

LESSON H-UII-L2

Defining Terrorism

Unit II: Violence, Aggression and Terrorism

Grade Levels: 9-12

Time: 160 Minutes (a minimum of four 40 minute lesson modules: 2 block schedule periods (80 minutes) or four standard instructional periods (40 minutes))



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Objectives

- Examine multiple definitions of terrorism and identify areas of agreement and disagreement.
- Use a U.N. definition of terrorism to categorize violent acts as terrorism or not terrorism.
- Interpret and analyze multiple sources of evidence about acts of violence to determine if they can be labeled “terrorist” acts.
- 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

- human security
- noncombatants
- humanitarian law
- civilian
- national security
- terrorism

Lesson 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 (found at http://www.hrea.org/index.php?doc_id=259)
- 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 (found at <http://www.civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Social-Education-article.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. (Information about this book and a link to purchase the book on Amazon.com can be found at <http://www.crimesofwar.org/about/crimes-of-war/>.)
- A more secure world: Our shared responsibility, Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, The United Nations, New York, 2004 (found at <http://www.un.org/secureworld/report2.pdf>)
- Human Development Report 1994, The United Nations, New York, 1994 (found at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1994/>).
- Student Worksheet: Defining Terrorism (several copies; see below)

- Study Guide: Definitions of Terrorism (one copy for each student; see below)
- Study Guide: Examples of Violence (one copy for each student; see below)

Lesson Plan

Lesson Module #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 notebook.
- 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.
- Place the students in groups of 3–4, again insuring that their own cards do not reappear in their small working group. Ask the question (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 students determine which responses are in common, have them make a second list of those that were not repeated by anyone in the group.
- Then have the students discuss the common examples by completing the Student Worksheet: Defining Terrorism. Have them make sure that each member of the group provides input to the worksheet responses. One worksheet should be completed for each common example.
- After each group has completed a separate worksheet for each common example, have them 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. You may also draw out this information by questioning the full class.
- Then have each small group 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?
- As each group completes their work, have them compile a list of the common attributes to be shared with the full class as the final activity for the day.
- Assign the following homework: Each student will investigate a specific example from those identified in today’s activity. Using the same worksheet (but with the goal of gathering more detail, and now listing reliable sources for their information), a student will complete a second worksheet on the example with more detailed responses and a list of sources. This assignment should be completed for Day #2. (Note to Teacher: If the lesson is implemented within a block schedule, have students use time in class to work in pairs to do their investigation, and then move on directly to Day #2.)

Lesson Module #2

- Check that students have completed the homework and then ask for examples of the second worksheet to be shared with the entire class. Pose questions 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. Encourage the students to pose questions as well.
- Distribute the Study Guide: Definitions of Terrorism, which contains a range of definitions of terrorism.

- Have 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 should determine what attributes in their example do or do not match the parameters of the definition.
- Give the students about 5–7 minutes to write down how their example(s) do or do not match each of the definitions, and then facilitate a question-answer session where students present their findings and defend their judgments, providing evidence from their examples to support their claims. 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, hand out Study Guide: Examples of Violence, which has a list of both recent and more historic examples of violence directed against individuals and groups. Ask the students to determine if these examples can be classified as terrorist acts using the definitions from the Study Guide: Defining Terrorism.
- Now make a master list (categorized by definition) of the examples from the Study Guide: Examples of Violence, and discuss with the class their rationales for classifying one or more of these examples under each definition. It is important to make sure that the students publicly offer their rationales and precisely link attributes of the definition to the specific examples being proposed. 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. (Note to Teacher: This should end day two in the traditional schedule format. If you are using a block schedule, move on to Day #3 at this time.)

Lesson Module #3

- Give the students the U.N. definition from the Dworkin article, “Terrorism,” from the Gutman, Reiff, and Dworkin book. That definition is:
“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.’” (2004)
- Ask the students 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 (for example, noncombatants) in the definition.
- Facilitate a discussion about students’ findings, and then ask them to compare the U.N. definition to the three definitions used in the Study Guide: Definitions of Terrorism. Ask: “How similar and/or different are the definitions? What do they have in common? In what ways is the U.N. definition more or less precise than the others?”
- Now introduce the terms “humanitarian law” and “human security” and their meanings. Have the students copy down the definitions and examples. (Note to Teacher: Use the Gutman, Reiff, 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). For the definition of human security, consult the U.N. Human Development Report from 1994, where a definition and examples are supplied.)
- Now ask the questions: “How might terrorism be considered a violation of humanitarian law and a threat to human security? If so, how would one know?” Direct the students to a set of documents (Geneva conventions, other U.N. conventions dealing with protection of human life), and then give

them 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?

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?

- Assign the final assessment to each student or pairs of students. Have each student or pair prepare a position paper that answers the question and then proposes a process for bringing perpetrators to justice as well as addressing the short and long-term consequences for human and material damages.

Lesson Module #4

- Have students share their findings from their position papers in a round-table discussion, and invite questions from students to their peers regarding their findings and recommendations.
- After all findings and recommendations have been discussed, invite the students to prepare a master list of their recommendations that will be condensed into a proposal for an international counter-terrorist program. Send the students' proposal to the relevant U.N. body dealing with terrorist activities, to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, and to the students' U. S. Senators for consideration by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. (Note to Teacher: This constitutes the final component of the lesson, and can also constitute a second assessment of student performance.)

Evidence of Understanding

- Completed position paper: Evaluate position papers based on criteria of relevance, use of evidence to support one's argument, clarity of expression, and application of relevant concepts and definitions.
- Letter to the U.N. and U.S. Senators: Use the same evaluation criteria as above, but also include criteria of comprehensiveness, as this should reflect the consensus of the full class of what constitutes meaningful recommendations

Additional Activities and Resources

Have the students examine other historic examples of possible terrorist acts, and implement simulated judicial proceedings or role plays where the perpetrators, victims, and legal participants present their perspectives on the case before a tribunal.

Taking Action and Giving Service

- Have the students engage in online dialogues and possibly a video conference with experts from the Gutman, Rieff, and Dworkin book to discuss their findings on the topic. Then have them record their ideas in an online discussion forum that can be archived for future use.