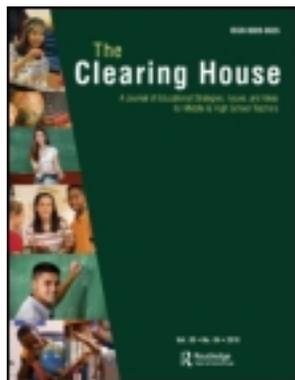


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Historical Thinking through Classroom Simulation: 1919 Paris Peace Conference

ANTHONY PELLEGRINO, CHRISTOPHER DEAN LEE, and ALEX D'ERIZANS

Abstract: For almost one hundred years, educators have used model deliberative bodies (e.g., Model United Nations) as a pedagogical tool to teach students about the complexities of diplomatic negotiations. We argue that this type of classroom simulation activity may also serve to illustrate specific historical realities and, more broadly, provide a model of student-centered instruction focused on investigation and decision making. Employed in social studies classrooms, this tool has the potential to foster historical thinking and empathy by calling on students to engage in the act of deliberation as experienced by contemporary actors of a particular negotiating body. The lesson activity we outline in this article charges students to wrestle with the multiplicity of complex dilemmas and conflicting claims that characterized the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Assuming the role of actual delegates, students not only discuss pertinent issues but also deliberate. That is to say, just like the representatives who convened at the meeting, the students will not have the luxury of merely reflecting on and talking about key geopolitical questions. They will have to reach concrete decisions for a world finding itself in a terrifying, yet hopeful, flux.

Keywords: historical simulation, deliberation, historical empathy, historical thinking, Paris Peace Conference, World War I, deliberative bodies

For almost one hundred years, educators have used model deliberative bodies (e.g., Model United Nations) as a pedagogical tool to teach the complexities of diplomatic negotiations, geopolitical realities, and civic engagement. We believe that this type of

classroom simulation may also serve a function more geared toward understanding the historical realities of a specific time and place. This tool has the potential to foster historical thinking and empathy by calling on students to engage in the act of deliberation as experienced by contemporary actors of a particular negotiating body. In such a classroom situation, students engaging in simulation activities “are able to discuss the causes, the pros and cons, and even the dangers and the advantages of lifestyles unlike their own” (Fisher and Vander Laan 2002, 25). More broadly speaking, efforts to implement such student-centered instruction, in which students guide their own learning experiences, impact self-efficacy and serve to make learning a more meaningful experience (Neill 1995; Tanner et al. 2003). Interestingly enough, the historical event we choose as an example to be explored through this method is the very same one that gave birth to the use of model deliberative bodies as a pedagogical tool: the Paris Peace Conference of 1919.

Propelled by the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools, an emphasis on historical thinking has been at the forefront of teaching and learning history for well over two decades (Evans 2004; Zilversmit 1989). Among scholars, a wide consensus has emerged that effective history instruction includes “doing” history. Such an approach involves analyzing primary and secondary sources, and in so doing, grappling with evidence and the manner in which historians have evaluated it (Drake and Nelson 2005). The achievement of “mature historical thought,” after all, “rests precisely on our ability to navigate the uneven landscape of history, to traverse the terrain that lies between the poles of familiarity with the distance from the past”

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(Wineburg 2001, 5). As such, the tenets of historical thinking have encouraged students to employ practices often utilized by historians, including issues analysis, decision making, and the recognition of historical perspective (i.e., historical empathy) within the context of the time period under investigation (Crabtree and Nash 1995). By calling on students to assume the role of historical agents, classroom simulations provide an ideal vehicle for developing historical empathy and higher-order thinking beyond the mere memorization of names and dates and even traditional classroom discussion (Jensen 2008; Larson and Keiper 2011).

Despite the usefulness of discussion in the classroom regarding historical content—in which a teacher-initiated statement or question results in student response, followed by teacher feedback and evaluation (Wilén and White 1991)—deliberation may be even more appropriate to the development of historical thinking. While discussion involves the consideration of a question and an opportunity for debate, certainly a knowledge-building endeavor in and of itself (Hess 2009; Larson and Keiper 2011; Singer 2009), deliberation takes this activity one step further by requiring consensus and, by extension, resolution that is “binding to all” (Parker 2001, 112). The process of deliberation forces students to resolve an issue, problem, or conflict based on a thoughtful examination of the facts and their own reasoned judgment (Center for Public Deliberation 2009; Mutz 2006), key ingredients in historical thinking, specifically (Wineburg 2001), and meaningful educational experiences, generally. A modified version of a model deliberative-bodies activity can be effectively employed to spur students’ historical thinking skills by requiring that students become immersed in an authentic examination of content “beyond a routine use of facts and procedures” (Larson and Keiper 2011, 192) in an effort to “seek insight rather than victory” (Parker 2001, 112).

The following exercise is an effort to provide students with an opportunity to engage vigorously in the deliberative process through historical simulation. Here, we provide the historical context of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, a lesson overview, the lesson website, prerequisite student knowledge for the activity, step-by-step lesson directions, and a suggested assessment rubric.

Historical Context

In January 1919 the Paris Peace Conference convened because confident, wealthy, and imperial Europe had torn itself to pieces over four long, bloody years of fighting in a conflict that had begun in 1914 over a scramble for influence and power in the Balkans and that was impossible to halt because both sides were so evenly balanced. World War I had drawn in almost all the European powers. Millions of combatants (it was not until World War II that massive killing of civil-

ians ensued) died in the war (MacMillan 2003). This death toll did not even include the millions more who were injured—often left with one leg, one arm, or one eye—disfigured by poison gas, or whose nerves were shattered (Howard 2003; Keegan 1999; Neiberg 2006). The grief of family and friends over the fallen and wounded was simply unfathomable (Ferguson 1999; Winter 1998).

The conflict, however, impacted those who fought it in a multitude of other ways as well. The war toppled governments and upturned societies. The conflict exhausted the material achievements of the 20th century and shook forever the supreme self-confidence, sense of superiority, and “enlightened” sense of progress that had carried Europe to world dominance (Keegan 1999, 8). A “crisis of the mind,” in the words of the French poet Paul Valéry, became widespread in societies that had experienced considerable brutalization (Valéry 1927, 27–28).

Nonetheless, all was not gloom and doom. In an era of mass attacks, mass slaughters, and mobilization of the home front and colonial empires to wage “total” war, the common man came into his own. Ordinary men and women in Europe felt empowered and claimed entitlements like never before (Brayborn and Summerfield 1987; Davis 2000; Higonnet et al. 1987; Horne 1997; Winter and Robert 1997). Following the conflict, colonial natives, many of whom had seen military service, emerged emboldened in their fights for independence. Convinced that their voices deserved to be heard because of their contribution to the war effort of the Triple Entente, and witnessing what they believed to be the collapse of Western claims of “enlightened” superiority in the killing fields of Europe, colonial natives were energized like never before. From West Africa to Southeast Asia, in areas such as Senegal, Algeria, India, and Vietnam, nationalist movements burgeoned (Brocheux and Hémerly 2010; Derrick 2008; Echenberg 1990; Heehs 1998). In addition, particularly in the defeated nations, such as Germany and Russia, as well as in states like Italy, which were embittered by what they perceived as unfair and inadequate territorial spoils in the aftermath of such profound sacrifice, the war ultimately opened the door to new utopian possibilities and energized efforts at national renewal and progress in the “spirit of 1914.” Comradeship at the front and the excitement of war galvanized many soldiers in the postwar world into action. Bursting with optimism and hope, many believed they had a right, even a duty, to lead their respective nations toward a better future (Ekstein 1989; Fritzsche 1998; Mosse 1991).

By the beginning of 1919, delegates from around the world had gathered to determine the terms of peace at the end of the war. Following such a conflict, expectations were great, and the risks of disappointment were correspondingly high. For six months, representatives

(the peak number exceeded a thousand) from over 30 Allied and associate countries met day after day, arguing, debating, and quarreling. The real powers at the conference were the "Big Four": the United States, Great Britain, France, and to a lesser extent, Italy. The latter, a member of the Triple Alliance when war broke out, had remained neutral for months, arguing that it was only obliged to defend its allies if they were attacked first. The Italians used the fact that Austria-Hungary had declared war on Serbia as a justification for their stance. Eventually, however, because of enticing promises of territorial gains presented to it by Britain, France, and Russia, Italy entered the war on the side of the Triple Entente in May, 1915. Although a latecomer to the Allied side, the country managed to secure for itself a prominent place at the Conference because of its considerable sacrifice of men and material during the conflict. Germany was not permitted to attend, and Bolshevik Russia, immersed in civil war, did not receive an invitation. Officially, the Peace Conference lasted into 1920, but its first six months, when the delegates made the key decisions, were the ones that truly counted. The peacemakers had to compose treaties with the defeated powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire, and they also had to wrestle with a multitude of their own clamorous and often competing aspirations and demands. Petitioners came from countries that had existed in the past and ones that were only future dreams. All the while, peacemakers knew that as discussions and debates raged in Paris, people on the ground across the globe were making their own decisions, fighting their own battles, and seeking to make their own history (MacMillan 2003; Mee 1980; Sharp 1991). The chief French delegate, Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, perhaps characterized the multitude of Herculean tasks confronting him and the other peacemakers in the simplest terms when he complained to a colleague: "It is much easier to make war than peace" (MacMillan 2003, xxx).

The legacy of the Paris Peace Conference is indeed complex (Boemeke, Feldman, and Glaser 1998). To some contemporary observers, as well as scholars and the media ever since, the decisions of the meeting laid the foundations for the economic and political instability of the postwar years, the rise of totalitarian ideologies in Germany and Italy, the eventual outbreak of World War II, and resentment over colonialism that extends to today (Andelman 2008). Recently, however, historians have generally been kinder to the peacemakers, attempting to acknowledge the truly awesome challenges and difficult questions the latter faced. These historians argue that Hitler did not wage war 20 years later because of the Treaty of Versailles. Certainly the peacemakers of 1919 made mistakes, often arrogant ones. Nonetheless, even cynically, the delegates sought to build a better world order. They could not foresee the future, and they

certainly could not control it (MacMillan 2003). The latter task was truly up to their successors, who often failed to enforce the provisions of the Treaty, which were actually quite flexible and capable of future readjustment. The principle of national self-determination, which had played such a large role in starting the war, served as a viable organizing global framework. A new world organization, the League of Nations, complemented a traditional defensive alliance of satisfied powers. Such accomplishments were all the more extraordinary since the peacemakers acted under extreme time pressure. Speed was essential so as to halt the spread of Communism, which had just assumed control in Russia (Mayer 1967). In the final analysis, however, the ability of the peacemakers to determine any events at all was limited, for developments on the ground often overtook them. Particularly, the leaders of France, Britain, and Italy no longer had the capacity to compel their war-weary peoples to pay a high price for expensive foreign adventures. Simply stated, power was lacking at the time to impose any settlement, whatever its terms. Such were the conditions under which the 1919 Paris peacemakers had to operate in order to bring peace to a war-ravaged world.

Lesson Overview

In this activity, teachers will typically spend two to four days engaging students in a simulated experience of the Paris Peace Conference. The lesson should serve as a culminating experience in a discussion of World War I. Students will actively role-play members of various delegations from around the world, most notably those representing the Big Four. Student assessment will be based on the quality of their written artifacts as well as their in-class performance as delegation representations. All documents and resources for this lesson are located online at <http://cehd.gmu.edu/book/pellegrino/>.

Prerequisite Student Knowledge

1. Students exhibit familiarity with the following long- and short-term causes of World War I, many of which extend back to the second half of the 19th century:
 - the imperialist drive to acquire colonies abroad, particularly in relation to the so-called Scramble for Africa
 - the rise of an aggressive nationalist sentiment across Europe promoting uncompromising notions of "us" versus "them," feelings of superiority, and the destiny or mission of a particular people, all concepts often defined in rigidly ethnic and racial terms
 - the gradual solidification of two rival alliances, the Triple Entente (Britain, France, and Russia) and the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy)
 - the beliefs and expectations of European military commanders, which increased belligerent

sentiment across the continent, shaped the failure of initial plans to achieve a decisive victory in 1914, and contributed to stalemate on the Western Front for four long, bloody years

- cultural trends, such as Social Darwinism and Modernism, promoting the notion of conflict as a cathartic release necessary to “cleanse” society
 - the immediate background and circumstances leading to the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, as well the subsequent outbreak of general European war in the summer of 1914
2. Students are acquainted with the following ways through which the belligerents prepared to fight and experience total war:
 - the political, economic, social, and cultural impact of total mobilization at the home fronts of the various warring states
 - the profound destruction of men and material across the various fronts of the war, with particular attention devoted to the extremely bloody battles of attrition (e.g., Somme, Verdun) along the trench lines in Western Europe
 3. Students understand the following factors accounting for the end of the conflict:
 - the U.S. entry into the war in April 1917
 - the outbreak of a full-fledged Russian civil war in 1918
 - the withdrawal of Russia from World War I by the Bolsheviks in March 1918
 - the failed German Spring Offensive of March 1918
 - the 1918 November Revolution in Germany

Lesson Directions

Day One

1. Students will read *Dulce et Decorum Est*, written by the soldier-poet Wilfred Owen (see <http://cehd.gmu.edu/book/pellegrino/> for artifact). The teacher will engage the class in a brief group discussion about the possible meanings of the poem, as well as what the work reveals concerning how the belligerents experienced total war. Such an exercise will reinforce the savagery of the war for the battlefield combatants. In so doing, it will provide the students with a sense of the nature and costs of the conflict for which they will now have to determine a just and lasting peace.
2. The teacher will proceed to organize students into delegations representing 14 of the most prominent national groups that were present at the Conference. Other than the United States, United Kingdom, France, Italy (the Big Four), each delegation will be included in one of four regional conflict areas: Northern Europe (Poles, Czechs/Slovaks), Southern Europe (Yugoslavs, Greeks, Romanians), Asia (Japanese, Chinese), and the Middle East (Jews, Arabs, Turks).

3. The teacher will distribute one delegation position paper to each student. The one-to-two-page papers will provide students with the necessary information to enable them to assume the role of delegates for their particular national groups. The papers will serve as vital tools in acquainting students with the most recent and relevant past history, the unique war experiences, and specific Conference expectations and goals of the national group they will be representing (see <http://cehd.gmu.edu/book/pellegrino/> for copies of the position papers). By studying the unique social, political, cultural, economic, and military contexts out of which the representatives of the various national groups meeting at Versailles emerged, students will be better equipped to step into the roles of actual delegates. With such enhanced historical empathy, students will be prepared to engage in deliberation.
4. For homework, the teacher will instruct students to read their delegation position papers carefully and to provide written answers to the following questions by the next class session: (1) determine three facts, events, or ideas learned from the document that they believe will be most relevant as they deliberate during the Conference; (2) establish three of the most important goals to be accomplished by the end of the Conference; and (3) indicate three of the most formidable challenges they believe they will face in achieving their aims. This information will not be discussed within the class as a whole but, rather, will be used as a concrete starting point for the students' deliberation within their respective regional conflict groups (see the following Lesson Direction 5).

Days Two and Three

5. The teacher will divide students (now representing delegations) into their respective four regional conflict areas. The latter grouping will serve as the framework within which initial deliberation will take place. Each of the four regional conflict areas must have at least one representative from each of their respective delegations. In order to reflect the domineering influence of the Big Four at the Conference, representatives from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy will have delegates from their nations present at all four of the regional conflict area meetings. Ultimately, the ideal number of students for the activity is 26, 16 students (four for each nation) representing the Big Four, as well as 10 students acting as delegates for the other 10 participating nations at the Conference. The teacher, however, could make adjustments (increasing the number of delegates for each given nation and/or decreasing the number of participating nations), based on the number of students present in the class.
6. The teacher will begin the deliberation process by establishing guidelines to foster effective exchanges

between delegates. Most significantly, the teacher must ensure that students are aware of the deliberation goals. Additionally, students must be informed of the necessity for all delegates to have sufficient opportunities to initiate wants and needs, as well as respond to comments from other delegates (Parker 2001). Once deliberation guidelines are established, the teacher will instruct delegates to deliberate by clearly determining and stating a position, providing the necessary background information to the other delegates as to why they are making such claims, and persuading the Big Four (the delegates who will ultimately make the final Conference decisions) of their particular preferences. The teacher will explain to the delegates that, within each regional conflict group meeting, the Big Four must reach a consensus on the particular issues under deliberation (Center for Public Deliberation 2009). In this respect, the teacher will remind students that at least one delegation in each regional conflict group (if not all) will likely disagree with at least some portion of the decisions reached by the delegates from the Big Four. Once deliberation begins within each of the four regional conflict area groups, the teacher will actively circulate throughout the classroom and encourage discussion and deliberation among delegates by asking leading questions, encouraging students to reflect on and advocate for their nation's position, and making specific suggestions as needed.

Days Three and Four

7. Once consensus within each regional conflict group meeting is achieved, the Big Four delegates will compose a position statement (two double-spaced pages) indicating the particular discussions and debates that took place within the group as a whole, as well as providing the details of and reasoning behind their own decisions (Larson and Keiper 2011). At the same time, each of the other delegations must craft a position statement (one double-spaced page) outlining their criticism or praise of (or some combination thereof) the consensus decision of the Big Four, as well as the reasons for their position. Since each position statement will be in the form of a press release to the general public, delegates from all nations will have to take into account interested audiences (domestic and international) when composing their statements. Reflecting not only discussion but also the struggle to reach clear decisions concerning very real and immediate concerns, the papers will demonstrate the deliberation in which the students have been engaged.
8. The teacher will dismantle the regional conflict groups, reorganize the Big Four delegates into solely national groups that will meet separately, and call on all conflict delegation members to convene as

one group. If the latter seems too large for fruitful discussion, the teacher may further subdivide the conflict delegations groups into "losers" and "winners."

9. Within each of the Big Four national groups, delegates will write a final national position paper (two double-spaced pages) that addresses their country's stance on each of the regional conflict group statements in a unified, comprehensive way. Within the meeting(s) of the remaining national groups, delegations will discuss their Conference experiences with each other and perhaps revise their own individual press release statements, when appropriate. Once again, students will deliberate by not only engaging in discussion but also having to reach definite conclusions.
10. Once all final position statements are written, each delegation group will present its findings (national position papers for the Big Four and individual position papers for the remaining delegations) to the entire class.
11. Teachers should use the remaining class time as a debriefing activity, which should generate authentic and substantive discussion about the historical moment of Paris 1919 (Larson and Keiper 2011). The teacher should also utilize this time to outline the actual conclusions drawn by the Big Four during the Paris Peace Conference.
12. The teacher will instruct students to turn in the written artifacts created during this lesson for assessment purposes. All students must submit their initial reflection pieces (one per individual student) concerning the delegation position papers they received at the beginning of the activity. In addition, students representing the Big Four must turn in the initial position papers emerging from the four regional conflict area group meetings (one per regional conflict area), as well as the final national position paper (one per national group). Students representing other delegations must turn in all drafts of their position papers (before and after the general session with all delegations except the Big Four).

Assessment

Assessment for this activity is divided into two parts: presentation (written artifacts) and performance (face-to-face deliberation as well as oral declarations to the class), both subdivided into knowledge and communication (Drake and Nelson 2005; Larson and Keiper 2011).

Presentation

1. Knowledge. High-performing students should be able to:
 - thoroughly define and describe key concepts and vital themes

- accurately explain circumstances involved in the deliberations
 - clearly identify all relevant stakeholders within the simulation
2. Communication. High-performing students should be able to:
- coherently express ideas in ways that provide evidence of knowledge and reasoning processes
 - structure the product in a clear and organized fashion
 - attend to detail (grammar, spelling, mechanics) throughout

Performance

1. Knowledge. High-performing students should be able to:
- consistently engage with other students concerning the topic at hand
 - genuinely act and speak in character throughout the activity
 - harness appropriate terms throughout the activity.
2. Communication. High-performing students should be able to:
- encourage dialogue within the group
 - provide supporting ideas or counterpoints to other group members
 - follow the rules of order for discussion as outlined by the instructor (see the previous Lesson Direction 6)

Each of these four assessment categories may be graded on a one (poorest presentation and performance) to five (optimal presentation and performance) scale, and then applied to a class-appropriate point value. When assessing the activity, the teacher should devote particular attention to indications of changes (for better or worse) over time. The multiple writing artifacts the students need to turn in, as well as the prolonged deliberation that the activity demands, enable the teacher to note such trends for individual students as well as for the class as a whole. This assessment is certainly not meant to be definitive, but it may give educators some guidance in scoring students' overall performance during this lesson.

Simulation Activity Implications

Classroom simulation activities have the potential to immerse students into a learning experience beyond that of knowledge acquisition at the lowest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Providing an opportunity for students to gain an empathetic view of others—historical or otherwise—serves as a cornerstone of an education system designed to perpetuate an informed and active citizenry in a participatory democracy (Center for Public Deliberation 2009; Gutmann 1987; Hess 2009). Teachers should keep in mind, however, that, like in

a democracy, simulation activities, such as the one we have described here, are largely untaught events that cannot be prescribed. The teacher's role is as facilitator, charged with allowing the simulation as designed to run its course directed by the students and intervening only when absolutely necessary. The teacher should consider the (mis)direction the activity takes as a significant part of the learning experience, and should employ the vital debriefing activity as the time to encourage metacognitive contemplation and correct misinformation (Larson and Keiper 2011). As with all instructional strategies, developing and implementing classroom simulations is indeed challenging. Nonetheless, whether grappling with prominent judicial trials, crisis management sessions, trade settlements, or peace treaties, this type of activity has the potential to be a pivotal educational experience for both teacher and student in wrestling with a wide variety of unique past events in which historical actors joined together in order to not only discuss but also deliberate. Concluding the most destructive war that mankind had ever fought, while ushering in a century of even greater tumult, the 1919 Paris Peace Conference was exactly such a gathering, one that the world had never quite seen before, and will most likely never see again.

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