

Secret Treaties Prior to World War I

Historical Contextualization with your Gale in Context Resources

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject/Content: World History and U.S. History

Summary of Lesson: Students will use *Gale In Context: World History* or *Gale In Context: U.S. History* to read a primary source and then place that source within the proper **Historical Context** and with its appropriate **Perspective**.

Focus Questions: What is the overall meaning of the Secret Treaty between the German Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire? What is the overall meaning of the Secret Treaty between France and Russia? Why were these treaties written? What influenced their creation? What were the consequences of these treaties?

Resource: *Gale In Context: World History* or *Gale In Context: U.S. History*

Time Frame: 45 minutes

Learning Expectation: Students will use their close reading skills to analyze a primary source. Students will provide proper historical context and perspective on their primary source using research skills and appropriate sources.

Assessment Types:

Informal Assessments: Students will be assessed informally through the introduction discussion and through the debrief discussion with informal questioning.

Formal Assessment: Students will be assessed formally through the included questions regarding the primary source and the research they complete on the secret treaties prior to World War I.

Procedures:

Steps/Activities by the Teacher:

- Introduce the idea of Historical Context with your students.
- Ask students why understanding Historical Context is important to understanding historical events or primary sources.
- Facilitate a class discussion on how misunderstanding of historical context and Point of View can lead to misrepresentation and misunderstanding of Primary Sources.
- Pass out or digitally distribute copies of the attached worksheet, Historical Context and Secret Treaties Prior to World War I.
- (Optional) Send direct links to the students to the Primary Source and supplemental resources using the **Get Link** tool.
- Allow time for students to read the primary source and research the impact of Secret Treaties prior to World War I.
- Debrief after the assignment to clear up any lasting questions over the document, the historical context, Secret Treaties, and the causes of World War I.

Source:

"Secret Treaties." World War I Reference Library, edited by Sara Pendergast, et al., vol. 3: Primary Sources, UXL, 2002, pp. 53-59. Gale In Context: U.S. History, link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3411700071/GPS. Accessed 24 Feb. 2023.

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Directions: Today's activity focuses on two secret treaties signed before the start of World War I. One between the German Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire and one between France and Russia. For the first part of the activity, using either *Gale in Context: World History* or *Gale in Context: US History*, search for the primary source document of "Secret Treaties" using the search below.



Basic Search: Secret Treaties and open the Primary Source "Secret Treaties"

Advanced Search: Gale Document Number: CX3411700071



An 1890s political cartoon depicting the alliance between France and Russia. The powerful bear, symbolizing Russia, forces the French diplomat to "dance." (Corbis Corporation. *Reproduced by permission.*)

Historical Context: Once you have found the document, read the sections, "From the Dual Alliance" and "Things to Remember While Reading the Treaties" to set up the Historical Context of the treaties. Answer the following questions before continuing.

1. Who were the dominant geographic and economic powers in Western Europe prior to the start of World War I, according to this article?
2. When did Europe take this shape? What happened to create the power structure prior to World War I?
3. What war was France looking to avenge and when was it?
4. Who did Germany sign a treaty with in 1879 and what was it called?
5. How did France respond to this treaty?

Dual Alliance Treaty: Now let's look specifically at the Dual Alliance Treaty. Read through the treaty and answer the following questions.

6. According to Article I, if _____ were to attack, the two "contracting" countries would have to aid the other.

7. Why do you think they wrote “whole war strength” when discussing such aid?
8. What did the alliance agree to if a separate country attacked?
9. How often did the treaty come up for renewal?
10. After reading the whole treaty, from the Dual Alliance **perspective**, who did they see as the aggressor?

Franco-Russian Alliance Military Convention: Now move on to the Franco-Russian Military Convention and answer the following questions.

11. What does this treaty state as its main goal?
12. What country has joined Russia and Austria-Hungary in point number one?
13. Point three worded differently from the agreement between Germany and Austria-Hungary. What is different about it?
14. What is the meaning of point five?
15. After reading this alliance, who is the aggressive force from their **perspective**?

Extension: Continue reading the article into the “What Happened Next”. Using what you have learned with this new material and from your understanding of the treaties, on a separate sheet of paper, explain how secret alliances contributed to the start of World War I. Be sure to include why these treaties were fatally flawed.

Answer Key:

1. France and Germany.
2. Late Nineteenth Century (or late 1800s) with the unification of Germany under Wilhelm I.
3. Franco-Prussian war, 1870-1871.
4. Austria-Hungary and the Dual Alliance.
5. Formed their own alliance with Russia.
6. Russia.
7. Size of aid can vary, this meant they got stronger support.
8. They could not support the attacking country, but could remain neutral, as long as the attacking country was not supported by Russia.
9. Every 5 years.
10. Russia.
11. To preserve peace.
12. Italy.
13. They specify the number of troops they expect from the other country.
14. They cannot agree to peace without the other country.
15. Triple Alliance.

Extension:

The intention of the treaties was to make sure the signers were not fighting a war alone; however, their fatal flaw was it involved these countries in a war that would most likely have been a small skirmish prior to the treaties.