

An Introduction to Winston Churchill

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Grade Level: 9-12

Timeframe: 50 minutes

Illinois State Standards

16.A.1a Explain the difference between past, present, and future time; place themselves in time

16.A.4a Analyze and report historical events to determine cause-and-effect relationships

16.A.5a Analyze historical and contemporary developments using methods of historical inquiry (pose questions, collect and analyze data, make and support inferences with evidence, report findings)

16.A.5b Explain the tentative nature of historical interpretations

16.A.2c Ask questions and seek answers by collecting and analyzing data from historic documents, images, and other literary and non-literary sources

16.B.5a (W) Analyze worldwide consequences of isolated political events, including the events triggering the Napoleonic Wars and World Wars I and II

16.B.5b (W) Describe how tensions in the modern world are affected by different political ideologies including democracy and totalitarianism

16.C.4b (W) Compare socialism and communism in Europe, America, Asia and Africa after 1815 CE

16.C.3c (W) Describe the impact of technology (e.g., weaponry, transportation, printing press, microchips) in different parts of the world, 1500-present

Hook Exercise: 5-10 minutes

- WRITE quote on the board, instruct students to copy it down, and write what the quote means in their journals.

“A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.” – *Winston Churchill*

- READ the quote aloud (or have a student do so) and ask a few students what their thoughts are about the quote.
- READ 3-5 other quotes by Winston Churchill in regards to leadership. A few examples are provided for you:

“It is no good going to the country solely on the platform of your opponents’ mistakes.”

“Any clever person can make plans for winning a war if he has no responsibility for carrying them out.”

“Democracy is the occasional necessity of deferring to the opinions of other people.”

“Victory will never be found by taking the line of least resistance.”

- You may wish to briefly discuss these quotes in regards to Winston Churchill.
 - ASK the question: Based on these quotes, what kind of person do you think Winston Churchill was?

**Other quotes may be obtained by reading *The Quotable Winston Churchill* by Richard J. Maboney – (sold at the Churchill Museum – approx. \$15)*

Question/Objective: 25-30 minutes

- Why study Winston Churchill?
 - ASK student why they think we should study Winston Churchill. Why is Winston Churchill important to learn about?
 - TELL students to take about one minute to write down their answers. If they do not have an answer, expect them to have one at the end of the hour for your assessment question.
 - BEGIN NOTES (you may also want to create a PowerPoint, etc)
 - **Winston Churchill* by Katie Daynes is also a very good introductory book to read before you give these notes; very short book!

INTRODUCTORY NOTES FOR WINSTON CHURCHILL

Winston Churchill (1874-1965) dies in his 90th year.

Scion of an English aristocratic family

Descendent of the Duke of Marlborough

Son of Randolph Churchill and Jenny Jerome

Soldier, writer, artist, politician, Prime Minister

‘Savior of Western civilization’, foe of tyranny, world diplomat

First observer of the emerging Cold War

Liberal advocate of early attempts to establish social medicine and welfare programs
and adamant opponent of the evils of socialism

Churchill is a dramatic and contradictory figure – but because of that an ideal subject for class discussion and an ideal entre into myriad areas of historical study, political science and a host of related subjects and topics.

Why should Americans care? (He is dead, white, and British.)

Three reasons I think Americans should care:

1. He has a local connection.
 - Well, for local school children, for local students in the Midwest there is the immediate significance of such a historical figure having visited Fulton, Missouri; visited the area and delivered perhaps the most famous speech of his long and illustrious career.
 - The “Sinews of Peace” speech better known as the “Iron Curtain” speech; the ‘it happened here’ consideration for students is a powerful evocative consideration that helps to connect them to events that are bigger and more far reaching than themselves.
 - WATCH video clipping of Winston Churchill’s speech at Westminster College

- www.churchillmemorial.org click on Churchill Resources, then Related Links, click Videos, and select Winston Churchill at Fulton
 - CONSIDER defining Cold War and “iron curtain” before starting the video
2. Churchill was half-American.
- His mother is Jenny Jerome – a society woman and the daughter of a Brooklyn industrialist. Churchill’s relationship with what he called ‘the Great Republic’ was a lifelong passion and a constant source of fascination for him. During his efforts to persuade, President Roosevelt to enter World War II Churchill liked to joke that he himself as an ‘Anglo-American’ union.
 - The relationship between the USA and the UK was important on a global scale during the early 20th century – in two world wars and a cold war.
 - The great German leader Otto Von Bismarck remarked at the end of the 19th century that the fact that the British and Americans spoke the same language was likely to prove one of the most significant considerations in international relations in the 20th century.
 - Having an Anglo-American like Churchill as a leading player in the international system was almost an underscoring of that consideration.
3. He is figure of tremendous historical significance but historical significance with substantial contemporary echoes.
- Churchill played a pivotal role in events that shaped and affected the United States.
 - As a politician in World War I, his actions, both successes and failures, helped secure victory for the Allies and shaped too the nature of the post war world.
 - As an ardent British imperialist and pragmatist he helped create the modern and wholly artificial state of Iraq; the origins of this country, its ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity are central to an understanding of the needs of the US and the wider world.
 - The interwar years – where Churchill played the role of lone (or seemingly so) opponent of fascism have tremendously beneficial lessons for students – especially so when contemporary American politicians (and other nationalities) continue to cite the lessons of ‘appeasement’ – generally without a terribly firm grasp of what those really were.
 - World War II is a shared experience and an understanding of its course and consequences is indispensable to a firm grasp of contemporary US history; so too the manner in which Britain stepped down from its preeminent role in global affairs and, in doing so, stood down to see the USA take its place.
 - The Cold War – tremendous contemporary significance and its emergence first articulated by Churchill who milked shamelessly the fact that he had been ignored in the 1930s and been proven right by Adolf Hitler’s subsequent actions.
 - Beyond these obvious and direct links to US history lie the less obvious: Churchill’s fascination with technology and its myriad applications; his role as progressive politician pre-1914 in Britain and later as opponent of further enhancements of a ‘welfare state’; a tremendous vehicle to discuss with students the reality of politicians beliefs or otherwise.

- Also of course, Churchill as leader; Churchill as exemplar of what a leader should and could be: Why do so many modern day politicians seek inspiration from his words and deeds; and simply his words alone teach a great deal about how to use language for best effect.

**A special thanks to Dr. Rob Havers, Executive Director of the National Churchill Museum for providing these introductory notes*

- IF TIME ALLOWS, have students provide analysis and feedback of four photos of Winston Churchill from the National Churchill Museum's website www.churchillmemorial.org (pictures are also below)
*You might have to save the pictures to your computer so you can enlarge them for the students to see if they do not have computers of their own.

Assessment: 5 minutes

Students write in their own words why they believe studying Winston Churchill is important. They will turn in their papers as they leave class.

Prime Minister Churchill



PHOTO: PR/LANDOV

Churchill and FDR



Churchill, FDR, and Stalin
at Yalta Conference



Stalin, Truman, and Churchill at Potsdam Conference

