Open Up the Textbook (OUT)

The Zimmermann Note

Enlarge Complicate Contest Vivify

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Grade Level: 8th Grade US History

In this OUT analysis, 8th grade students will study the Zimmermann Note in order to better understand how various perspectives influence our understanding of the role the Zimmermann Note played in the declaration of war on Germany by the United States. This OUT analysis provides students with documents that are meant to deliberately enlarge and contest the textbook.

Source A: The Textbook – *United States History*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2007. page 726.

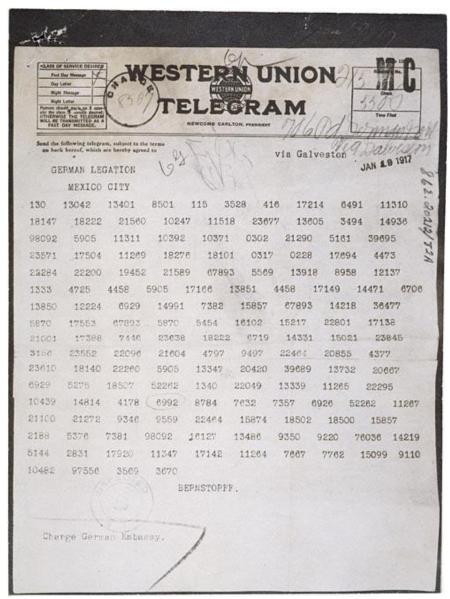
The United States stepped closer to war when Americans found out about the Zimmermann Note. This secret telegram to Mexico sent by the German foreign minister, Arthur Zimmermann, was decoded and then published by American newspapers in March 1917. In the note, Zimmermann proposed an alliance against the United States. He promised that Germany would help Mexico recapture areas that Mexico had lost during the Mexican-American War.

The American public was outraged by the telegram. President Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany. "The world must be made safe for democracy," he proclaimed. Congress declared war on April 6, 1917.

Source A Questions for Consideration

- 1. What was the Zimmerman Note? What promises are made to Mexico and by whom? Be specific.
- 2. What different groups and individuals are mentioned in the text and how did each respond to the discovery of the note? Example: -the American public- was outraged by the note
- 3. What assumption can be made about the decoding of the telegram if only the textbook passage is read?
- 4. What other assumptions are made when reading only the textbook passage?

Source B: Source C: Zimmermann Telegram as Received by the German Ambassador to Mexico, 01/19/1917.



Source B Questions for Consideration

- 1. In what form is the telegram written?
- 2. What might be a secret to decoding the telegram?
- 3. What might be a possible reason the numbers 6992 are circled?

Source C Primary – Zimmermann Telegram – Decoded Message.

A.CELED TELEGRAM RECEIVED. r d ...tor 1-8-58orson, State Dept. By Mark & Eckboff Withwest FROM 2nd from London # 5747. Date Ed. 27,195 8 "We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, Table Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace." Signed, ZIMMERMANN.

Source C Questions for Consideration

- 1. In the telegram, Germany hopes the US will remain neutral. What two phrases explain why Germany believes the US might enter the war?
- 2. What two phrases indicate when the terms in the telegram are to be carried out?
- 3. What is decoded word corresponds to the circled number in the original telegram? How do you know?
- 4. What is a possible reason for the change in this word?
- 5. The telegram states that, "Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona." Explain what you think this means.

Source D Primary- Excerpt from a speech given by Arthur Zimmermann on March 29, 1917,
confirming the authenticity of the telegram. Source Records of the Great War, Vol. V, ed. Charles F. Horne,
National Alumni 1923
"···
General Carranza would have heard nothing of it up to the present if the United States had not

published the instructions which came into its hands in a way which was not unobjectionable. Our behavior contrasts considerable with the behavior of the Washington Government.

President Wilson after our note of January 31, 1917, which avoided all aggressiveness in tone, deemed it proper immediately to break off relations with extraordinary roughness. Our Ambassador no longer had the opportunity to explain or elucidate our attitude orally.

The United States Government thus declined to negotiate with us. On the other hand, it addressed itself immediately to all the neutral powers to induce them to join the United States and break with us.

Every unprejudiced person must see in this the hostile attitude of the American Government, which seemed to consider it right, before being at war with us, to set the entire world against us. It cannot deny us the right to seek allies when it has itself practically declared war on us.

...."

Source D Questions for Consideration

I.	What do you	learn about this	text from the	Sourcing informa	tion (the top thi	ree lines)?
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- 2. What is the author's point of view about the Americans' and Germans' feelings concerning the possibility of war?
- 3. What are three phrases in the passage which justify your answer to question two?
- 4. The phrase "not unobjectionable" in the first paragraph, uses a literary device known as a double negative. Rather than making a negative statement, double negatives actually make a positive statement. Reread this sentence and explain the meaning of the sentence in your own words.

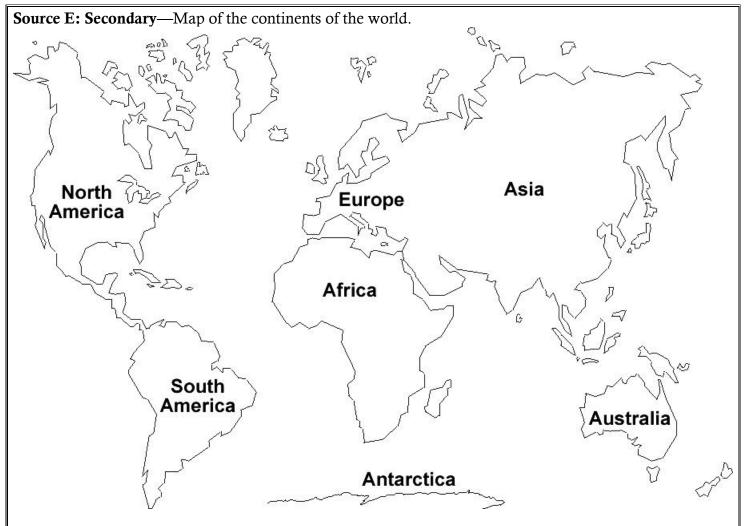
Source D: Secondary-Teaching with Documents: The Zimmermann Telegram: Background (Alexander, Mary and Marilyn Childress. "The Zimmerman Telegram." Social Education 45, (April 1981): 266.

Between 1914 and the spring of 1917, the European nations engaged in a conflict that became known as World War I. While armies moved across the face of Europe, the United States remained neutral. In 1916, Woodrow Wilson was elected President for a second term, largely because of the slogan "He kept us out of war." Events in early 1917 would change that hope. In frustration over the effective British naval blockade, in February Germany broke its pledge to limit submarine warfare. In response to the breaking of the Sussex pledge, the United States severed diplomatic relations with Germany.

In January of 1917, British cryptographers deciphered a telegram from German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann to the German Minister to Mexico, von Eckhardt, offering United States territory to Mexico in return for joining the German cause. This message helped draw the United States into the war and thus changed the course of history. The telegram had such an impact on American opinion that, according to David Kahn, author of The Code breakers, "No other single cryptanalysis has had such enormous consequences." It is his opinion that "never before or since has so much turned upon the solution of a secret message." In an effort to protect their intelligence from detection and to capitalize on growing anti-German sentiment in the United States, the British waited until February 24 to present the telegram to Woodrow Wilson. The American press published news of the telegram on March 1. On April 6, 1917, the United States Congress formally declared war on Germany and its allies.

Source D Questions for Consideration

1.	Prior to the Zimmerman Note, neutrality was very important to the American people. What evidence from the first paragraph supports this claim?
2.	What phrases help define the word "cryptographers"?
3.	What significance does the author give to the Zimmerman Note? Cite evidence from the text to
	support your answer.



Source E Questions for Consideration

- 1. Locate and label Canada, Mexico, the United States, Germany and Great Britain.
- 2. Locate, label and color the approximate area promised to Mexico by Germany in the telegram.

3. According to the Background, trace the route of the telegram.

Writing Task

This is an informational writing task based on NVACS standards [2: Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes]. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the texts as well as the ways in which the textbook was enlarged and contested.

Compare and contrast the points of view of the Americans and the Germans about the role the Zimmermann Note played in America's declaration of war against Germany.

- Answer the above question in approximately three paragraphs using evidence from at least three of the texts provided.
- Write a clear informational thesis and provide 3 pieces of evidence to support each the German and American points of view. After each piece of evidence cited in a direct quote or paraphrase (your own words), please add the source letter in parentheses, for example (Source B).
- For each piece of evidence, clearly reason (explain) why this piece of evidence helps support your thesis. Underline your reasoning. Reasoning can be in the same sentence as the evidence or come before or after the sentence that includes the evidence.
- Choose 3 of the important vocabulary terms from the box below to include in your writing. Add at least two context clues for each term to demonstrate your understanding. Circle your context clues for each term.

aggressive alliance antagonistic cryptographer decoded neutral perspective reconquer

- Prewriting Exercise:
 - With a partner create a T-chart that organizes the evidence you will use for each informational paragraph.
 - o List the evidence you will use for each paragraph and include the source information at the end.
 - When you are finished, number the evidence from most to least important.
 - o Take this order into consideration when writing. Will you begin your paragraphs with the strongest evidence or build up to it to strengthen your writing? You decide!