

Battle of Adwa Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:

How did Ethiopia defeat Italy at the Battle of Adwa?

Materials:

- Documents A-B
- Guiding Questions
- PowerPoint

Plan of Instruction:

- 1) Introduction: Use PowerPoint to introduce inquiry, establish or review necessary background information, and explore a short textbook account of the Battle of Adwa.
 - a. Slides 1 & 2: Introduce lesson
 - i. *This is a painting of the Battle of Adwa, which was painted by an unknown Ethiopian artist. The exact date of the painting is also unknown. The battle was fought between Ethiopia and Italy on March 1, 1896. It lasted one day, and was a decisive victory for Ethiopia.*
 - ii. *The battle was significant because it marked the biggest African victory over a European army in the 19th century. The battle helped keep Ethiopia, or Abyssinia, one of the only parts of Africa to remain independent during the “scramble for Africa” in the second half of the 19th century – a time when European powers established colonies across most of African continent.*
 - b. Slide 3: Inquiry Question
 - i. *Our question today is: How was Ethiopia able to defeat the Italian army at the Battle of Adwa and stay independent?*
 - ii. *To address this question, we are going to look at 3 different textbook accounts, 2 American and 1 Ethiopian.*
 - iii. *One of our primary objectives for the day is to compare and contrast - or corroborate - information across these different textbooks. Part of our job is to identify what these accounts have in common and how they are different.*
- 2) Begin Inquiry with the textbook passage on Slide 4. Introduce modeling of the first textbook account of the battle.
 - a. Model reading textbook to students:
 - i. *Ok, so checking the source information here, I see this excerpt comes from an American, World History Textbook published in 2006. I am assuming it's going to provide a*

pretty simple explanation, or overview of the Battle, given the amount of text here. Wow, it is a really short passage. That seems very typical of many textbook accounts of historical events. It's hard to "cover everything," I guess. So, I am reading this with the purpose of trying to figure out how Ethiopia defeated Italy at the Battle of Adwa. "Only the African nation of Ethiopia was able to retain its independence by matching European firepower." Well there you go. It sounds like the Ethiopians in this case had a strong military. Let's see what else it says. "In 1889 the emperor of Ethiopia, Menelik II, undertook a program of modernization that included a modern Army." Ok. A modern army, and perhaps a strong leader too – this person Menelik II the emperor. "In 1895, Italian forces invaded Ethiopia over a treaty dispute. Within a year, however, Menelik's forces – more numerous and better armed than the Italians – defeated the Italians at the Battle of Adwa." Well that does not tell me much. I guess that is to be expected in such a short excerpt. According to the textbook Ethiopia won this battle because it had a bigger and better armed army.

- 3) Hand out documents A and B with guiding questions. In pairs, students read textbook excerpt A and answer the questions.
 - a. Share out responses to guiding questions.

Important to note:

- *The central importance of Menelik in this textbook.*
- *The effect of differing versions of the treaty, which is not mentioned in the first textbook account.*
- *The importance attributed to modern weapons, a reason shared with the first textbook.*

- 4) In pairs, students read textbook excerpt B and answer guiding questions.
 - a. Share out responses to guiding questions.

Important to Note:

- *This account is the most substantial of the 3.*
- *Menelik's friendly relations with Italy is not mentioned in the American textbooks.*
- *The different version of how the conflict between Italy and Ethiopia began. This account positions Italy as the aggressor, both in the lead up to battle and as the instigator of the battle.*
- *The description of the Ethiopian army as "ill-trained" and not "well armed"- the direct opposite of the other textbooks*

- *The other factors mentioned to explain Ethiopia's victory – namely, the courage and support of the people and the participation of women.*

5) Making a Claim

- a. Students write a paragraph addressing the central historical question.

6) Discussion

- *How are the narratives that appear in the two textbooks similar?*
- *How are the two versions different?*
- *Why do you think they are so different. Which, if either, do you find more trustworthy?*
- *Why was Ethiopia able to defeat the Italian army at the Battle of Adwa?*
- *What other sources might you look at either to corroborate these textbook accounts, or to find out more information about the battle?*

Citations:

Mehari, Getachew, Mamo, A., Alemu, T., T'Giorgis, S., & Dissassa, M. (2006). *Social studies student textbook: Grade 8*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Educational Materials Production and Distribution Enterprise. p. 86-88.

Beck, R. B., Black, L., Krieger, L.S., Naylor, P.C., Shabaka, D.I. (2006) *Modern world history: Patterns of interaction*. McDougal Littell. p. 349.

Ramirez, S., Stearns, P., & Wineburg, S. (2008). *World history: Human legacy*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. p. 760.