

Using Technology to Teach Boys about War



We can engage the boys on their own “playgrounds” in order to:

- Teach history in a dynamic and engaging manner
- Leverage boys’ proficiency with technology to encourage involvement in the learning process
- Contextualize and authenticate their pre-existing historical knowledge
- Integrate the “lessons” and “skills” they learn from war games into academic studies
- Attempt to bridge the yawning gap between their “recreational gaming” and the realities of war that very well could become their future

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- I. In teaching history to boys, war is a hook, no matter how much we try to avoid it.

 - II. Using technology that’s out of our comfort zone allows *them* to teach *us* – a great avenue for them to learn.

 - III. Technology provides boys with myriad bits of “random” historical information – it’s our job to provide a relevant context for it all.
 - A. Historical facts
 - B. Characteristics of cultures
 - C. Advantages and disadvantages of types governments
 - D. Basic understanding of economic forces
 - E. How valid is their information?

- IV. We can draw from their previous virtual experiences to initiate or advance class discussions.
- A. TV and YouTube Documentaries – The History Channel
 - B. Strategy Games
 - 1. **Turn-Based** - “Civilization”
 - 2. **Real-Time**
 - a. Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG)- “World of Warcraft”
 - b. Computer Opponent (CPU) - “Age of Empires”
 - C. **First Person Shooter Games** (FPS) – “Call of Duty”
 - D. What strategies must they consider in playing these games? How are these similar to ones facing leaders and soldiers in actual conflicts over the ages?
- V. As best we can, we must expose them to some of the realities of war to identify and offset misconceptions.
- A. Google Earth
 - 1. Access Ramsey Historical Maps e.g. Berlin in 1944.
 - 2. Take tours of virtually recreated, historically important places. e. g. Ancient Rome.
 - 3. View contemporary topography, terrain and other physical characteristics of conflict.
 - 4. Use “street view” tool to understand complexities of real-world urban warfare.
 - 5. Enter “flight simulator” to fly across areas in real-time.
 - B. Current Events
 - 1. Web browsers set to news sites – Google Chrome “around the world in five minutes”
 - 2. Web videos, Hulu, YouTube – “Restrepo”
 - C. Blogs
 - 1. Steven Pressfield’s “One Tribe at a Time” with Major Jim Grant
 - 2. “Thinking Strategically”
 - 3. Association of Afghan Blog Writers (AABW)
 - 4. Military bloggers - <http://kaboomwarjournalarchive.blogspot.com/>
 - D. How do their “virtual” experiences differ so dramatically from actual world events and experiences?



The Afghan Campaign: Then and Now

A Three-Week Study Multi-Media Historical Study of War



Activities:

- We will read the accessible **historical novel** *Afghan Campaign* by Steven Pressfield. Each night, students will answer reading questions specifically designed to emphasize similarities between Alexander the Great's army and Coalition forces fighting in Afghanistan today, considering such characteristics as combat strategies, challenges of terrain, cultural traits, logistics and will to war.

Do you believe that so many nations accustomed to the name and rule of another, united with us neither by religion, nor customs, nor community or language, have been subdued in the same battle in which they were overcome? It is by your arms alone that they are restrained, not by their dispositions, and those who fear us when we are present; in our absence will be enemies... Accordingly, we must either give up what we have taken, or we must seize what we do not yet hold.

Alexander, addressing his troops @ 331 BC

- We will do a **parallel study** between Alexander's conquest of the Afghan plains and mountains up to the Indus River (332- 329 BC) and the War in Afghanistan (2001 to present). This includes highlighting common problems that have made for unique conditions of conflict between Afghans and foreign forces (i.e. harsh climate and challenging terrain, constantly changing cooperation vs. collaboration with invading armies, tribal rivalries, decision-making and leadership methods etc.).
- We will access **Google Chrome** to read daily news reports in Pashto and Dari – “take off our shoes and walk a few steps in another's sandals...”
- Use **Google Earth technology** to trace **Alexander the Great's route** through Afghanistan to see the terrain and topography. They will immediately notice that very little has changed in the 2,300 years between military campaigns.
- Experiment with the **Google flight simulator** to gain a greater understanding for the vast plains of southwestern Afghanistan and the forbidding highlands of the Hindu Kush; both of which are familiar terrain to the indigenous tribesmen who have, over the millennia, adapted to the harsh conditions but hostile to western armies.
- Play the new edition of the **computer game of “Medal of Honor”** in class and listen to two clips from NPR interviews; “Medal of Honor” and “Real Life, not a Game.” Discuss implications of “playing” graphic war games (especially as Taliban).

- View the National Geographic’s award-winning film “**Restrepo**,” about Second Platoon, B Company, 2nd Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team of the US Army in the Korengal valley defending a Forward Operating Base (FoB) in what was known at the time as “the deadliest place in the world.”

Written Presentation - Write a paper:

Identify and analyze three specific ways that Alexander the Great's Afghan Campaign was like the war being fought today by US and NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Requirements:

- Please cite at least 3 contemporary sources (either from the printed articles I handed out or from web sources*
 - One of those 3 contemporary sources cited must be from Ron Gant’s “One Tribe At A Time” paper
 - Access relevant articles from Lexis-Nexus using Woodberry’s website (cited correctly)
- Please cite/directly quote at least 3 quotes from Pressfield’s *Afghan Campaign* to support your analysis. We discussed many significant quotes in class over the last two weeks with this in mind.
- You will need to cite your sources using footnotes, Turabian style with a Bibliography page.
- Minimum length = at least 4 full pages (TNR, 12 pt., 1”)

*For links to sources, go to Woodberry’s network on your computer (the “Wfs4” drive, accessed from “My Computer”) and the following path:

Wfs4 > Academics > A&M > Afghan War >

Notes on sources:

- The folders “Afghan War Websites” and “Afghan articles” will be helpful - you will need to access those articles via “**Lexis-Nexis**” on the library’s website
- You will find the PDF file “**One Tribe at a Time**” *very helpful*. It’s written by a former US Special Ops officer who knows what’s up there, especially regarding tribalism and how to achieve “victory” if there is any possibility of it.
- Please email me the links to any sources you find extremely valuable for your research.

Ancient & Medieval History
2010 – 2011

Afghan Campaign Syllabus

Day 1 Homework due: **Read *Afghan Campaign*, pp. 3-39;** and answer questions
Class Discussion: **Afghanistan Then and Now**

Day 2 Homework due: **Read *Afghan Campaign*, pp. 40 - 54;** and answer questions
Class Discussion: **Moral Issues and Multi-Culturalism**

Day 3 Homework due: **Read *Afghan Campaign*, pp. 55-98;** and answer questions
Class Discussion: **US Strategies in Afghanistan Since 2001**

Day 4 Homework due: **Read *Afghan Campaign*, pp 99-116;** and answer questions
Class Discussion: **Geography, Topography and Weather of Afghanistan**

Day 5 Homework due: **Read *Afghan Campaign*, pp. 117 - 145;** and answer questions
Class Discussion: **Tribalism in Afghanistan**

Day 6 Homework due: **Read *Afghan Campaign*, pp. 149-159;** and answer questions
Class Discussion: **The Struggle for Hearts and Minds – Kandahar Campaign**

Day 7 Homework due: **Read *Afghan Campaign*, pp. 160-191;** and answer questions
Class Discussion: **Mr. Budlong *** Both Classes meet in my classroom at
11:45 – Meeting Period instead of class
Real Soldiers, Real War**

Day 8 Homework due: **Read *Afghan Campaign*, pp. 192-216;** and answer questions
Class Discussion: **What Makes an Effective Leader?**

Day 9 Homework due: **Read *Afghan Campaign*, pp. 217 - 248;** and answer questions
Class Discussion: **What's Worth Fighting For?**

Day 10 Homework due: **Read *Afghan Campaign*, pp. 251 - 284;** and answer questions
 Class Discussion: **Video Games; “Medal of Honor” – Demeaning or Engaging?**

Day 11 Homework due: **Read *Afghan Campaign*, pp. 285 - 326;** and answer questions
 Class Discussion: **What is Victory in War? Is it Possible in Afghanistan?**

Day 12 Homework due: **Read *Afghan Campaign*, pp. 327 - 351;** and answer questions
 Class Discussion: **Reactions to the book; learning about subscription sources**

BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS

Day 13 Homework due:

- **Spend 15 minutes reading on Pressfield’s *Afghan Campaign* website (make sure you stay on that one; he has several others)**
- **Use ProQuest, LexisNexus and JSTOR to find one article each pertaining to the US war in Afghanistan. (It needs to be written within the last 6 months).**
- **Go to Kabul Press, AlJazeera and The Jerusalem Post; read articles on the war in Afghanistan from these different points of view for discussion**

Class Discussion: Point of View – Bring laptops to class

Day 14 Homework due: **Begin work on paper due Tuesday, November 16 at 7:30 pm for everyone**

Identify and analyze three specific ways that Alexander the Great's Afghan Campaign was like the war being fought today by US and NATO forces in Afghanistan. (see separate sheet for more details)

Class Discussion: **Work on paper – Bring laptops to class**

Day 15 Homework due: **Work on paper – Bring laptops to class**

The paper is due on Tuesday night at 7:30.

Day 16 **Paper due at 7:30 pm for both classes – on my desk.**

Afghan Campaign – Reading Assignment #3

1. Briefly describe Mathias' first encounter with Alexander.
2. Why do the "Macks" like mules much better than horses? If they couldn't find horses or mules, what would they do?
3. In a conversation between Ash, the mule trader and Mathias, about the Afghan warlord and arch-enemy Spitamenes, what does Ash predict Spitamenes will do to the Macedonian army?

Afghan Campaign – Reading Assignment #8

1. How did Alexander strike back against Spitamenes' armed mountain encampment?
2. How do Mathias and Lucas gain their freedom from the Afghans?
3. Ultimately, whom does Alexander blame for the massacre at Many Blessings and the 1,723 Macedonian and Greek mercenary soldiers who died?
4. After the winter snows have closed all the passes, Alexander announces a “second phase” of the campaign. Why was it so revolutionary?

I have neither given nor received help on this assignment. _____

Afghan Campaign – Reading Assignment #9

1. Why won't Afghans fight in units, Macedonian style?
2. What are *nazq* and *pank*? Describe some of the problems they cause for the soldiers.
3. What advice does his older brother Elias give Mathias right before he dies?

I have neither given nor received help on this assignment. _____

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Name _____

Afghan Campaign – Reading Assignment #11

1. Why did Mathias get in trouble with his superiors regarding his friend, Lucas' death?
2. How does Alexander himself resolve the issue when he visits Mathias in the tent?
3. In preparing to leave Afghanistan, after Spitamenes is dead, what do the Macedonians realize about the definition of "victory?"

