
Research Kit

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I. Themes/Habits of the Mind used

The first draft of history is almost invariably the most controversial. For it is almost exclusively written by individuals who are often intellectually and emotionally invested in the experiences they record. Bearing this inescapable reality in mind, the following historical research kit will highlight the dual nature of the still ongoing Iraq War. In particular, we will showcase and contrast two early phases: 1.) the process of building a rationale for war and the spectacularly successful invasion, and 2.) the emergence of unexpected postwar challenges. The collection of documents in this kit will span the period immediately following the 9/11 attacks through the beginnings of a post-invasion insurgency.

Examining primary sources asks students to use the Habit of the Mind of “understand[ing] how things happen and how things change, how human intentions matter, but also how their consequences are shaped by the means of carrying them out in a tangle of purpose and process.” The lead-up to and first two years of the Iraq War feature two important themes, triumph and struggle. In the wake of the September 11th attacks, the Bush Administration sought to reorient America’s national security strategy by shifting away from conventional methods of counter terrorism to preemption. Throughout 2002 and early 2003, it was commonly argued that the prospect of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of unfriendly states was an unacceptable risk in a post 9/11 world. In an attempt to reconcile this risk, the Bush Administration pushed for and eventually launched a U.S.-led invasion of Iraq that began in March 2003. Within weeks, the Hussein regime had been deposed, and coalition forces had taken the Iraqi capital of Baghdad. The spectacular success of the invasion seemed, for a moment, to reflect a national triumph that, in some ways, assuaged the tragedy of September the

11th. A hostile regime, that was believed to have possessed dangerous weapons of mass destruction, had been vanquished.

The sense of triumph however, was short lived. A series of unexpected post-invasion challenges quickly emerged. By the summer of 2003, wide scale looting, collapse in public utility service, breakdowns in civil administration, sectarian fighting, and an emergent insurgency quickly propelled Iraq into a state of chaos. The failure to locate weapons of mass destruction further complicated public impressions of the war. A triumphant invasion had rapidly become an open ended foreign occupation, flush with unexpected struggle. Unlike the lead-up and invasion, the early occupation of Iraq was not triumphant. Instead of news reports featuring the spectacular images of “shock and awe,” the American public became inundated with persistent casualty reports and increasing civil unrest. Beginning in late 2003 and continuing throughout 2004, the Bush Administration increasingly received criticism for its poor postwar planning and the growing realization that weapons of mass destruction, which had justified the invasion, simply did not exist. As consternation swelled, public support for the war significantly declined. On the whole, this period demonstrates how the history of the Iraq War is defined by a tangle of purpose and process. As a consequence, no single narrative is sufficient, and students should explore the dualities and contradictions in historical events.

Overall, this research kit is bound through two Vital Themes and Narratives. Particularly, our selections reflect Values, Beliefs, Political Ideas and Institutions as well as Conflict and Cooperation. The lead-up and early Iraq War period highlights how American political institutions reacted to the September 11th attacks and how those reactions provoked a complex set of reactions. While the public sought unity and resolve, it soon became deeply conflicted over the decision to go to war. In sum, the Vital Themes and Narratives expressed in

this kit ask students to contemplate how historical events are often dualistic in their nature, showcasing a mix of contradictory emotions and outlooks. Appreciating this process is an essential component to historical analysis and thinking like a historian.

II. Key Question

Our research kit provides a set of documents that reflect the rapidly changing outlooks toward the Iraq War. In this sense, our key question asks students to contemplate the reasons for such change. *How was the lead up and early Iraq War a period of contradictions?* Evaluating a selection of primary documents will allow students to establish ways in which the national temper evolved from post 9/11 resolve, to the triumphant invasion, and eventually to the unexpected struggles of the occupation. In sum, the period from 2002 to 2004 showcased a dramatic shift in experiences and growing contradictions in the public mood toward the conflict. This shift stands as an important consideration for students taking part in an early historical examination of the Iraq War.

III. 1st Order Document(s)

Introduction

The first order documents for this project are two images that will be used to highlight the dual nature of the Iraq War. The first image depicts the toppling of a statue of Saddam Hussein on 9 April 2003. The second image is the cover of *Time Magazine*, from 14 July 2003, showing a soldier in the midst of a fight while its headline says, “Peace is Hell.”

Why these documents were selected?

These two images are designed to show the differences in the war’s approach and perception in America, and they are being used concurrently to highlight that change. The two images have been chosen to be the driving force behind this lesson because they show two

contrasting viewpoints on the war within a relatively close time frame. The statue image shows a defining moment of the first interpretation of the Iraq War, with the repressive leader being forced out of power. The *Time* cover depicts the evolved version of the war, with US soldiers being under fire and engaged in struggle. Overall, the cover implies the Iraq project's uncertain future.

The statue image is important to study because it shows the fulfillment of the initial goals of the conflict. The ruling family had been removed from power, which permitted the Iraqi people and the American occupation to chart a new future. Americans were fairly unified in their sentiments about this image and others like this. The United States had accomplished a key goal, but the country still had to contend with the effects of a destabilized region and work hard to efficiently resolve the ensuing power struggles.

The *Time* cover shows the next step after the overthrow of Hussein's regime. The U.S. military was unsure about how to accomplish the goals set forth in Iraq and the American public was even more undecided. The cover depicts feelings of uncertainty about the future of the war and the current progress for the better. *Time* appears to question the results of being in the country in the first place.

The two images show that wars may start off with one objective but that goal can change over the course of time. In these two images, the war shifts from a short-term war that would last for a couple months, while the other suggests that the war could last for a far longer period than anticipated.

Historical Context

When the Iraq war was launched in March of 2003, the United States was in the midst of another war in Afghanistan. The United States, led by President George W. Bush, feared that a terrorist attack would happen again. Bush pushed for an extension of the war into Iraq to force the government there to surrender any terrorists and weapons of mass destruction and establish a new government that could make the country more democratic and open. The Iraq War shifted from a war to force out a dangerous regime that harbored terrorists and dangerous weapons into rebuilding an entire nation's government and society.

How Do Sources Contribute?

The two sources, used together, illustrate the dual nature of the Iraq conflict. The short solution was to remove the Hussein family from power in Iraq. The long term goal of the conflict was to implement a system of democracy. In order for the Americans to establish a healthy form of government that could capably supplant the prior system, U.S. soldiers and resources would be needed to stabilize a strategically important region. The soldiers spent much of their time trying to rebuild the country that had been scarred by the previous government and past wars.

These two images help students understand that the United States did not, at least initially, expect to be an occupying force in the region. The U.S. simply wanted a short-term fix, highlighted by the Hussein family being out of power and a new government in its place. After the soldiers had entered Iraq, they realized that there was an abundance of work required to stabilize and rebuild the nation. The necessity to establish security and stability led the United States into a position where they would remain for years.

Habit of Mind

Using the Habits of Mind in concert with these images can incorporate a number of different perspectives. Students should understand how things happen and how things change, how human intentions matter, but also how their consequences are shaped by the means of carrying them out in a tangle of purpose and process. By highlighting this thought process, these images are perfect to show the changing purpose of the war. The soldiers involved in the fighting in Iraq experience this change firsthand from the shifting roles they play. The soldiers fighting changed their goals from ousting Hussein to nation building. Recognizing the shift is an important aspect in both studying the events of the war as well as listening to the firsthand accounts of the soldiers.

Vital Theme and Narrative

The Vital Theme and Narrative, Conflict and Cooperation, works perfectly with this kit, as we are shifting from a conflict resolution image with the statue being dismantled to a conflict continuing. The images are used to highlight how cooperation can come out of a conflict as it did in Iraq. The soldiers had been trained to fight a war in Iraq, but instead were put in charge of helping to rebuild the nation and support a new government.

Conclusion

The two images highlight the dual nature of the Iraq war in being both a war to oust a dictatorship and to build a nation into a democracy. The relationship and change between the two are important aspects of this period. The shift highlights differences, between a unifying objective, such as ousting a dangerous person, to the controversial task of being an occupying force. The U.S. military experienced a number of problems they worked to rectify, but many were not the same as when they first came to the region.

IV. 2nd Order Documents

Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York: June 1, 2002:

In this speech, President Bush puts forth his goals and expectations for his war on terror as a result of the attacks on September 11, 2001 and his belief of the existence of weapons of mass destruction. It is during this speech that the idea of the “Bush Doctrine” first emerges. In his speech, Bush says new threats require new ways of thinking. He claims we cannot wait for the threats to materialize or on the promises of tyrants and dictators. He states that our troops will be sent if and where they are needed, which proves Bush’s resolve on the issue. This directly corresponds with our first order image of Saddam Hussein’s statue falling down because it demonstrates that America strongly supports the war and has faith in President Bush to pull us through to victory over the terrorists and those threatening our freedom.

2003 State of the Union Address:

From this address we see a verification that the United States will in fact be going to war with Iraq over their supposed weapons of mass destruction. President Bush gives numerous facts and statistics about the chemical weaponry that Hussein is estimated to have in his arsenal, and Bush makes the claim that despite warnings to disarm, Hussein has done the opposite. He believes Iraq has stockpiled these weapons and questions why no one has really tried to stop him. Furthermore, he believes that Iraq has connections to Al Qaida, the terrorist group believed to have attacked the United States on September 11, 2001. Bush’s message is clear: If Hussein does not clean his act up, will we strike against him. This document relates to the first order

image of Hussein's statue falling because it demonstrates Bush's sincere belief that our nation is in trouble, and that we will be the defenders of liberty and the Iraqi people.

Ray Bourne Oral History Interview:

This interview from Colonel Ray Bourne provides a personal approach to the war. Bourne describes his time in Iraq in this interview. He was engaging in combat with the local insurgents and trying to ward off any criminal activity that may have been occurring. He stressed that in his interactions with the Iraqi people it was important to understand their values and customs. He described people skills as "the most essential tool" when it came to winning any hearts and minds of the Iraqis. While the military has prepared him to handle any situation thrown his way, there were shortages of resources and equipment which limited his ability to fight to fullest possible extent. This interview better relates to our second images within the first order documents that show a soldier on the front of a *Time* issue with the title, "Peace is Hell." Bourne's interview depicts the long struggle he knows is still ahead.

"Mission Not Accomplished" Image:

The cover of *Time*, the week of October 6, 2003, featured a highly critical image and headline of President George W. Bush. After triumphantly declaring an end to major combat operations in Iraq in May, highlighted with a prominently displayed "Mission Accomplished" banner, support for the Bush Administration's handling of Iraq began to crumble by the fall. The cover of *Time* captures a key transition in public sentiment toward the war. Although combat operations had ended, a violent occupation was ramping up. It would become increasingly clear, for the Bush Administration and the public that a military commitment in Iraq would be long-term—a project with no end in sight.

John Kerry's Acceptance Speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention:

This speech sheds light on the growing amounts of doubts among Americans as the war continues to drag on and discovering weapons of mass destruction seems to be less and less likely. Kerry certainly expresses his support of our military, but he makes it clear that just because Bush said “mission accomplished” or that the weapons of mass destruction existed does not make it a truth. He resolves to bring back the idea that America only goes to war because she has to, not because she wants to. This speech clearly relates to the doubts the American people are experiencing during this time with President Bush’s capabilities as Commander in Chief and the growing dissatisfaction of many with a war they cannot justify.

V. Potential 3rd Order Documents

- **Graph of U.S. Fatalities by I.E.D.s:** A study by the *Brookings Institute* provides a graph, spanning from March 2003 to June 2009, showcasing U.S. fatalities as result of improvised explosive devices. This graph reflects a key transition in how Americans perceived the Iraq War. Although there were very few deaths during the invasion, the emergence of an insurgency changed how the public viewed the war.
- **Department of Defense Press Release:** An article by the *American Forces Press Service*, from March 4, 2004, reported on the growing Iraqi insurgency. Notably, the report highlights how the insurgency sought to target Iraqi security forces and civilians as a way to provoke a civil war and destabilize the American Occupation efforts. The DOD Press release highlights the shifting focus of the War, from an attempt to prevent Weapons of Mass destruction, to the difficult process of nation building.
- **Bush “Mushroom Cloud Speech”:** An excerpt from President Bush’s October 8, 2002 speech in Cincinnati, Ohio is an example of the early rationale for war against Iraq. Bush draws a link between weapons of mass destruction, believed to be in the Hussein regime’s possession, and international terrorism. Building on the Administration’s doctrine of preemption (Bush Doctrine), Bush argues that “America must not ignore the threat gathering against us. Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof -- the smoking gun -- that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.” The speech was perceived to highlight the urgent need to build public support for confronting the Iraqi regime.
- **Bush Press Conference Clip:** At this White House Press Conference, held on April 13, 2004, President Bush was asked by a reporter, "In the last campaign, you were asked a question about the biggest mistake you'd made in your life, and you used to like to joke that it was trading Sammy Sosa. You've looked back before 9-11 for what mistakes might have been made. After 9-11, what would your biggest mistake be, would you say, and what lessons have learned from it?" Bush, visibly uncomfortable, was unable to

summon a mistake, leaving the impression that he was unreflective. Opponents highlighted the incident as a symbolic example of the Administration's ignorance and lack of planning following the successful invasion.

- **Department of Defense Press Release:** An article by the *American Forces Press Service*, from September 18, 2004, reported the death of a U.S. Marine. The cause of death was described as a road-side bomb. The article is one of many examples of how the U.S. occupation was not only charged with the difficult task of reconstructing Iraq, but contending with a guerrilla insurgency force that relied on low-tech ambushes such as road side bombs.
- **Public Opinion of the Iraq War:** An assortment of charts tracking public opinion of the Iraq War reflects how the initial optimism and support for the invasion faded as the insurgency emerged. Declining public support for the war highlights an important duality between optimism and pessimism of the early war years.
- **Clip from *Fahrenheit 9/11*:** A five minute clip from *Fahrenheit 9/11*, a documentary film released in the summer of 2004, depicts how a growing disapproval with the war had coalesced within a year of the invasion. Filmmaker Michael Moore directed a highly controversial film that argued that the American public was repeatedly lied to and baited into war by the Bush Administration in the months following the September 11th attacks. Moore suggests that growing difficulties in the Iraq occupation are the direct result of the Administration's dishonesty. In general, a clip from *Fahrenheit 9/11* showcases how, although the war received high public support, it quickly became a source of intense public controversy by 2004.

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