STUDENT HANDOUT

What Might Have Been

INSTRUCTIONS

Did history “have to happen” the way it did? Was it fated? How could it have been different? For the next several days, you’ll be researching and analyzing a particular historical event or set of events to decide whether history could have taken a different course. Working in small groups, you will develop a “case” to convince the rest of the class how history would have been different if your event had never happened or if it had unfolded differently. You will present your case as a skit, an oral presentation, or a multimedia presentation. This project will take six class periods, as well as after-school time. Use the list below to check the assigned historical time period/focus for your project:

AMERICAN HISTORY
American Revolution
Other: _________________________

WORLD HISTORY: THE MODERN ERA
World War I
Other: _________________________

WORLD HISTORY: ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL ERAS
The Byzantine Empire
Other: _________________________

Exploring Your Topic

After your teacher has introduced this project to the class, begin your research (individually, with a partner, or in your groups, as assigned by the instructor) by completing the following steps:

1. Go to the appropriate ABC-CLIO database
2. Enter the username and password provided to you by your teacher. Then click Log In.
3. Click on Era.
4. As you work through the assigned sections, take notes on the main sequence of events for your assigned topic.

If you have been assigned to research the American Revolution:

a. Click on Explore an Era. In the Eras Section under The Origins of a Nation, 1350–1776, under The Coming of Independence, 1754–1776, click Mercantilism.
b. Click on and read the Overview, Visual, and People and Organizations, and primary sources sections on the right side of the page.
c. Click the Activity link and follow the directions to complete the activity.
d. Click the Discussion link. On a sheet of paper, write individual responses to the discussion questions.
If you have been assigned to research World War I:

a. Click on Explore an Era. In the Eras Section under The World at War, 1914–1945, click Unraveling the Causes of World War I.
b. Click on and read the Overview, Visual, and People and Organizations, and primary sources sections on the right side of the page.
c. Click the Activity link and follow the directions to complete the activity.
d. Click the Discussion link. On a sheet of paper, write individual responses to the discussion questions.

If you have been assigned to research the Byzantine Empire:

a. In the Eras Section under The Byzantine Empire and Russia, A.D. 300–1500, click Byzantine Christendom and Islam: Tension and Conflict.
b. Click on and read the Overview, Visual, and People and Organizations, and primary sources sections on the right side of the page.
c. Click the Activity link and follow the directions to complete the activity.
d. Click the Discussion link. On a sheet of paper, write individual responses to the discussion questions.

If you have been assigned to research a different topic:

Read and respond to sections of the designated Eras as assigned by your teacher.
1. Hand in your written work (including a print copy of the Activity).

Choosing an Event

After you have completed the assigned sections of your Eras, meet with the other members of your group. To start your historical analysis, complete the following steps:

1. Choose a job for each group member from the following list:

   Group Leader: Helps the group stay on track, helps Researchers find information, and moderates the group’s discussions

   Researcher(s): Hunt(s) for information on the ABC-CLIO database that can be used for completing the project

   Recorder: Records the information Researchers have found in response to the questions on the What Might Have Been Event Guiding Questions handout. The Recorder should also help with research.

2. Review the What Might Have Been Project Rubric handout to see how you will be graded for this project.

3. Discuss which of the various events seem to be the most important. Use the guiding questions below to
   – Do you see a pattern in the events you studied?
   – Did there seem to be a chain reaction of events?
   – Which events seem to be the outcome of prior events?
   – Which events seem to result in other events?
   – Which events seem to stand out?
   – Could any of these events have unfolded differently or been avoided altogether?
   – If so, how would that have affected other events?
4. From the set of events you discovered, select a single event that the group feels is most important. There may be several important events, so consider your selection carefully, focusing especially on events that might have unfolded differently and their impact on other events if they had unfolded differently. You will need to be able to make the case that this specific event was a critical link in the chain of historical events related to your assigned topic. In particular, you will need to be able to show that this event had a strong effect on other events that followed afterward.

5. If your group feels that you want additional information before choosing a key event, go back online to the Eras Section or look at the appropriate time period in the ABC-CLIO database. To do this, select the appropriate time period for your assigned topic, select an Event from the Related Entries section to the right of the page, and conduct your search.

6. Write up your choice of a key event and your reasons for that choice. Submit your write-up to the teacher.

**Researching Your Event**

Once your group has chosen an event, you are ready to move on to the main phase of your research.

1. Working together as a group, gather information needed to answer the questions listed on the How It Happened section of the What Might Have Been Event Guiding Questions handout. You can use the resources of the database as well as other resources from your library to collect the information. See the Quick Tips handout for instructions on how to conduct your searches. Specific resources you may want to access include the following:
   - Related links from various pages of the Era
   - Links from the related entries section in the Era
   - Chronology for your time period (accessed through Advanced Search by selecting the appropriate time period for your assigned topic and selecting the Chronology category). You may also use other features of the Advanced Search section of the database. Use the Quick Tips handout to help you.

2. As you’re doing research, make sure you talk to each other as a group to coordinate your research and share information. Refer back to the handout questions frequently. Plan on doing additional research outside of class.

3. When you have completed the research on your event, write up your answers to the How It Happened section of the handout and submit them to your teacher. Based on your teacher’s feedback, you may want to do additional research before going on to the next step.

4. Working together as a group, decide on your answers to the questions on the What Might Have Happened Differently section of the handout. These answers will be the basis for the presentation you will be giving to the class.
Making Your Case

1. Decide whether the group wants to create a skit, oral presentation, or multimedia presentation in order to present your event to the rest of the class.

2. Make a list of the tasks that need to be done in order to create the presentation. Then give each group member one or more assignments.

3. Plan to answer questions from other members of the class about your event and its place in the chain of historical events.

4. Draft your presentation and then compare it to the rubric your teacher has given you. Make any needed revisions. Be prepared to make your own presentation and to view other students’ presentations. Other class members and your teacher will evaluate your presentation using the rubric as a guide.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN EVENT GUIDING QUESTIONS

Discuss the questions below with your entire group and develop an answer for each. Have the Recorder write down your group’s responses on separate sheets of paper. Make sure your group’s answers are thorough and that they contain historical evidence to support your responses.

How It Happened

- What makes this event particularly important?
- Is this event related to any other event(s)?
- If so, how?
- What other event(s) preceded this event? Focus especially on other events that seem linked to this event.
- What other event(s) followed the event? Focus especially on other events that seem linked to this event, and explain why and how they were linked.
- What were the important issues or feelings related to this event?
- Did these issues or feelings contribute to the event or were they reactions to it? Explain the issues or feelings in detail.

What Might Have Happened Differently

- Could this event have been prevented or altered?
- If so, how?
- If the event had been altered, how would this have affected later events?
- If the event had been avoided, how would this have affected later events?
- What possible actions, proposals, solutions, or compromises might have prevented or altered this?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Might have Been Project Rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>History Student</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(1 point, try harder)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes a summary of the event/outcome itself and shows that students identified some of the related events and feelings. Provides at least one reason supporting the group’s selection of the event/outcome. Answers some, but not all, of the essential questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text is difficult to understand or vague and has numerous errors in grammar, punctuation, and/or spelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Presentation of information is solid, but doesn’t go beyond the basics. For example:  
  • Multimedia presentation includes text but little graphics, sound, etc.  
  • Oral presentation/skit includes few graphics or props  
Student(s) are not able to defend their event selection when challenged by the rest of the class. | Presentation is entertaining. For example:  
  • Multimedia presentation uses numerous features of the software, includes several types of media.  
  • Oral presentation/skit includes some good graphics or props.  
  • Skit makes good use of dialogue. Student(s) are able to defend their event selection when challenged by the rest of the class. | Presentation is entertaining (as for Intern) and includes extensive, effective use of student-created media (e.g., paintings, drawings, graphs). Student(s) are able to defend both their event selection and their suggestions as to how the event/outcome might have been avoided or altered when challenged by the rest of the class. |
| **Effort**                       | **Effort**                           | **Effort**                          |
| Shows just enough effort to complete the assignment. | Shows better than average effort, personal interest in the topic, and enthusiasm. | Shows personal interest and enthusiasm, including extensive additional research. |
| **Collaboration**                | **Collaboration**                    | **Collaboration**                   |
| Has difficulty getting along with group members. Doesn’t do his/her fair share of the work. | Displays cooperation and team spirit, helps settle disagreements, and fulfills his/her responsibilities. | Displays cooperation and team spirit, helps settle disagreements, fulfills his/her responsibilities, and contributes significantly to the direction of the group. |