

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. page726.

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.

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT

Send the following telegram, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to:

GERMAN LEGATION
MEXICO CITY

via Galveston

JAN 19 1917

Charge German Embassy.

BEHNSTOPFF.

130	13042	13401	8501	115	3528	416	17214	6491	11310
18147	18222	21560	10247	11518	23677	13805	3494	14936	
98092	5905	11311	10392	10371	0302	21290	5101	39695	
23571	17504	11269	18276	18101	0317	0228	17694	4473	
23224	22200	19452	21589	67893	5569	13918	8958	12137	
1333	4725	4452	5905	17166	13851	4458	17149	14471	6706
13850	12224	6929	14991	7382	15857	67893	14218	36477	
5870	17553	67893	5870	5454	16102	15217	22801	17138	
21001	17328	7446	23638	18222	6719	14331	15021	23845	
3156	23552	22096	21604	4797	9497	22464	20855	4377	
23610	18140	22260	5905	13347	20420	39689	13732	20667	
6929	5275	18507	52262	1340	22049	13339	11265	22295	
10439	14814	4178	6992	8784	7632	7357	6926	52262	11267
21100	21272	9346	9559	22464	15874	18502	18500	15857	
2188	5376	7381	98092	16127	13486	9350	9220	76036	14219
5144	2831	17920	11347	17142	11264	7667	7762	15099	9110
10482	97556	3569	3670						

861.20119/521

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.

RECEIVED
October 1-8-58
W. L. Garrison, State Dept.
By *Mack G. Eckhoff, Undersecretary*
Date *Oct. 27, 1958*

TELEGRAM RECEIVED.

FROM 2nd from London # 5747.

"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, ~~invite~~ ^{invite} 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

1. What do you learn about this text from the Sourcing information (the top three lines)?
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: Secondary—Map of the continents of the world.



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.
 - 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.
 - 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!