**Lesson title: 1. War – The Blame Game**

**Lesson aim:**
1. To explore the question: Who was to blame for World War 1?
2. To explore the question: Are we too quick to play the blame game and too slow to take responsibility for ourselves?

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<td>We can be quick to blame others without taking the blame ourselves. Consider social issues that are relevant today – unemployment, lack of housing, poverty around the world, food wastage, wars … Who is really to blame?</td>
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<td>Use this time to reflect on what you have discussed and learned about the causes of World War 1 but also on a personal level reflect on our own willingness to take the blame.</td>
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<td>Rewrite the Treaty of Versailles</td>
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<td>Imagine that you have managed to travel back in time. You arrive just as the Treaty of Versailles is about to be written. What do you advice them to write as the cause of the war? What clauses should they include that ensures a war like this never happens again?</td>
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Introduction
There has been much discussion over the last 100 years about who or what was to blame for the outbreak of war in 1914. The Treaty of Versailles clearly blamed Germany but that is now seen as a far too simplistic view.

The aim of this section is to get the class to explore and discuss some of the key factors that led to World War 1 and to decide for themselves, which they believe, were the most important.

1. Splendid Isolation: In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Britain was often described as being in 'Splendid Isolation' from the rest of Europe. Britain had a huge empire and ruling this empire was its priority. Many believe that such a narrow World View meant that Britain failed to recognise fully the significance of the events that were happening within Europe itself.

2. Schlieffen Plan: In 1892, the French and the Russians formed their own strong alliance (the Dual Entente) that meant Germany now had an unfriendly power on each side. As a result of this in 1897, General Schlieffen, drew up a plan that would allow Germany to beat France very quickly in any future war. This would then free most German troops to fight Russia in the east. The plan presumed that France was the weaker of the threats but Russia, although stronger, would take longer to mobilize her troops.

3. Triple Alliance: In 1879, Germany and Austria-Hungary formed an alliance (the Dual Alliance) that gave them great strength in the centre of Europe. By the early 1900s, the Dual Alliance had become the Triple Alliance with the entry of Italy into the agreement (although Italy stayed out of the war in 1914).

4. Triple Entente: In 1907, Britain joined Russia and France to form the Triple Entente. Britain was much less committed to this alliance than Russia or France. The agreement brought together three old enemies, united in their suspicions of German plans to dominate Europe.
5. **Balkan War:** In October 1912 the Balkan War erupted in southern Europe as Serbia led an attack by members of the Balkan League (Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece) against the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire to drive the Turks out of Europe. The war ended in May 1913 – with the Turks driven out of southern Europe. A peace settlement was then drawn up by the major European powers that divided up the former Turkish areas in southern Europe among the Balkan League nations. However, the peace is short-lived as Bulgaria wanted a bigger share of the land and so attacked neighboring Greece and Serbia. Romania then attacked Bulgaria along with the Turks. This Second Balkan War resulted in Bulgaria losing territory and the Serbians becoming more powerful which left the Balkan region of southern Europe politically unstable.

6. **Bosnia Annexed:** In 1908, Austria-Hungary took over the province of Bosnia, where many Serbs lived. Serbia and her ally Russia were furious. Although this action did not lead to immediate conflict tension began to rise and opposition to Austria-Hungary began to grow.

7. **Assassination of the Archduke:** The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand was the catalyst that set in motion the direct events that were to lead to the Great War. Franz Ferdinand was the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary. He was assassinated on 28 June 1914 during a visit to Sarajevo. Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia, even though the assassins were not directly connected to the Serbian government. On 31 July 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.

8. **Invasion of Belgium:** When German troops invaded France and Belgium as part of the Schlieffen Plan, Britain did not have to go to war. Germany hoped Britain would stay out of the war altogether. However, the Germans knew that Britain had promised to defend Belgium under the Treaty of London of 1839. The Germans wanted the British government to ignore the Treaty of London and let the German army pass through Belgium. However, Belgium's ports were close to the British coast and German control of Belgium was seen as a serious threat to
Britain. In the end, Britain refused to ignore the events of 4th August 1914, when Germany attacked France through Belgium. Within hours, Britain declared war on Germany. The Kaiser said how foolish he thought the British were. He said that Britain had gone to war for the sake of a "scrap of paper.

9. The mobilisation of the Russian Army to support Serbia
On 31 July 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. At this point, the alliances came into play. Russia mobilised its army ready to help the Serbs against Austria-Hungary. Everyone knew that if Russia attacked Austria-Hungary, then the alliance system meant that Germany and France could be pulled into the war as well.

Diamond Nines – this is a good way to encourage discussion amongst your group. Each individual or small group is given a copy of the Diamond Nine sheet cut up. They then need to form the diamond again by putting the factors in order of importance – the most important being at the top of the diamond. It is important to emphasise that there is no right or wrong answer but each group must be prepared to argue why they have reached the conclusion they have.

❖ Delving Deeper
The fact that the Treaty of Versailles blamed Germany for the start of World War 1 was one of the key factors that eventually led to World War 2. Putting the blame at one person / group’s feet whilst not excepting any responsibility for yourself can have devastating results. In the media we often see the blame for social issues placed onto certain groups or individuals whilst we fail to acknowledge the other side of the story.

The aim of delving deeper is to look at some of these issues and to get the class to challenge prejudices by presenting both sides of the story. This could be done through organised debate or individual research.

One way to present a debate is by ‘tag team debate’. The research could be done in small teams with each team focusing on only one particular side of the debate. Members of the team have a set time to present their argument before tagging onto their teammate. The team who presents the clearest argument wins.
Examples of statements to consider:

• Young people are to blame for the social ills in our country
• My parents and teachers are to blame for all my problems
• Video games are to blame for all the antisocial behaviour
• Religion is to blame for all the wars in the world
• Old people are to blame for the state of the country

❖ Biblical Links

There is a joke:
‘In the beginning Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the snake and the snake didn’t have a leg to stand on.’

Right from the beginning of time we read in Genesis 3 that humans were passing the blame and not taking on responsibility for their own actions:

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’

10 He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’

11 And he said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?’

12 The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’

The woman said, ‘The snake deceived me, and I ate.’
As you look at the accounts of creation and the fall in Genesis 2 and 3 keep in mind some key questions:

1. Who was to blame?
2. What was the consequence of their actions?
3. Is the need to blame others at the very heart of being human?
4. Would we have behaved any differently?

In contrast to the Adam and Eve story look at the death of Jesus. There is an excellent film on RE:quest entitled ‘The Cross.’

http://request.org.uk/jesus/jesus-importance-today/2013/10/11/why-did-jesus-die/

As you explore the idea of Jesus taking on the blame for us and our action compare this to the way humans are so quick to play the blame game.

❖ **Reflections**
As you come to the end of the session it is essential to give the class the time to reflect on what they have learned and discussed. Use this time to reflect on what you have discussed and learned about the causes of World War 1 but also on a personal level reflect on our own willingness to take the blame.

NB. For some the issues discussed in this lesson maybe very pertinent ones for them personally and therefore they may need support in working through these issues.

❖ **Next Step**
Imagine that you have managed to travel back in time. You arrive just as the Treaty of Versailles is about to be written. What do you advice them to write as the cause of the war? What clauses should they include that ensures a war like this never happens again?