

Spies in the sand

Archaeology and espionage in the Middle East during the First World War

Lesson Two Which British archaeologists made the best spies in the Middle East during the First World War?

Learning objective; To gauge the success of past individuals against agreed criteria.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will have;

- Taken part in discussion about methods of intelligence gathering in the present
- Studied the limitations of British knowledge of the Middle East in 1914
- Assessed the possible effectiveness of forms of espionage available at the time
- Revised the attributes previously agreed as necessary for a good spy in the light of British intelligence needs in 1914 and forms of espionage available at the time

- Gauged the relative success of British archaeologists turned intelligence agents against the revised attributes necessary for a good spy

Studied how British intelligence gathering in the Middle East improved between 1914 and 1918.

Starter or initial stimulus material

Display slide three of the PowerPoint which shows a map of modern Turkey. Ask pairs to imagine that Britain was preparing to go to war with turkey (which is of course currently a NATO ally with a democratic constitution). Ask pairs within a set time limit to discuss the answer to the question about how a foreign government might find out about Turkey today. Lead discussion taking suggestions from pairs and then compare comments to the list of methods of intelligence gathering on slide four of the PowerPoint.

Ask pairs to discuss what might be the most and least effective methods of intelligence gathering listed on the slide (Pupils could be given a copy of the list from the slide and be asked to number the suggestions in order of effectiveness).Lead discussion taking comments from pairs.

Ask pairs to discuss which methods they think might been available at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 (on a copy of the list pupils could highlight those suggestions they think might have been available in 1914).

Display slide five of the PowerPoint showing maps of the Middle East today and in 1914 (this can be downloaded for insertion from the link given on the slide).

Explain that in November 1914 the Ottoman Empire (the precursor of the modern Turkish Republic) declared war on Britain as an ally of Germany and Austria- Hungary.

(Reference could be made to any prior learning about the First World War in general and any study of the Middle East in the period already covered).

Display slide six which refers to modern methods of intelligence gathering which were not available in 1914.

Then refer to slide eight which lists problems facing the British in their knowledge of the Ottoman Empire in 1914.

Give out copies of slides nine to fifteen which outline some methods of intelligence gathering potentially available to British spies or intelligence agents in 1914. Ask pairs to read these carefully and write out the titles of each slide on a large piece of paper which could be held up by a pupil or worn over their shoulders as a tabard. Ask eleven pupils to stand at the front of the class in a line holding a placard or wearing a tabard each. Lead discussion taking suggestions from pairs about which methods might be the most and least effective forms of intelligence gathering and move the pupils holding placards or wearing tabards accordingly from one end of the line (representing the least effective method) to the other end of the line (representing the most effective). Ask pairs to consider whether the attributes of a good spy previously agreed need to be revised and if so how.

Give out the fact files used in the previous lesson summarising the pre-war backgrounds and experience of Petrie's "pups" and his fellow archaeologists to pairs. Ask them to review the choice of who might have made the most effective British spies. Lead discussion probing the reasoning behind any changes they suggest now knowing more about the limitations of methods available in 1914.

Then give out the details of the war service of the same individuals from slides twenty three to thirty three as a set of cards. Ask pairs to give them a mark out of ten for their war record and rank the names from most effective to least effective spy or intelligence agent (that is if they became one).

Pairs could be given a copy of the table on slide thirty four as a means of recording their discussion and extracting supporting details for individual scores.

Lead discussion, taking comments from pairs and if possible agree a whole class ranking for the individuals. Lead discussion if there is a difference between what had previously been predicted as the three individuals who would make the best spies with those that were chosen on the basis of their war record.

Plenary or concluding activity

Lastly display slides thirty four to thirty six which explain how British intelligence gathering changed and improved by 1918. Lead discussion about whether this made the skills of British archaeologists turned agents more or less valuable in the Middle East (*there was apparently less need for detailed local knowledge and for as many agents in the field but in fact it was the linguistic skill of Campbell-Thompson who helped to crack enemy codes and the knowledge of Arabic and Arab culture made T.E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell crucial to helping defeat the Turks*).