

Is War a Necessary Evil?

Lesson plan for writing an argumentative essay

Suggested length: 1-2 class periods (45-55 minutes each)

Lesson components:

- Opener (5-10 minutes)
- Activity
 - Part A: Exploring the Kialo discussion (focus of 1 class period)
 - Part B: Beginning the argumentative essay (5 minutes)
- Optional closer (2 minutes)

Assessment

Students will write an argumentative essay on the prompt: *Is war a necessary evil? Give three reasons to support your position, and explain your reasoning.* (see suggested rubric in **provided materials**)

Tips

Students can be asked to explore the Kialo discussion at home, before coming to class. In this case, you can also discuss students' impressions of the discussion during the lesson Opener.

In writing their essays, you can challenge students to defend a viewpoint that they disagree with.

Opener (5-10 minutes)

1. Present two quotations to the class:
 - "I am sick and tired of war. Its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, for vengeance, for desolation. War is hell." (U.S. General William Tecumseh Sherman, 1880)
 - "Perpetual peace is a dream, and it is not even a beautiful dream. War is an element in the order of the world ordained by God. In it the noblest virtues of mankind are developed; courage and the abnegation of self, faithfulness to duty, and a spirit of sacrifice: the soldier gives his life. Without war the world would stagnate, and lose itself in materialism." (Prussian General Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, 1880)

2. Ask students to speak with a partner about which of these quotations the students agree with more. Then conduct a brief class discussion on students' thoughts.
3. Use the discussion as a segue to introducing the lesson topic: *Is War a Necessary Evil?*

Activity

Part A: Exploring the Kialo discussion (focus of 1 class period)

1. Go over the student instructions document, the suggested rubric, and the graphic organizer.
2. Direct students to log into Kialo Edu and begin exploring the discussion, taking notes of any important points or ideas that can be used for the essay.

TIP: Encourage students to explore the entire Kialo discussion with an open mind. Useful points for both positions on the issue can be found throughout the discussion.

Optional extension: Invite students to consider war from the perspective of participants, through two interviews with World War I veterans. Compare the men's perspectives: How might they answer the question of whether war is a necessary evil? What might be their reasons?

Clip 1: [Interview with Jack Campbell, Irish soldier fighting for the British Empire](#) (clip starts at 9:46, duration 1m 37s):

Clip 2: [Interview with Stephan Westman, soldier for the German Empire](#) (clip starts at 1:18, duration 3m 47s):

NOTE: The portion of the interview before the start of the clip is graphic, as it describes hand-to-hand violence. Share this context with students, so they can understand Westman's commentary.

Part B: Beginning the argumentative essay (5 minutes)

1. When students are finished exploring the Kialo discussion, direct them to begin planning and writing their essays.

Optional closer (2 minutes)

1. Share the following quote from American author Ernest Hemingway, who served as an ambulance driver in World War I and worked as a war correspondent in the Spanish Civil War:

“Never think that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime.”

2. Invite students to consider the question, “Is it possible for something to be both morally wrong and morally necessary at the same time, or are these concepts always exclusive?”