Teachers’ guide:

What caused 9/11?

What caused the 9/11 attacks on the USA?

The causes of the 9/11 attacks are complicated and go back a long way. It is likely that when you are teaching, you will cover episodes in history that are unfamiliar to your students, which just adds to the complexity!

The booklet What caused 9/11? (Version A) (PDF) is designed to help students navigate their way through the causes before they attempt the final activity, in which they have to provide a short summary of the reasons for 9/11 attacks. The booklet is divided into several sections, which could be taught over several lessons:

• Introduction/early involvement
• Promises made… and broken
• Seeking refuge
• Violence breeding violence
• Suicide and murder
• Dreadful warnings
• What caused the 9/11 attacks on the USA?

At the end of each section, the students are required to complete a simple exercise where they copy labels depicting some of the causes of 9/11 onto the Tree roots diagram (PDF) – available on the website. They use what they have learnt to provide simple explanations for each cause. As they progress through each section, they begin to gather ideas about the way different causes developed over time, enabling them to build up an overall picture of the reasons for the 9/11 attacks.

You should help students to distinguish between underlying factors and triggers. You can approach this in different ways – either by asking the students to work through the booklet individually, or by organising the class into small groups and dividing the sections between them before getting each to feed back to the rest of the class. Whichever approach you use, you will need to take the students very carefully though each section before they complete the exercises, to ensure that they have a firm grasp of the events covered.

Find out more by visiting:
www.since911.com
It is essential to keep reminding them that trying to understand the brutal events of 9/11 does not mean that you are condoning them.

The final activity in the booklet – where the students have to provide a short summary of the reasons for 9/11 attacks – is very challenging. The students are provided with some prompts at the end of the booklet to help them review the complexities they have studied. This is shown as a table at the end of the booklet, but it might be more effective to create a card sort from these using the Flash cards: What caused 9/11? (PDF) – available on the website. If you challenge the students to make links between the cards or to group them by factors such as war; promises; communications; and religion, they will be re-visiting the material they have learnt; therefore it is more likely to be securely in place before they create their short summaries. In sharing and discussing some of their suggested summaries, be sure to emphasise the following:

- It is very difficult to come up with simple, fair summaries of complex events.
- It is perfectly possible – indeed likely – that different people will have significantly different summaries.
- What matters is that we should always try to base any simple summary on evidence that we have considered carefully and fairly.

The rest of this teachers’ guide provides advice on how to help your students understand the content covered in the booklet before they complete the activities at the end of each section.

**Early involvement**

The first section of the booklet looks at why the USA became involved in the Middle East. This means going back to the 19th century and early part of the 20th century. At this stage, it is worth pointing out to the students how far back they need to go to begin their quest to find an explanation for the reasons for the 9/11 attacks.

The issues here are quite straightforward – oil, trade and profit – and the map on page 2 of the booklet can be used to illustrate why the Middle East became such an important region to the West at this time. You may want to supplement this with other maps – political maps of the Middle East in 1900 and the present day, and a world map showing the strategic importance of the Middle East and the Suez Canal.

- A PowerPoint slide showing the British Empire in 1886 and how the Suez Canal shortened the trade route to India has been included in the resources as British Empire trade routes map (PowerPoint) – available on this website. Clicking on the map takes you to a site with a zoom facility that explores a very high-resolution copy of the map. (The link is to http://maps.bpl.org/details_M8682.)

Maps offer a useful way to build up the students’ contextual knowledge of the region and extra map-based resources have been provided for this reason. You can refer to these (and the ones in the booklet) as you progress though the different sections.
Promises made… and broken

The focus here is on the rise of Islamism and Zionism and how these increased tension in the Middle East. (For many Arabs, the driving force was nationalism, i.e. the desire to rule their own separate Arab states. However, the emphasis here is on the Islamist desire for a single, unified Muslim “nation” that would follow Islamic law, as it was this view that was later adopted by Al-Qaeda.)

If your students are already familiar with the First World War and the Versailles peace treaties, then this could be a good starting point. You could refer back to how Germany was treated after the First World War and make comparisons with the Middle East. You could also make reference to any work the students may have done on the British Empire, reminding them that Britain controlled large parts of the world at this time and was able to treat some countries in any way it wanted.

The website resource called First World War Arab allies (PowerPoint) shows the main alliances in the First World War, including the Ottoman Empire and its lands in Arabia and the Middle East. It also shows a rough outline of where Arab people lived across the region and North Africa, as well as the main area where Arabs joined forces with the British in the First World War. This should help students understand the context for the first two paragraphs in this section of the booklet.

A role-play activity can be found in Arab lands role play (PDF). This should help students to grasp how and why many Arabs were angry and suspicious of Western powers after the events of the First World War. It would probably be best to use this resource before reading the relevant section of the booklet, but it could be used afterwards if you prefer.

By the end of this section, you should make sure that the students have a clear understanding of the concepts of Islamism, Zionism and empire. The students should also be able to provide an explanation of why some Arabs would have felt aggrieved at the actions of the West and why Zionism was able to grow.

Make links to the overall question What caused the 9/11 attacks on the USA? by looking back at what the students learnt in the first section, so that they gradually build up their understanding of the West’s involvement in the Middle East and the resentment it caused in some quarters. Tell them that this resentment towards the West is going to increase as the story unfolds.
Seeking refuge

By the end of this section, the students will be expected to explain why Israel was founded, why it grew and why this caused resentment among Arabs. The theme is of war causing mass movements of people as refugees in search of safety, followed by disputes over land.

As a hook to this stage, you could start with the British Pathe film clip – Illegal Immigrants in Haifa: www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=58168. The clip shows Jewish refugees arriving at Haifa on the Mediterranean coast of Palestine in the years just after the Second World War and the Holocaust. It is important that students understand why Jewish immigrants were so determined to create a safe new home, and this film (together with references to any work they may have done on the Holocaust) may help. The rest of the work below explores the consequences and wider context of this.

You will probably want to use the maps of the Middle East and Palestine in 1947 on pages 4 and 6 of the booklet, to help students grasp the geography of the Arab–Israeli conflict covered on these pages. You may also find it helpful to use the maps, web links and activity included in Palestine–Israel maps activity (PowerPoint).

• Slide 1 shows the same map as is used on page 6 of the booklet, but locates this within the Middle East in 1947.

• Slide 2 can be used to summarise or reinforce page 4 of the booklet.

• The next ten slides can be used actively with the class. As you move from slide to slide, they must work out whether a given statement would be “said” by Palestinians or Israelis. If you prefer, Slides 12 and 13 could be used as the basis for a card sort activity instead of or before the PowerPoint presentation. Cut out the statements from a hard copy of Slide 12 and get pupils to arrange them in the right places on a printout of Slide 13.

• The final slide on the presentation leads to a BBC web page (http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in_depth/world/2001/israel_and_palestinians/key_maps/4.stm). This page has a range of maps about Palestine, from the First World War to the present day. This may be helpful, especially for showing land taken by Israel in 1967.

The Interactive timeline (Flash) includes some further support material you may wish to use. You may also wish to use the following video clips online:

• BBC News video of a helicopter flight over the West Bank, showing Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian lands: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11139865

• BBC Learning Zone video of Israeli and Palestinian children talking about how their lives have been affected by the dispute and by terrorism: www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/the-arab-israeli-war-impact-on-palestinian-and-israeli-children/3224.html

Find out more by visiting:
www.since911.com
Use the timeline and/or the booklet to take the students through the sequence of events from 1945 to 1973. Ask them to identify reasons why Palestinians might mistrust Israelis and vice versa. Get them to describe how the West was involved in some of these events and suggest what the consequences might have been of this.

Before going on to the next section, consolidate the students’ learning by getting them to look back at their work from the first three stages in the booklet and list the different ways the West involved itself in the Middle East. Ask them to try to give reasons for each of the different ways they list. It is important to keep making links between the sections and gradually build up the students’ understanding of the key themes that run through them.

**Violence breeding violence**

Remind the students of the work they did at the end of the previous section on bin Laden and the resentment caused by the West’s involvement in the Middle East. Tell them that they are going to find out about the rise of Al-Qaeda during the 1980s and about why the resentment felt by Muslim extremists towards the West and the USA in particular increased during the 1990s. They need to know what motivated extreme Muslims to join violent terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda if they are to understand why the attacks on 9/11 took place.

**As a starting point, ask the students to plot the following on a map:**
- Afghanistan
- Soviet Union
- Iraq
- Kuwait
- Saudi Arabia
- Medina
- Mecca

Take the students though the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the first Gulf War. Ask them why bin Laden and other Muslim extremists got involved in Afghanistan, why the West went to war against Saddam Hussein, and why the Gulf War fuelled the Muslim extremists’ antipathy towards the West. Make sure that they understand what is meant by the United Nations and sanctions. To finish, ask them to suggest why events in Afghanistan and the Gulf may have made the eventual 9/11 attacks on the USA more likely.

To help students focus on the motivation of Al-Qaeda supporters, you may wish to use the resource called **Al-Qaeda motives** (PDF). It is based on pages 8–9 of the booklet and suggests some statements that an Al-Qaeda supporter might make. Students must decide what sort of motivation is behind each statement. As you go through students’ responses, you may wish to get them to identify which events on pages 8–9 may lie behind the imaginary Al-Qaeda statements. This will reinforce their knowledge of the key events.
It will be very important in using this resource to make clear, once again, **that trying to understand these motives does not mean you are asking students to agree with them.**

The task ends by inviting students to think of ways of countering Al-Qaeda arguments, especially by trying to look for non-violent responses. You could develop this as you wish.

**Suicide and murder**

By now, the students should have a clear visual knowledge of the Middle East, an understanding of why it has been of strategic importance to the West throughout the past century or more, why there was increasing resentment towards the West from some quarters, and the reasons behind the rise of bin Laden and Al-Qaeda.

This section is fairly straightforward and the students should be able to explain why the number of suicide attacks grew in the 1990s without too much support. Make sure the students understand why Al-Qaeda felt increasingly emboldened.

**Dreadful warnings**

To guide the students through this section, ask them to read the statements made by bin Laden. Then ask them to suggest what clues these statements might have shown that he was planning an attack on the USA itself. Was the USA at all worried that it might come under attack?

**What caused the 9/11 attacks on the USA?**

The students should now have sufficient knowledge and understanding to complete the final task, which is to write a short summary of the reasons for the 9/11 attack. You could start by re-visiting and reinforcing the learning before completing this task:

- Create a single card for each of the phrases they used to label the roots in the exercises at the end of each section.
- Put these in a hat or box and ask team members to pull out one card at a time and explain how it helped to cause 9/11.
- Award points if you wish.

Once they have written up their summaries, you could provide an opportunity for them to share, discuss and evaluate each other’s work.

If you wish, you could ask the students to consolidate their learning through completing an extended piece of writing, using one or other of these questions:

- What caused the 9/11 attacks on the USA?
- Why is it so hard to say what caused the 9/11 attacks?
- Why is it misleading to say that the 9/11 attacks came “out of the blue”?