

1918 Flu Pandemic: Ideas for Teaching

There are many possible focuses and formats for this inquiry lesson! Here are some ideas to aid in lesson planning. Revise graphic organizers accordingly.

Possible Focus Skills: these are some of the skills that could be easily supported during the 1918 Flu Pandemic inquiry. The sources listed are especially helpful for teaching that skill.

- **Historical empathy.** This inquiry gives students a chance to empathize with people from the past in a straightforward way. Seeing similarities between 2020 and 1918 can remind students that people from the past are usually not very different from people today—imperfect, passionate, and concerned about their safety and their loved ones.
 - Football Games Postponed
 - Red Cross Warning
 - Raymond Foster Obituary
 - George’s Story
- **Contextualization.** The context of the pandemic combined with WWI helps explain viewpoints and behaviors from the sources; students can practice reading them in context. You could also discuss how someone from before 2020 might have viewed the sources compared to how we view them after the COVID-19 pandemic. *Our* context matters at least as much as the evidence’s context for our interpretation of this evidence.
 - “Hand the Flu a Lemon!”
 - “A Sure Way to Get a Seat” comic
 - “Homes of Victims to be Placarded”
 - “Fight the ‘Flu’”
- **Corroboration (especially with the Venn Diagram graphic organizer).** This lesson provides chances to corroborate not only across sources about 1918, but across time periods as students compare 1918 and 2020. While most 1918 sources agree, they provide deeper understanding of concepts when examined together.
 - Agreeing sources: “So the People May Know” and “Hand Washing Advertisement,” “Flu Nurses are Greatly in Demand” and “Disease at Apex”
 - Disagreeing sources: “Wearing of Masks Made Mandatory” and “Anti-Mask Meeting,” Red Cross Warning and “Quarantine Order is Not Enforced Here”

Possible Lesson Structures: This inquiry will be too much to cover in a class period if everyone is reading every source! Here are some options for structuring the lesson beyond the typical guided inquiry structure. Some of them save time, while some of them deepen the inquiry. (Click [here](#) and scroll to the numbered list to learn about the basic guided inquiry lesson format.)

- **Tap into local COVID-19 background knowledge.** One graphic organizer option for this inquiry lists information about COVID-19 for students to compare with the 1918 Flu. Why not gather that information with your students? If they are old enough to remember

COVID-19, the class could brainstorm its own list of facts about the pandemic. If they are not, they could interview their parents or siblings for a fun field experience in writing history. Use the information compiled by your students to compare the two pandemics.

- **Swap out the question.** If you want to keep it simple and your class does not have extensive COVID-19 background knowledge, you could instead have them seek to answer something along the lines of “What was life like for the average Utahn (or student) during the 1918 Flu Pandemic?” Parallels to COVID-19 could still be discussed in debriefing time.
 - You could also use the question “What has changed and what has stayed the same about how Utahns respond to pandemics?” for a clearer focus on corroboration.
- **Focus on one aspect of the pandemic or one group’s experience.** The graphic organizer has different categories for different aspects of the pandemic; adapt the lesson by dividing them up or getting rid of some. You could also shorten the list of sources by only studying the 1918 Flu’s impact on students, nurses, or the sick. The source summary document linked at the bottom of this page would be helpful!
 - Similarly, you could divide and conquer the sources by theme with groups of students. Groups could then present to the class in any format you like.

Other teaching ideas/helps:

- **A few differentiation/adaptation options:**
 - Have one writer act as scribe for a group on a shared graphic organizer.
 - Provide a word bank for extra vocabulary support. The background information tab on the inquiry page has a short vocabulary section that may be helpful.
 - Allow students to listen to written sources on a PDF reader.
 - Organize groups with student learning level in mind to ensure the best chances for learning.
- **Assessment ideas:**
 - Check key boxes on the students’ graphic organizers. To focus on historical empathy, you could assess students’ finding similarities between the two pandemics (maybe two for each box). To focus on contextualization, you could watch for wartime differences in 1918 or evidence that students recognize the bias of their own context.
 - Turn one of the reflection questions, or another question linked to one of the state standards, into an exit ticket.

[SOURCE SUMMARY DOCUMENT](#)

Feedback: We want your input on how to make these lessons better! If you have any comments or suggestions, please email our team at utahhistoryinquiries@gmail.com.