An Introduction to Winston Churchill

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.
  o 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?
  o ASK student why they think we should study Winston Churchill. Why is
    Winston Churchill important to learn about?
  o 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.
  o 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.
   o 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.
   o 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.
   o WATCH video clipping of Winston Churchill’s speech at Westminster College
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, it’s 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](http://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.