

Making Sense of World Conflicts

Lesson plan 3: The arms bazaar – a mystery

Age group: 14–17

Objectives

To interpret information and make judgements informed by reasons and evidence. To create a basis of understanding of the issues of arms dealing and the arms trade.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will have:

- identified some initial facts about the increasing use of small arms.
- used information-sorting, processing, interpreting and explaining skills.

You will need

The **worksheet: Statements – The arms bazaar** (below) cut up and put into envelopes for groups of three pupils. For teachers who wish to differentiate between pupils of different abilities, you can make this exercise shorter and simpler by missing out statements 18-25 inclusive. You will also need the **worksheet: The increasing use of small arms** (below) for each pair.

You will need to have discussed the definition of 'small arms':

Small arms Small arms are designed for personal use; light weapons are designed for use by several people serving as a crew. Small arms include revolvers and self-loading pistols; rifles and carbines; sub-machine guns; assault rifles; and light machine guns.

What to do

Starter

1. In pairs, pupils should complete the following sentences:

'If I ruled the school, my rule on weapons would be ...'

'If I ruled my family, my rule on weapons would be ...'

'If I ruled my community, my rule on weapons would be ...'

'If I ruled the country, my rule on weapons would be ...'

'If I ruled the world, my rule on weapons would be ...'

2. Ask for brief feedback and discuss the similarities in the lists.

Activity

3. This is a 'thinking skills' activity. Pupils will carry out a 'mystery' exercise in which they are given 30 statements on individual pieces of paper and should produce an answer to a central question. The question is 'Why is there a big increase in the number of arms in the world?'

The mystery is designed to encourage pupils to deal with ambiguity through addressing a question which has no single correct answer and where they are not even sure which information is relevant, so they must sift and evaluate ideas. It is important that the statements are presented on separate pieces of paper so that pupils can physically categorise them and move them around. The successful completion of the task depends on co-operative group work – three in a group is recommended.

4. Give each group an envelope with the cut-up statements inside and the key question that they must answer written on the envelope. You can also give them copies of the worksheet: The increasing use of small arms (below) as supporting material if you wish. Ask groups to lay out all the statements in any order and check if there are any words that need explaining.

5. Explain that they are going to become detectives and use the statements to come up with an answer to the key question. There is not a right order or a right answer. Tell them sorting the statements is important but they need to keep looking at the links between statements. As detectives they must come up with the most convincing explanation using the evidence plus any other knowledge of the issue. They should give as much detail as they can.

6. You might need to think about how to ask pupils to give their feedback, as lower-ability groups will need more structure. They could, for example, be asked to identify five key answers to the question (giving evidence) and then rank them. As groups work, check that they are manipulating the information effectively, and give guidance if necessary.

7. Ask each group to report back to the class on their answer to the mystery, giving their reasons. Discuss the findings.

Closing discussion

8. Ask for feedback on the activity and discuss their responses. Discuss with the class anything that surprised them about the information on the arms trade or the arms companies. What do they think could or should be done about the situation?

Making Sense of World Conflicts

Worksheet: the arms bazaar

1. The UK is the world's second-largest arms exporting country.
2. Small arms have been used in both Sierra Leone and Liberia to kill and maim many innocent civilians, yet nobody involved in supplying any of these arms has been prosecuted or held accountable for their actions.
3. In March 1999, a Ukrainian arms broker, Leonid Minin, was responsible for delivering weapons, including 2,000 AK-47 assault rifles, 50 machine guns, ammunition, rocket-propelled grenades, anti-tank weapons and surface-to-air missiles, from Ukraine to Liberia and to rebel forces in Sierra Leone.
4. In 2001 China, France, the Russian Federation, the UK and the USA were the top five arms exporters in the world, together responsible for 88 per cent of arms exports.
5. Illegal arms deals involve a complex web of front companies, false or misleading paperwork, transport and different trails originating from many different countries.
6. MBDA (a UK-owned arms company), produces some of the world's most advanced future missile systems. Its aim is to offer customers the best and most cost-efficient solutions and services for their defence requirements in missiles and missile systems.
7. Arms travel around the world and can reach conflict zones and countries with poor human rights records or high levels of organised crime.
8. From 1960-1999, the number of countries producing small arms doubled. There was an almost six-fold increase in the number of companies manufacturing them.
9. Nearly 60 per cent of small arms are in civilian hands.
10. Leonid Minin's arms deals were made possible by companies and individuals based in countries as diverse as Gibraltar, the UK, Burkina Faso, Côte D'Ivoire and the Ukraine.
11. The control of arms trading is left to individual governments, who may be unwilling or unable to ensure responsible practices.
12. DRS Technologies (a US-owned arms company) states that it is a defence technology leader and provides leading-edge products and services to defence, government, intelligence and commercial customers.
13. Between 1998 and 2002 there was an 11-fold increase in the number of components licensed for sale in the UK.

14. Italian police arrested Leonid Minin near Milan on 5 August 2000. When police raided his hotel, documents relating to questionable arms deals were found in his possession.

15. In March 1999, any arms deals to Sierra Leone and Liberia were illegal and outlawed by the United Nations.

16. China, France, Russia, the UK and the USA are heavily involved in the business of arms trading and profiting from it.

17. Leonid Minin walked free from prosecution when Italian authorities decided they could not prosecute him under Italian law because the arms he supplied, although outlawed by the United Nations, had never passed over Italian soil.

18. The majority of weapons used in conflict situations are not produced by the countries involved.

19. BAe Systems (a UK-owned arms company) states that it is a systems company innovating for a safer world and is a company with vision and values.

20. The USA dominates the arms industry, contributing almost half (45 per cent) of all the world's exported weapons.

21. Recent research has identified 1,135 companies manufacturing small arms and ammunition in at least 98 countries; these numbers are increasing all the time.

22. From 1998-2001, the USA, the UK, and France earned more from arms sales to developing countries than they gave in aid.

23. One of the key features of the trade in arms is the way that weapons pass from the legal sector into the illegal sphere. The boundary between the two is extremely weak.

24. There is an increasing trade in components (parts that are used to make small arms and weapons) which are more likely to be given licences for trade with fewer controls.

25. DRS Technologies (US-owned arms company) develops and manufactures a broad range of mission critical systems, which are sold to all branches of the US military, government agencies, major aerospace and defence contractors, and international military forces.

Making Sense of World Conflicts

Worksheet: The increasing use of small arms

- A. Small arms kill more people than Weapons of Mass Destruction.
- B. Small arms are present in every country in the world.
- C. Small arms are the only weapons used in most conflicts.
- D. Nine out of ten atrocities committed against civilians involve the use of small arms.
- E. The availability of small arms increases the risk of death and injury.
- F. Injury rates are likely to rise once a war is over.
- G. Domestic violence is now more likely to occur and end in serious injury.
- H. Small arms are lighter than ever before.
- I. Small arms are cheaper than ever before.
- J. There are 639 million small arms in the world, or one for every ten people.
- K. Small arms are produced by over 1,000 companies, in at least 98 countries.
- L. Eight million more small arms are produced every year.
- M. Sixteen billion units of ammunition are produced each year.
- N. Nearly 60 per cent of small arms are in civilian hands.



Credit: Howard Hughes / Oxfam