**Spartacus Educational Classroom Activity**

[Sinking of the Lusitania and War Propaganda](http://spartacus-educational.com/ExamFWWU6.htm) (Questions & Answers)

<http://spartacus-educational.com/EXAManswerFWW6.htm>

This commentary is based on the classroom activity:  **Q1**: Study sources 1, 4, 7, 21 and 22. How many people were drowned as a result of the sinking of the Lusitania?

**A1**: These sources give different figures for the number of people drowned as a result of the sinking of the Lusitania. This includes source 1 (1,260), source 4 (1,272), source 7 (1,450), source 21 (1,100) and source 22 (1,198).

**Q2**: (a) How did the Germans defend the sinking of the Lusitania? It will help you to read sources 2, 3, 11, 12 and 14 before answering this question. (b) How does source 5 help to support the German argument.

**A2**: The German government had issued warnings that "enemy ships" would be "destroyed" if they entered the "war region". It also pointed out "attacks intended for hostile ships may affect neutral ships". (sources 2 and 3). The German high command became convinced that ships such as the Lusitania was being used to transport troops and ammunition. (source 11) [Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg](http://spartacus-educational.com/FWWbethmann.htm)argued that it was necessary to sink the Lusitania in order to "gain the freedom of the seas". (source 12) The German newspaper, [Die Kölnische Volkszeitung](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/K&#195;&#182;lnische_Volkszeitung), justified the sinking on the grounds that the "English wish to abandon the German people to death by starvation" by imposing a naval blockade. Whereas Germany is "more humane. We simply sank an English ship with passengers, who, at their own risk and responsibility, entered the zone of operations". (source 14)

**Q3**: Explain the meaning of source 6.

**A3**: Source 6 shows the Kaiser [Wilhelm II](http://spartacus-educational.com/FWWkaiser.htm) and Uncle Sam (representing the United States). Between them lies the bodies of young children who died as a result of the sinking of the Lusitania. By saying "Here are the Facts" Uncle Sam is suggesting that Germany has committed an immoral act.

**Q4**: Read the introduction and sources 9 and 10 and describe the problems encountered by the people on the Lusitania. Can you explain why more women than men survived the sinking of the Lusitania?

**A4**: It was the policy to put women and children in the lifeboats first. Unfortunately, only six of the 48 lifeboats were launched successfully. It was mainly the people in the lifeboats who survived.

**Q5**: Read source 18 and explain why the sinking of the Lusitania caused problems for the English woman living in Acton?

**A5**: [Ernest Sackville Turner](http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/jul/18/pressandpublishing.obituaries) points out in [Dear Old Blighty](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Dear-Old-Blighty-S-Turner/dp/0718118790/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1323104843&sr=1-1) (1980) that after the sinking of the Lusitaniathe British public became very hostile to Germany. This included attacks on British women who had married German men. Turner illustrates this with the story of the woman in Acton who had been evicted from her house by her landlord because she was married to a German man.

**Q6**: Use the information in source 22 to explain source 20.

**A6**: [Martin Gilbert](http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/04/sir-martin-gilbert) argues that "the sinking of the Lusitania shocked American opinion, but President Wilson had no intention of abandoning neutrality". Source 20 shows Kaiser [Wilhelm II](http://spartacus-educational.com/FWWkaiser.htm) saying to President [Woodrow Wilson](http://spartacus-educational.com/FWWwilsonW.htm): "Here's money for your Americans. I may drown some more". The cartoonist seems to be saying that as long as the United States were profiting from trade during the war, Wilson would not declare war on Germany.

**Q7**: The governments of Britain and the United States used the sinking of the Lusitania to produce anti-German propaganda. Study sources 8, 13, 17 and 24 and explain the message being communicated by these visual images. Can you explain why source 24 was produced two years after the other sources?

**A7**:

(Source 8): This poster produced by [Bernard Partridge](http://spartacus-educational.com/Jpartridge.htm) shows a woman representing justice, while in the background the Lusitania is sinking. The title, Take Up the Sword of Justice, suggests that Britain needs to revenge this decision to sink a passenger ship.

(Source 13): This poster also uses the phrase the "sword of justice". It claims that "this appalling crime was contrary to international law and the conventions of all civilized nations". This poster was used to encourage men to join the armed forces to "take up the sword of justice to avenge the devil's work".

(Source 17): Like source 13 this source is a recruitment poster. It is aimed at people living in Ireland: "Irishmen avenge the Lusitania."

(Source 24) This poster does not mention the Lusitania. However, people at the time would have linked the drawing of the drowned woman with the sinking of the ship. The word "Enlist" shows it is another recruitment poster. It was not published until 1917 because it was only after entering the First World War that the American government used the sinking of the Lusitania to recruit men into the armed forces.

**Q8**: Source 11 claims that the *Lusitania* had "on earlier occasions, had Canadian troops and munitions on board, including no less than 5,400 cases of ammunition destined for the destruction of brave German soldiers". Find evidence in this unit to support this claim.

**A8**: [Howard Zinn](http://spartacus-educational.com/USAzinn.htm), the author of [*A People's History of the United States*](http://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=A+People%27s+History+of+the+United+States&rh=n%3A266239%2Ck%3AA+People%27s+History+of+the+United+States) (1980) pointed out: "The United States claimed the Lusitania carried an innocent cargo, and therefore the torpedoing was a monstrous German atrocity. Actually, the Lusitania was heavily armed: it carried 1,248 cases of 3-inch shells, 4,927 boxes of cartridges (1,000 rounds in each box), and 2,000 more cases of small-arms ammunition. Her manifests were falsified to hide this fact, and the British and American governments lied about the cargo." (source 23)

[Greg Bemis](http://www.zoominfo.com/p/Gregg-Bemis/4363226) purchased the *Lusitania* in 1968. When he was interviewed by the [*Sunday Times*](http://spartacus-educational.com/JtimesS.htm) in 2002 he argued: "The fact is that the ship sank in 18 minutes. That could only happen as the result of a massive second explosion. We know there was such an explosion, and the only thing capable of doing that is ammunitions. It's virtually impossible to get coal dust and damp air in the right mixture to explode, and none of the crew who were working in the boiler rooms and survived say anything about a boiler exploding. I don't think there's any question that there was a steamline explosion, but that wouldn't have damaged the ship to the point where it sunk in 18 minutes. It's blarney, part of another cover story." (source 19)

Source 25 quotes a letter from Noel Marshall, the head of the Foreign Office's North America department, written on 30th July 1982, that stated: "Successive British governments have always maintained that there was no munitions on board the Lusitania (and that the Germans were therefore in the wrong to claim to the contrary as an excuse for sinking the ship)... . The facts are that there is a large amount of ammunition in the wreck, some of which is highly dangerous. The Treasury have decided that they must inform the salvage company of this fact in the interests of the safety of all concerned. Although there have been rumours in the press that the previous denial of the presence of munitions was untrue, this would be the first acknowledgement of the facts by HMG."