

**Title**

The War According to...: Multiple Perspectives on the Bosnian War

**Grade Level**

9-12

**Author**

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**Time Required**

2 -3 class periods

**Lesson Objectives**

By the end of the lesson the learner will be able to...

1. Explain and compare and contrast the multiple national perspectives on the causes of the Bosnian War
2. Analyze what kinds of evidence are used to justify war.

**Appropriate National Standards**

9.b – explain conditions and motivations that contribute to conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among groups, societies, and nations

9.d – analyze the causes, consequences and possible solutions to persistent, contemporary and emerging global issues...

**Background**

The causes of the Bosnian War are complex, interwoven and largely a result of nationalist ethnic groups using history and fear as a means of justifying or explaining the reason for the war. In this lesson, students will investigate the reasons that Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims give for why the war started. This lesson is slated as taking 3 class periods. 1-2 periods can be dedicated to research and preparation for the debate, while 1 class period can be devoted to the debate and a debriefing discussion.

**Materials**

10 copies of “The War According to Serbs” In Cothran, H. (2001). War-torn Bosnia. Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven.

10 copies of “The War According to Croats” Cothran, H. (2001). War-torn Bosnia. Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven.

10 copies of “The War According to Muslims” Cothran, H. (2001). War-torn Bosnia. Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven.

30 copies of “The War According to...” worksheet

3 copies of “Debate Plan Sheet”

Class set of “Debate Analysis Sheet”

Pen/pencil

**Procedure**

1. The teacher should begin the class by having students independently answer the question “if two of your friends get in an argument and you are asked to decide who is “right,” what kind of evidence/information do you find the most convincing? Explain.”
2. After students complete the question, the teacher should solicit answers from the students and engage in a discussion on the question.
3. The teacher should then introduce the topic of how participants in war often give different reasons for why the war began or why they are involved in it. The teacher should then explain that the class will be investigating the different reasons given by Serbs, Croats and Bosnians for why the Bosnian War began. **NOTE:** The teacher needs to point out that though students may find that they agree with one of the sides, it is important to understand the various perspectives and that no one side is correct. The goal of this lesson is to engage students in thinking about how these perspectives are formed, used and justified, and not to try and place blame on who started the war, or reinforce historical stereotypes.
4. The teacher should then divide the class into three equal-sized groups. One group should receive “The War According to Serbs,” one should receive “The War According to Croats,” and the third should receive “The War According to Muslims.” All students should also receive “The War According to...” worksheet.
5. Students should then work independently or together with their group to analyze their reading and fill out their section of the worksheet.
6. Once students have completed their columns, the teacher will explain that students will be taking part in a debate to discuss why the Bosnian War began. Each group needs to prepare a statement using information from their reading about why they think the war began. Statements should be recorded on the Debate Plan worksheet (see attached) and should include specific details from the readings.
7. Once groups have made their statements they will choose one member to be the group ambassador and one to be the group researcher. The ambassador will present the statement to the rest of the class and the researcher will assist the ambassador.
8. While each group’s ambassador and researcher go off to practice, the teacher will explain to the rest of the class that the true nature of the debate is to see what kinds of information each side relies on to make their arguments. The rest of the class will then be debate analysts who analyze the statements made by each ambassador. Specifically, each analyst will be given a Debate Record Sheet (see attached) where they will place checks each time a specific type of evidence is used. **NOTE:** Ambassadors and researchers should not know that their types of evidence are being analyzed. This way, they will stick to the information in their packets as opposed to trying to avoid specific lines of reasoning.
9. The ambassadors and researchers will then come back into the room and the debate will begin. The teacher can decide what order groups present in.
10. After delivering opening statements, each ambassador and researcher will be given 5 minutes to write a response to the other two ambassadors/researchers. Again, specific evidence and reasoning should be taken from the readings.
11. Ambassadors should then present the rebuttals.
12. Once the debate is over, all students should return to their desks for a debriefing discussion. The teacher will begin by listing the categories of evidence on the board

and asking the analysts to note how many times each kind of evidence was used by each ambassador.

13. Discussion questions can include:

- How does each side use history to defend their position?
- Why do the Serbs and Croats believe that Bosnia isn't a legitimate entity?
- How did each side use nationalism to support their position, or justify their actions?
- How did each side use fear as a motivator? Why do you think they did?
- Can you think of any moments in American history where fear or nationalism was used to shape public opinion? If so, what were they?

14. Once the discussion comes to a close the teacher should divide the students into groups of three composed of one student from the Serb group, one from the Croat group and one from the Muslim group. Students should discuss the answers on their "War According to..." charts and fill in the information they do not have.

15. The teacher should then assign the following for homework: You are a researcher at the United Nations and have been asked to write a brief report of why the Bosnian War started. In a 5-paragraph essay, introduce the war, explain each side's reasoning for why the war started and conclude with your thoughts/reflection on the information you learned. Due tomorrow.

### **Assessment**

Students will be assessed on the completion of their chart, participation in the debate/discussion and on completion of their UN report.

### **Extension Ideas**

This lesson can be extended to consider how current events in American history are justified or explained by the different actors. For example, students could investigate reasoning put forth by the United States and Al-Qaeda for the World Trade Center attacks on 9/11 or reasons for and against the Park 51 Project in New York City.





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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Debate Analysis Sheet

**Directions:** Listen for the kinds of evidence each debate participant uses and place a check mark in the appropriate box each time that type of evidence is used.

	Appeal to Historical Violence	Appeal to Nationalism	Fear of Second-Class Citizenship	Fear of Islam
Serb				
Croat				
Muslim				

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## The War According To...

Directions: Read through your assigned section and fill in the appropriate column. When completed, work as a group to finish the chart.

### Serbians

1. Appeal to Historical Violence

2. Role of Nationalism

3. Fear of Second-Class Citizenship

4. Fear of Islam

### Croats

1. Appeal to Historical Violence

2. Role of Nationalism

3. Fear of Second-Class Citizenship

4. Fear of Islam

### Muslims/Bosniacs

1. Appeal to Historical Violence

2. Role of Nationalism

3. Fear of Second-Class Citizenship

4. Fear of Islam