

Earthschooling Eighth Grade

PART 1 of 7: WWI & WWII

America's Road to the Great Wars and Beyond

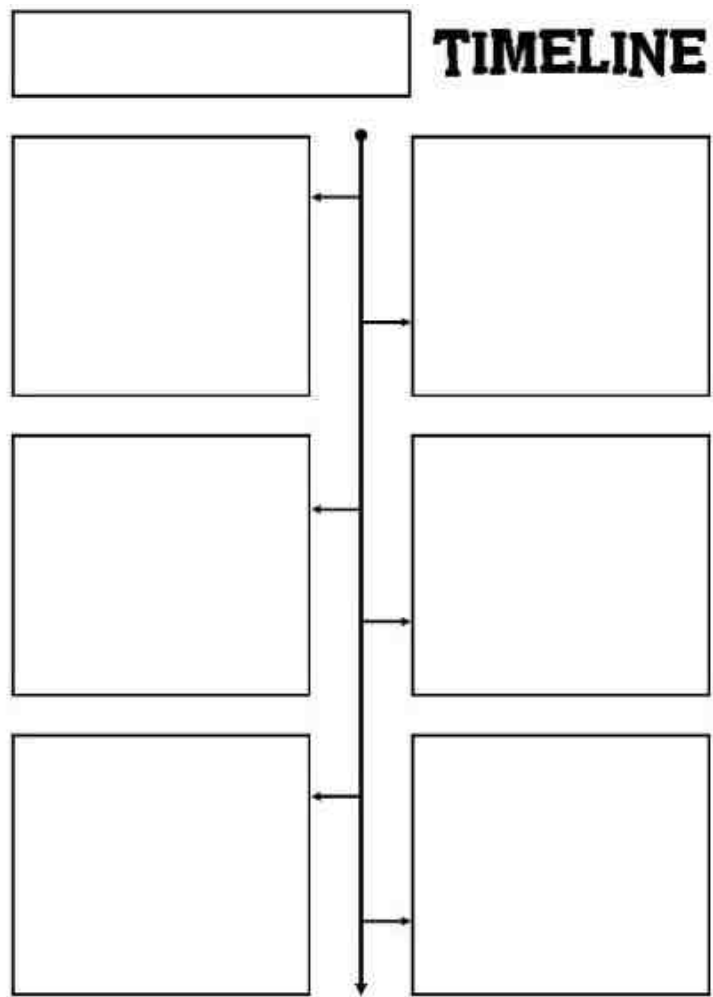
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Assignment One

We have called this assignment one because we want your students to start creating their timeline as they are reading. However, this time-line will not be completed until the end of the readings. The goal of this activity is for learners to explore the relationships in American history among the following five topics: WW I, The Great Depression, World War II, The Holocaust, and The Cold War. Use a vertical timeline format like the one below on many sheets of paper or your Main Lesson Book to construct a timeline of these five topics using the readings following page one.



The Beginning or the End of America's Social Gospel

Most scholars and historians agree that the Social Gospel movement of the United States peaked in the early 20th century. However, scholars disagree over when the movement began to decline, with some positing that the violence, trauma, and loss of life during caused by World War I left the movement disillusioned about its lofty moral ideals for American society. Others argue that World War I stimulated the Social Gospel's ideals. For example, many of the Social Gospel's ideas reappeared in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s in the ideas of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Cesar Chavez, and Mirra Vidal who voiced the Women's side of the La Raza Latina labor movement in the early 1970s. America itself entered a new age in the 20th Century emerging from a country in which our fellow brothers and sisters were used as slave labor centered along racial divisions. Recommended reading is a collection of African American essays regarding the heart of the race issue in the United States entitled *The Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, 1995. Memorial Issue*. This book includes writings by Booker T. Washinton, Frederick Douglas, and W.E.B. Dubois. The death of this old slavery and race issue soon became juxtaposed in the 20th Century along side a new form of scientific and technological slavery for mankind to contend with leading to the emergence of new weaponry and tools impacting the emergence of both World War I and World War II.

Assignment Two

The most effective way to bring an experience to your students is to have them read actual writings from people living during this time. First-hand accounts and essays are an amazing way to transport the student back into history, and right into the "shoes" of the writer. Have your students read three or more of the essays from *The Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 1995 Memorial Issue*, which you will find in your eighth grade folder. Then, have them give an oral or written report on which essay they were most impacted by and why.

Rudolf Steiner emphasizes:

The natural scientific mode of thinking came to the fore in the modern age, during the first half of the nineteenth century. We have only to think of men like the German philosophers Johanne Gotlieb Fichte (May 19, 1762 – January 27, 1814), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (27 January 1775 – 20 August 1854), and George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel August 27, 1770 – November 14, 1831). Steiner continues, "in their days, men still had faith in the spirit and believed that the spirit would help them r to fathom the world of nature; they believed that nature was in some way directed by the spirit."

Schopenhauer (*Parerga and Paralipomena*, Vol. I, §13) reminds us that Fichte did away with the essential aspect of the Kantian doctrine, that being the distinction between a priori and a posteriori and thus that between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself. For he declared everything to be a priori, naturally without any evidence for such an assertion of causation; he appealed openly to intellectual intuition, and boldly to inspiration and human creativity as the heart of humanity.



Public domain image of Johanne Fichte

Schelling asks us, "Has creation a final goal? And if so, why was it not reached at once? Why was the consummation not realized from the beginning? To these questions there is but one answer: Because God is Life, and not merely Being."



Public Domain image of Joseph Schelling

Hegel regards freedom or self-determination both as real and as having important ontological implications; self-determination and soul are one in the same.



Public domain image of George Hegel

America's Road to World War I and World War II

Ultimately these three great German philosophers believed that human beings controlled their own fate, outcomes, and History to a large extent. However, at the height of such beautiful philosophical insights regarding human's ability to self-determine it's past and future political, economic, and ethnic greed plunges Europe into World War I and soon after World War II due to various industrial government powers throughout the world. If we explore a map of Europe preceding World War I (see below) you will see the conflicting interests of the Great powers of Europe, neighboring African, and Asiatic countries.

America itself was not immune to such imperial domination; the United States acquired Alaska from Russia in 1867; Cuba, Puerto Rica, the Philippine islands, and Hawaii were all acquired by force due to America's imperial interests. The late 19th Century and the early 20th Century were times of imperial domination by almost every industrial country in the World. The most publicized example came from Britain's imperial domination of India. To learn more about British hegemony over India we can read *India Home Rule* by Mahatma Gandhi written three years after World War I in 1922. This book beautifully illustrates Gandhi's method of passive resistance to combat imperial aggression and cultural domination of India by Great Britain. In addition, advances in technology, industry, and weaponry offered many countries bullying rights. In fact, every major industrial country sought to control the Earth's resources like coal, oil, gold, silver, platinum, chemicals of all types, radioactive materials, diamonds and the like. The human species craves power, and this sickness is most apparent with political leaders, royal leaders, corporate leaders and other individuals and entities that control large amounts of monetary wealth and material resources.

Assignment Three

[Indian Home Rule](#) is included in your Earthschooling folder for WWI and WWII and should be assigned as a reading activity for your students.

Let's study the map below in *Figure 1* on the next page. You will notice that France sought interests in Tunisia, Morocco and the German territory of Alsace-Lorraine prior to the outbreak of WW I in 1914. Germany sought to control railroads in the Middle East. Italy aimed to control the Balkan territories and the Adriatic Sea. Russia tried to control the Bosphorus, the Dardanelle's Straits, and Constantinople. Britain sought acquisition of the Suez Canal and Egypt to control the route to India. It's easy to imagine how only a spark was needed to ignite the fires of War.



THE CONFLICTING INTERESTS OF THE GREAT POWERS IN EUROPE AND NEIGHBORING AFRICAN AND ASIATIC TERRITORIES BEFORE THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR

Figure 1. Public domain image of the conflicting interests prior to the outbreak of World War I.

Assignment Four

Europe is a very complex aggregation of cultures and languages. This fact makes Europe a hot seat for complex diplomatic relations and border issues among cultures. It's a good idea to reflect and participate at this time in the *Map Activity: Europe as it Should Be*. This will allow you to see the complexity of ethnic boundaries in Europe. This activity is included in your WWI and WWII folder for eighth grade.

The Rise of Modern Nations

Before we jump into the Rise of the Great Wars and the United States's road to war we need to explore the rise of Modern Nations in Europe prior to the rise of America as a great power in the world. You have already been shown how in the early days of the feudal system, the lords, with their squires, knights, and fighting men made up a class of the population whose only trade was war, and how the poor peasants were compelled to raise crops and live stock enough to feed both themselves and the fighting men. Peasants had no love for war, as war resulted