

Iraq: War and Peace Activities

Activity 3: Interpreting different viewpoints

Aims

- To enable pupils to express their ideas, feelings and opinions about the Iraq war
- For pupils to consider issues with which they disagree, and to defend their viewpoint and argue and persuade in a calm, rational manner
- To enable teachers to assess pupils' knowledge of the crisis and to establish where further information may be needed and where misconceptions and prejudices may lie

What to do

You will need multiple copies of the **'for and against'** (below) statements below and large sheets of paper on which to stick the cards.

Arrange pupils in groups and pre-select a responsible pupil to facilitate each group. Each group should then agree ground rules for discussion, e.g. only one person speaks at once. Give each facilitator a copy of each of the statements, and a large sheet of paper marked up in three columns: agree, not sure, disagree.

The facilitator keeps the statement cards and lets each member of the group draw one in turn. As they draw a card, the group member reads it out and decides which column to put it in, explaining why they are making that decision.

The statement is then open for discussion, following the agreed rules. The person who placed the statement can move it to another column if persuaded. Keep going round till all the cards are placed. The group can then decide on any additional statements they wish to contribute.

Finally, groups present their findings to the rest of the class. This could prompt class discussion and lead on to specific media interpretation work.

'I am saddened by the fact we are at war. It is hard to really understand how people are feeling in Iraq because it is so far away. One night on the news there was footage from the troops and people in Iraq - that is the closest I have got to being able to understand how it must be in Iraq for everyone there, and that understanding is minimal.'

Rachel, 15, Derbyshire

'In the modern world, the use of force should only be a last, and exceptional, resort. It should only be allowed in the case of legitimate force, or by decision of the competent international authorities...only this firmly guards us against temptations of adventure.'

French President, Jacques Chirac, at a speech in Beirut, Lebanon

'And I tell you honestly what my fear is, my fear is that we wake up one day and we find either that one of these dictatorial states has used weapons of mass destruction - and Iraq has done so in the past - and we get sucked into a conflict, with all the devastation that would cause; or alternatively these weapons, which are being traded right round the world at the moment, fall into the hands of these terrorist groups, these fanatics who will stop at absolutely nothing to cause death and destruction on a mass scale.'

UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, speech given in Sedgefield, March 2004

'States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of our world... History has called on America and our allies to action, and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom's fight.'

US President, George Bush, State of the Union Address, 29 January 2002

'Like many, many Iraqi people, I am against Saddam Hussein and at the same time against America's intervention in Iraq. Saddam Hussein came to power with American backing, and now they want to get rid of him and impose another leadership on us. It has nothing to do with democracy, or the good of the Iraqi people - this is about the supremacy of the United States over the world.'

Nadia Mahmoud, Iraqi dissident and women's rights campaigner living in London

'My two brothers - one younger than me, only 16 - have been drafted into the army and are now in Baghdad. I am very worried about them and about my family. I [didn't] like Saddam Hussein but I am against this war.'

Ahmed, 17 year-old Iraqi asylum seeker in Britain