Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 8th Grade US History

Christmas on the Front Lines of World War I

Objective: Students will express in writing feelings and emotions of soldiers on the front lines of World War I. Students will make connections that people of different languages and backgrounds can find common grounds of communication.

Corner Stones: Trust ★ Respect ★ Compassion

Lesson Overview: This lesson is designed to be a prompt for a writing piece. Students will first journal in Google Docs what they think soldiers might do on Christmas Day in times of war. Students will then play the Gauntlet which is a trust game, which reminds me of the trenches during the Great War, we will tie this activity back into our discussion after the media motivator. We will then read Shooting at the Stars followed by the music video “Christmas in the Trenches.” After a discussion and question session students will return to google docs and reflect about what happened during the Christmas Day Truce in 1914 on the Western Front.

Energizer: The Gauntlet

Directions: A person walks between two lines of people acting as ‘spotters,’ falling in any direction and at any time. Students in the lines will support the student from falling to the floor. The aim of this activity is to sharpen the focus, trust and observation skills of the group. A variation is that the kids stand facing each other with arms outstretched and fingertips barely touching. A person stands at the top of the gauntlet and runs through with the anticipation that arms will rise as they approach.

Literature Connection: Shooting at the Stars

by John Hendrix (Illustrator) 2014

Shooting at the Stars is the moving story of a young British soldier on the front lines during World War I who experiences an unforgettable Christmas
Eve. In a letter home to his mother, he describes how, despite fierce fighting earlier from both sides, Allied and German soldiers ceased firing and came together on the battlefield to celebrate the holiday. They sang carols, exchanged gifts, and even lit Christmas trees. But as the holiday came to a close, they returned to their separate trenches to await orders for the war to begin again.

John Hendrix wonderfully brings this story to life, interweaving fact and fiction along with his detailed illustrations and hand-lettered text. His story celebrates the humanity and kindness that can persist even during the darkest periods of our history. Back matter includes a glossary, additional information about World War I and the Christmas Truce and its aftermath, and an archival photograph taken during the Truce. ([amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com))

**Media Motivator:** Christmas in the Trenches

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTXhZ4uR6rs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTXhZ4uR6rs)

"Christmas in the Trenches" is a ballad from John McCutcheon's 1984 Album Winter Solstice. It tells the story of the 1914 Christmas Truce between the British and German lines on the Western Front during the Great War from the perspective of a fictional British soldier. Although Francis Tolliver is a fictional character, the event depicted in the ballad is true. John McCutcheon met some of the German soldiers involved in this Christmas story when he toured in Denmark.

This video show archival photographs of World War I as well as pictures of current soldiers serving in the armed forces. It is a tribute to those who have served our country so faithfully.