

# The beginning and end of World War II

## Exercise/ methodology

---

**Lesson**  
45 minutes

**Additional**  
material

**Exercise /**  
methodology

## Definition of the term “War”

This exercise can be used as an introduction to the topic “Beginning and end of WWII”. It is well suited as an introductory topic for the timeline method.

Duration	45 min
Material	Blank cards to write on, paper on which to write the definition, flipchart paper to be prepared by the teacher
Objectives	To write a definition of the term “War”, using keywords; to understand what might cause a war; to understand when a war ends; to apply this knowledge to WWII

## Methodology

The “Ball bearing” method, brainstorming, pair work, “Silent discussion” method, writing of a definition using keywords

### The “Ball bearing” method”

The students are arranged in two circles—an outer circle and an inner circle—in such a manner that the students are facing one another in pairs. The pairs exchange views on a topic. After a set time has elapsed, the circles rotate in opposite directions, so that new conversation partners are now facing each other. The clear structure of this method gives the students security. It enables intensive and varied contact and exchange within the group’s protected space. Even if you talk about the same topic several times, this can help to clarify and structure your own thoughts, and you can think more deeply about the topic(s).

1. The students stand in pairs in an inner and an outer circle, facing each other.
2. The moderator indicates that a conversation or a common action is to begin. The students are told how much time they have to exchange ideas.
3. After the specified time has elapsed (approx. 2-3 minutes), the moderator gives a signal, which means that everyone ends their conversation. The students are asked to say goodbye. They are told now to follow the rotation rule. (e.g. “The inner circle moves two places to the right. The outer circle moves one place to the left.”) The students change their places according to the specified rule. In this way, new conversation pairs are created with each rotation.
4. This is followed by a new round of talks, again with a specified duration. The pairs do not necessarily have to discuss factual issues; optional alternatives may be suggested, e.g. relaxation exercises, discussion (in pairs or small groups) of questions or issues of interest, etc.

### “Silent discussion”

This is a method in which students write down (on a large sheet of paper) their own ideas, thoughts, opinions, questions, or facts, in response to a statement or a question that they are given to consider. They also may make written comments on, or write down questions about, what their fellow students have written. Reading what others have written may give them further ideas of their own to write down.

The method is very suitable for students who are too shy to speak in class or for those who need to be inspired in order to develop their own ideas.



- The teacher prepares three large sheets of paper, with a different statement or question on a particular topic on each of the sheets.
- The students may choose which sheet of paper to start with, and go back and forth from paper to paper, writing down thoughts and ideas of their own, or reading what others have written and writing down comments or questions.

There is only one rule: All students must remain silent.

- After that the class is to be divided into three groups, one for each sheet of paper. Each group discusses amongst themselves what has been written on their paper.
- After that each group will present (in a plenary session) the paper they have been discussing.

---

## Suggestion for possible lesson plan

### The “Ball-bearing” method (see above)

Students are to collect different ideas of what “War” is. They may make their own notes.

#### Suggestion of possible questions to ask during the “Ball bearing” method

- What is war? When do we talk about war?
- What, in your opinion, are the causes of war/reasons for waging wars?
- When do you officially declare a war over? (examples: if fighting has ceased, or if a ceasefire has been declared, or a peace treaty has been signed, etc.)

### Individual work:

Students write down on blank cards key words from what they have learned.

### Brainstorming/Mind Map:

The students put their cards on the board and together with their teacher they sort their ideas/results to create a mind map.

### Pair or small group work:

The students write on a piece of paper a definition of the term “War”, and a list of reasons that could lead to a war, using the mind map on the board. They put their definitions on the board.

### Plenary:

The students read out their definitions. At the end they decide which of the definitions best describes what war is.



## Silent discussion:

The teacher has prepared three sheets of flipchart paper by writing in the middle of each of the three sheets one statement or a question on the theme of:

- the attack on Poland on 1 September 1939 as the beginning of WWII
- the attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941
- the end of WWII.

The students are to discuss the statement or question by writing down what they know or wish to know.

## Plenary:

The class is to be divided into three groups, one for each sheet of paper. Each group discusses amongst themselves what has been written on their paper. After that each group will present (in a plenary session) the paper they have been discussing.

