

LESSON 5: How can we take action to bring about change after the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?

OVERVIEW:

In this culminating activity, students will reflect on past work they've completed international crimes of atrocities, the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Based on their research and their personal feelings about the prospects for action, students will construct a personal letter of appeal to member of the federal government inquiring about the American position on the conflict and asking for a specific action be taken.

STANDARDS:

PS3.c.h: Power in government: Evaluate the structure and functions of governments at the local, state, tribal, national, and global levels. Evaluate the purpose of political institutions at the local, state, tribal, national, global, and supranational or non-government organization (NGO) levels distinguishing their roles, powers, and limitations.

SS.PS4.a.h Create arguments by researching and interpreting claims and counterclaims.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- I. Reflect on their previous research on international crimes of atrocities, the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

- II. Construct a personal letter to a member of the federal government appealing for a specific action to be taken by the United States government regarding the conflict

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE: Students should be able to define and begin to find the significance of:

- I. 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
- II. International Criminal Court
- III. Constituent advocacy

DURATION: 3 class periods

MATERIALS (one per student):

- Student handouts or notes from previous work on the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the International Criminal Court
- One laptop or Chromebook
- One copy of **Handout 1: Taking Informed Action Letter – Background**
- One copy of **Handout 2: Taking Informed Action Letter – Basic Format & Suggestions**

PROCEDURE – DAY 1:

- I. Ask students to reflect on the work they've completed in class so far on international law, crimes of atrocities, the International Criminal Court, and the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Students can engage in personal written reflection, or engage the whole class via an online poll, Google Doc or open discussion.

- II. Inform students that they have a voice in asking for change; in American politics, this is known as constituent advocacy – with students (constituents) being represented by their publicly elected or appointed officials. While many Americans engage in constituent advocacy on economic or ideological issues, the same can be done on topics of foreign policy.

- III. Inform students that they will write a personal letter to a federal government official defending their views on who should be held responsible for the conflict. Be sure to mention that students will have a lot of voice and choice in terms of the argument they wish to make and the leader they will write to, but emphasize that since this is being mailed to the federal official that the letter should follow formal writing guidelines. Assure them that there will be ample time for edits.

- IV. All students should use **Handout 1: Taking Informed Action Letter – Basic Format & Suggestions** for guidance. Since the letters will be shared tomorrow for peer and teacher edits, suggest that students use a program such as Google Docs that will make it easy to share, comment, suggest and edit. Give students the remainder of the period to begin their rough drafts.

- V. Wrap up the class by asking for any questions and hearing student concerns about the activity. Conclude the class by reminding students that their rough drafts are due tomorrow for peer edits, with their final, printed letters turned in and presented to the class on the following day.

PROCEDURE – DAY 2:

- I. All students should have rough drafts of their letters ready by the start of class.

- II. Separate the class into small groups for peer edits. Students should have their **Handout 1: Taking Informed Action Letter – Basic Format & Suggestions** for reference. Groups can be student- or teacher-selected, but suggest that their letter be viewed by no less than three peers.

- III. Suggest to students that they share their letters with students in class who may not necessarily be their best friends because it is always good to get multiple, different viewpoints. Remind students that the editing process is to help make the students better writers and to produce a more polished product, not to be

personally critical of the student or their efforts.

- IV. When they have received their comments and feedback from their peers, students will have the remainder of the class to work on editing their letter.

- V. Ask each student to share their letter with the teacher as well. While students are engaged in peer edits and re-writing, teachers can call up students for individual quick conferences on their letters. Teachers can give insight and input into both the substance and structure of the letter, and students may take their comments into account when making changes.

- VI. Wrap up the class by asking for any questions. As a class check out, ask students to volunteer any positive things they saw from their peers (ex. writing style, good argument, good sources, etc.) Ask students to volunteer anything they personally will work on to polish their letter before turning it in. Conclude the class by reminding students that final, typed and printed letters will be due tomorrow to hand in at the start of class.

PROCEDURE – DAY 3:

- I. All students should have rough drafts of their letters ready to turn in by the start of class. Remind students to sign their name in pen in the area provided.

- II. Ask students to present their letters in front of the class. Letters can be shared with the teacher electronically and displayed on a projection screen or an interactive white board, or physical letters could be displayed via an electronic document camera.

- III. To facilitate a dialogue and discussion with the class during student presentations, ask the presenting students to speak about their letter by posing several questions to them:
 - 1. Who did you address the letter to? What position do they hold?
 - 2. Why did you decide to write to them? What do you think this official can do about the issue?
 - 3. Did you make a personal assessment as to whom is to blame or who should face international justice for the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh crisis? What was your assessment?
 - 4. What did you determine to be the best course of action for the United States government to take in addressing the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh crisis?

- IV. Be mindful that some students may not want to share their work with the class, especially if they are worried about its content or if they wrote something quite personal in the letter.

- V. Conclude class by thanking students for their work and assuring them that you will mail their letters.

Handout 1: Taking Informed Action Letter – Background

After researching and conducting an ICC simulation on the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it is your chance to act. Students will write a personal letter to an American federal government official defending their views on who should be held responsible for the conflict. Student letters should be written in a professional manner as one would write to a federal government and should be properly formatted. Letters could be addressed to people such as:

- US Ambassador to the United Nations
- US Ambassador to one of the affected countries
- US Secretary of State
- President of the United States
- One of the US Senators from our state

In your letter, ask that the American government take a specific action. Your action could be based on a bill or resolution that is going through Congress, a plan from a non-governmental organization (NGO) or an idea that you came up with on your own. Some examples of action may include:

- Take a definite, public side in a future ICC or domestic trial on this topic
- Bring a resolution on the conflict before the United Nations General Assembly or Security Council
- Ask the official to give public remarks on the conflict
- Request more or less funds for one or more of the countries involved in future appropriations bills
- Author a treaty or executive agreement with one or more of the countries involved
- Make an official state visit to meet with other leaders about the conflict

Letters will be graded on format and structure – not on their personal views on the conflict. See **Handout 2: Taking Informed Action Letter – Basic Format & Suggestions** for guidance.

Handout 2: Taking Informed Action Letter – Basic Format & Suggestions

Date (ex. July 6, 2021)

1 LINE SPACE

Title & Name (ex. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield)

Their Street Address

City, State Zip

1 LINE SPACE

Dear Title & Last Name (ex. “Dear Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield,”)

1 LINE SPACE

1. Introduction (ex. “My name is...and I am a junior at... I am writing to you about..”.)
2. Issue Background – Facts and statistics (ex. “According to a 2021 report by the Congressional Research Service, over 150 civilians died...”)
3. How you feel about this issue (ex. “After researching how cluster bombs were used in civilian areas, I feel...”)

1 LINE SPACE

1. Identify & promote a concrete proposal for change
 - A. You came up with on your own
OR
 - B. A proposal cited from an identified non-governmental organization (“I agree with Denis Krivosheev, Amnesty International’s Research Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, who said in December 2020 that ‘Both Azerbaijani and Armenian authorities must immediately conduct independent, impartial investigations and identify all those responsible.’”)
OR
 - C. A bill or resolution currently being debated in Congress that you support as a solution to the issue
2. Issue a Call to action asking the official to support your stance

1 LINE SPACE

1. Say “Thank you” for reading the letter
2. Encourage them to act

1 LINE SPACE

Sincerely,

3 LINE SPACES (space for your signature in pen)

Your Name

Your Street Address

City, State Zip

Suggestions:

<u>Format</u>	<u>Substance</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Block format; 1 page single-sided• 10- or 12-point professional font like Cambria• Single spaced – separate paragraphs with lines• Check your spelling and grammar – especially any names, locations, ethnic groups, etc.• Use in-text citations for your evidence – no footnotes or parenthetical citations in a letter• Sign in pen – and leave space to do it• Include your mailing address in case of a reply	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get your facts right – and cite your sources• Know who you’re writing to AND what powers they do/don’t have – ex. an American ambassador can’t unilaterally increase funding to a country• Be honest about your feelings on the topic• Solutions should be plausible• It pays to be possible – never threaten or insult