes and a variety sources. |  |
| Be Precise | Accurately represents ideas and language of the time periods discussed. Painstaking effort was given to capture details in order to properly compare and contract the eras. | Accurately represents ideas and language of the time periods discussed. |  |
| Conclude | Evidence is more analytical than descriptive (applies, analyzes, evaluates, and creates information) | Evidence is both descriptive and analytical (applies, analyzes, evaluates and/or creates information) |  |

**Key Dates**

January 8: Quiz 1

January 11: Quiz 2

January 16: Quiz 3

Socratic Seminar on whether WWII was a “just war”

To prepare, read the introduction to Tom Brokaw’s The Greatest Generation

And “Just and Unjust War” by Howard Zinn

January 31: Expo Day- Finished Films

February 4: Thematic Essay Due

**Timeline**

Based on the readings for homework, assigned students will bring in visual interpretations of key events, people, and ideas to add to a classroom timeline of World War II.

**Driving Question**

What was the greatest generation in global history?

**Essential Questions**

1. Was World War II a “just” war?
2. Are human rights worth fighting for?