

**NATIONALISM:  
THE ISSUE THAT WON'T GO AWAY**

ACTIVITIES FOR INTEGRATING  
AN UNDERSTANDING OF NATIONALISM  
INTO THE MODERN WORLD HISTORY COURSE  
FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

Elsie Begler  
David Johns  
Nancy Lindsay  
Simone Arias

**International Studies Education Project of San Diego**

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## INTRODUCTION

Try talking about the world today without using any terms based on the word "nation" (national, international, nationalism, etc.), and you will quickly find your conversation at a standstill. The concept of "nation" is a fundamental organizer in how we perceive, think about, analyze and react to events both at home and abroad. Yet this was not always so. The reification of "the nation," and particularly the notion that the boundaries of this entity should be congruent with the political boundaries of the state, is a relatively new idea in the history of humankind. Today, the nation-state - as much in ideal as in real form - dominates political interactions and political relations around the world.

Given the importance of the concept in the world today, it is not surprising that the development and spread of the nation-state and the relationship of this form of political organization to the rise of democratic ideas permeates the *Grade 10: World History, Culture and Geography: The Modern World* course of study in the California History/Social Science Framework. But "nation" and its sister term, "nationalism," are fuzzy concepts, those kinds of things that we all recognize intuitively when we see them, yet have trouble pinning down with concise definitions. Given nationalism's tremendous potential to act both as a positive or negative, inclusionary or exclusionary, unifying or disintegrative force in human relations, it is imperative that our students develop a more than superficial understanding of the concept and how it operates in their own lives and the lives of others.

The concept of nationality is a particularly difficult one for Americans. Most of us define our nationality as "American." At the same time, we speak of our "national origins" in terms of the country from which our ancestors migrated.

One source of the confusion lies in the fact that in the United States, we think of nationality as equal to or the same as citizenship. In Eastern and Western Europe people think of nationality as equal to ethnicity. These two different meanings of nationality - ethnicity and citizenship - come together in the ideal construct of the "nation-state." Without understanding that people give various different meanings to the concept of "nationality" (often mixing those meanings together), it becomes nearly impossible for students to understand the role which nationalism has played and continues to play in generating conflict throughout the world.

The following activities are designed to develop and apply the concept of nationalism throughout a high school level Modern World History course. Specific suggestions are provided for use of the activities in this course as taught at the 10th grade level in California. The various activities can be used sequentially or selected and used individually, as appropriate to the particular needs of the teacher and class. Taken as a whole, the activities in this unit will engage students in:

- 1) applying concepts of personal and group identity to concepts of national identity in a comparative and analytic fashion;
- 2) examining factors contributing to the development of national identity, including the use of symbolic elements in fomenting a sense of unity;
- 3) tracing the development of the concept of a nation-state and its relationship to the rise of democratic ideas;
- 4) defining, relating and distinguishing the various terms needed for understanding the modern concept of nationalism, including nation, state, country, nation-state, ethnic group, nationalism, patriotism and ultra-nationalism;
- 5) analyzing the tensions resulting from the incongruities existing in many countries between state boundaries and national, ethnic, linguistic and/or religious identities, particularly with reference to the Middle East;
- 6) examining the positive and negative aspects of nationalism in modern world history, particularly in regard to the delicate balance between promoting national unity vs. the development of national chauvinism, and the unifying vs. disintegrative force of nationalism in the world today.

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## A NOTE TO USERS

If you have any comments on this unit, or suggestions for improving any of the activities, we would like to hear from you. Please write or call:

Dr. Elsie Begler  
International Studies Education Project of San Diego  
San Diego State University  
San Diego, CA 92182-4446  
(619) 594-2412  
email: [istep@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:istep@mail.sdsu.edu)

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## SUGGESTIONS TO THE TEACHER:

### *Integrating These Lessons and the Concept of Nationalism into the Modern World History course*

The concepts of nation and nationalism underlie much of what is covered in a course on Modern World History. This is particularly true of the Modern World History course as designed to be taught at the 10th grade level in California. The activities in this supplementary unit are extremely flexible, are mutually reinforcing and can be used in a variety of ways. The lessons are divided into three sections, each organized around a particular concept or topical focus. Specific activities within each section may be used sequentially or selected and used individually, as appropriate to the particular needs of the teacher and class. The lessons are designed to be integrated into the year-long course, rather than to be taught as a separate, self-contained unit. However, if the teacher prefers, they may also be taught early in the school year as an introductory unit that will be reviewed and revisited throughout the year.

The concepts of inclusion, exclusion, manipulation of group membership, and several aspects of nationalism are introduced in Section I. The three activities in this section generate student awareness of him/herself as an individual and as a member of various reference groups, thereby forming a powerful base for building later concepts. For example, the personal identity work (Activity 1) may be used later as a student creates an identity for an individual of another time or place (Activity 11). The manipulation of shoes (Activity 2) which is used to define and redefine groups may be done again to represent the type of "nation" described in a particular national anthem (Activity 7) or as envisioned by early nationalists (Activities 6 and 8). The cluster of nationalism's many aspects (Activity 3) may be applied to current events and to every unit in the course.

Mastery of Section II anchors students firmly with the concepts of state, nation, sovereignty, legitimacy, and defining who are "the people" of a particular nation. These activities enhance course units dealing with imperialism and colonialism, World Wars I and II, and totalitarianism in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. This section is also well-suited to having students identify and discuss the terms and their usage in current events. Students may use techniques from Section I to create abstract models of the concepts. They may consider which aspects of nationalism (Activity 3) apply to a particular current event or concept (Activities 5 and 6). Later in the school year students may review a lesson such as "What Makes A Nation?" (Activity 6). Then they can compare it to the national character or nationalist feelings of the people in a particular region that they are studying.

Section III offers the opportunity to apply all the concepts that students have learned throughout the year. Activity 7 permits students to apply the concepts mastered in Section II to an examination of the symbolism underlying different national anthems. Activities 8 and 9 can be used in conjunction with the study of late 19th century Europe and/or the rise of fascism and the Nazi Party in 20th century Germany. Activity 10 (Nationality: A Confusion of Meanings) and Activity 11 (Ethnicity, Religion and Citizenship: Examples From the Middle East) may be done early in the second semester so that students develop an understanding of how many different perspectives and reference groups individuals in a particular region (including the United States) may have. As they study the next region, they may be reminded to consider multiple perspectives and may do personal research of individuals in that region. For example, as the class studies Mexico or the former Soviet Union, students may be assigned to prepare profiles representing individuals of various different ethnic groups. The Middle East activities also provide an excellent segue to studying sub-Saharan Africa. Students might research diverse ethnic identities in Ghana and South Africa, and then compare those individual identities to the Egyptian leader Nasser's "circles" that he believed connect Egyptians to other people (Activity 11).

The activities in this supplementary unit may be used in many ways. How you, the teacher, choose to make use of them will depend upon the precise structure of your course and the particular make-up of the students in your class. The chart on the following page, geared toward the Modern World History course as taught in California, is designed to aid you in thinking about various possibilities for integrating the activities in this unit into your curriculum by indicating most likely areas of application.

## GUIDE TO INTEGRATION OF NATIONALISM ACTIVITIES INTO THE MODERN WORLD HISTORY COURSE

<u>Course Unit</u>	Modern World History											<u>Nationalism Activity #</u>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Unresolved Problems of the Modern World						x	x	x				
						x	x					
The Rise of Democratic Ideas						x	x	x	x	x	x	x
						x						
The Rise of Imperialism and Colonialism									x	x	x	x
World War I and Its Consequences							x	x	x		x	x
					x	x						
Totalitarianism in the Modern World					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
					x	x	x					
World War II: Its Causes And Consequences					x	x	x	x			x	x
					x	x	x					
Nationalism in the Contemporary World:					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
					x	x	x	x				
Soviet Union and China					x	x	x				x	
							x					
Middle East: Israel and Syria					x	x	x				x	
						x	x					
Sub-Saharan Africa					x	x	x				x	
							x					
Latin America: Mexico and Brazil					x	x	x				x	
							x					