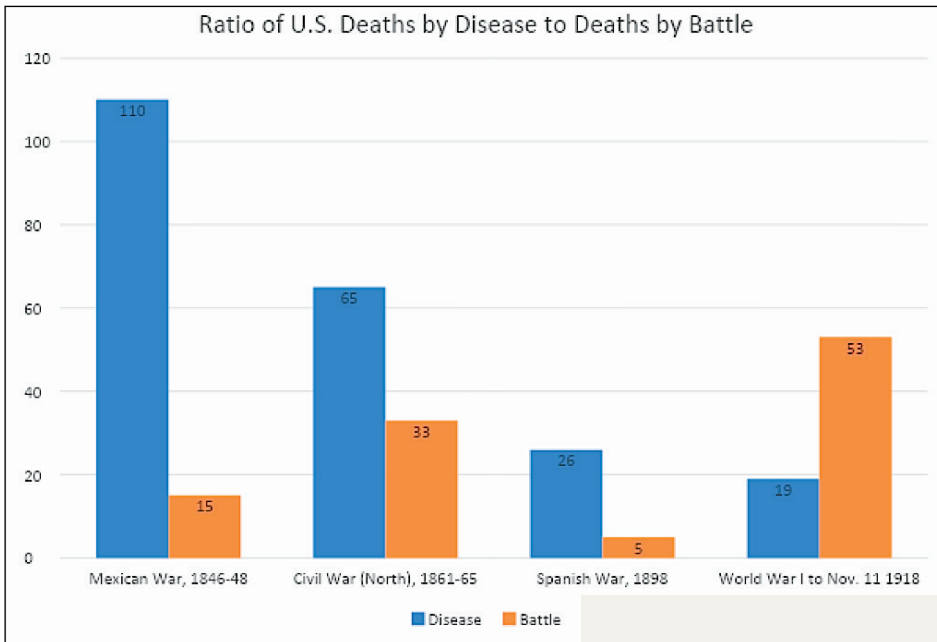




Activity: Running the Numbers on America's Contribution to the Meuse-Argonne Offensive



Guiding question:

How can students use statistics to make arguments about the past?

DEVELOPED BY KATE HARRIS

Grade Level(s): 9-12

Subject(s): Social Studies

Overview

Using statistics from the American Armies and Battlefields in Europe (Blue Book), students will evaluate the United States' contributions to the Meuse-Argonne Offensive and, ultimately, to World War I.

Historical Context

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive took place on the Western Front of World War I between September 26 and the Armistice of November 11, 1918. It was one of the largest military offensives in U.S. history with 1.2 million U.S. troops involved. By this time, both sides in the war had lost staggering numbers of soldiers and were facing financial ruin. With its entrance into the war in 1917, the United States provided much-needed military and financial support for the Allies.

Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to

- Evaluate the effectiveness of statistics as a source of historical evidence;
- Interpret statistics from the Blue Book;
- Use statistics to describe the United States' contribution to the Meuse-Argonne Offensive and World War I; and
- Evaluate the United States' contributions to the war relative to other nations.

Standards Connections

Connections to Common Core

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear among the key details and ideas.

“American Armies and Battlefields in Europe is full of so much good data about the United States contribution to World War I, but it can be challenging to make meaning from the various lists of statistics. This activity asks students to consider how different types of sources—video, text, and statistics—reveal different aspects of the conflict. In addition, it guides students through the statistics presented in order to develop an understanding of America's contribution to the conflict. Students will build cross-curricular skills in math and social studies while working with primary source materials to learn about World War I.”
—Kate Harris

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Connections to C3 Framework

D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects on events in the past.

D2.His.15.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

D2.His.10.9-12. Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.

D2.His.12.9-12. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.

Documents Used ★ indicates an ABMC source

Secondary Sources

[American Armies and Battlefields in Europe](#), 1938 ★
American Battle Monuments Commission

Video, [Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery](#) (1:57) ★
American Battle Monuments Commission

Materials

- Representations of Sacrifice Handout
- Representations of Sacrifice Evaluation Handout
- Running the Numbers Packet
- Running the Numbers Answer Key
- Computers with internet access for each student

Lesson Preparation

- Set up classroom technology and test all online resources before class.
- Make one copy of each of the following for each student:
 - Representations of Sacrifice Evaluation Handout
 - Running the Numbers Packet

Procedure

Activity One: Anticipatory Set (15 minutes)

- Share with students the Representations of Sacrifice Handout and the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery video.
 - **Teacher Tip:** The teacher may share the Representations of Sacrifice Handout as a handout or project the resources for the entire class. If students receive a handout, the teacher will have to project the video of the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery.
- Help students understand what is gained and what is lost when looking at statistics.
- As you review the sources as a class, give each student the Representations of Sacrifice Evaluation Handout to record the strengths and weaknesses of each source.
 - **Teacher Tip:** Beyond the difference of scale and emotion, the statistics can also mask details that are not in the “official records” such as volunteers who were killed during the war but would not show up on military casualty lists.

Activity Two: Running the Numbers (60 minutes)

- Have students work through the exercises in the Running the Numbers packet individually or in small groups.
- Ask students to consider what they have learned about the United States' contribution to World War I after they have completed the Running the Numbers Packet.
 - **Teacher Tip:** The teacher can have students write a short response on a sticky note for an exit ticket.

Assessment

- The teacher can assess the Running the Numbers Packet using the Running the Numbers Answer Key.

Methods for Extension

- Teachers could have students write an essay to answer the question, “What was the United States contribution to World War I?” based on the statistics provided.

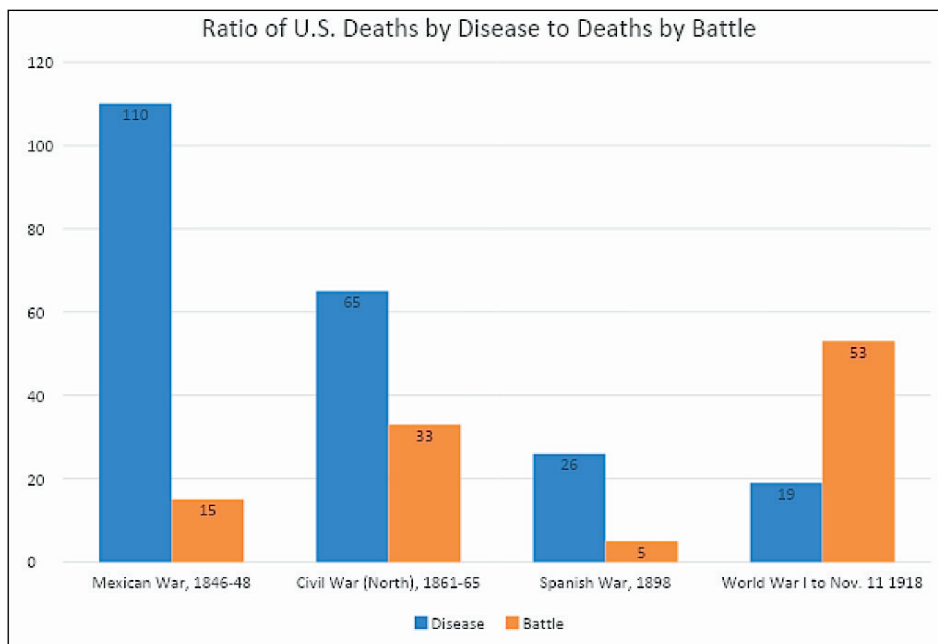
Adaptations

- Teachers can place students in mixed-ability groups for the Running the Numbers Packet.

Representations of Sacrifice Handout

World War I Battle Deaths per Nation

Nations engaged in the war, 1914-1918	Battle deaths
Russia	1,700,000
Germany	1,600,000
France	1,385,800
Great Britain	900,000
Austria	900,000
Italy	364,000
Turkey	250,000
Serbia and Montenegro	125,000
Belgium	102,000
Bulgaria	100,000
Romania	100,000
United States	50,300
Greece	7,000
Portugal	2,000
Total	7,485,600



Representations of Sacrifice Evaluation Handout

Instructions: For each source reviewed in the handout, complete the chart below. You are looking for information that helps answer the question of how much the United States contributed to the Meuse-Argonne Offensive and the outcome of World War I.

When you have completed the chart, answer the evaluation question and be prepared to share your thoughts with the class.

	Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery (video, 1:57)	World War I Battle Deaths per Nation (statistical chart)	Ratio of U.S. Deaths by Disease to Deaths by Battle (graph)
<p>Strengths What information does this source give us to answer the question? Does it capture your attention? What does it add to your understanding of the war?</p>			
<p>Weaknesses What is left out? Can this source be trusted? What is its perspective or bias? What more would you like to know?</p>			

Evaluation: Which source does the best job of helping us answer the question? Explain your answer.

Running the Numbers Packet

Figure 1: Blue Book, pg. 501

Approximate average actual strength of the various combat divisions on the Western Front during the year 1918:	
American.....	25,500
British.....	11,800
French.....	11,400
German.....	12,300

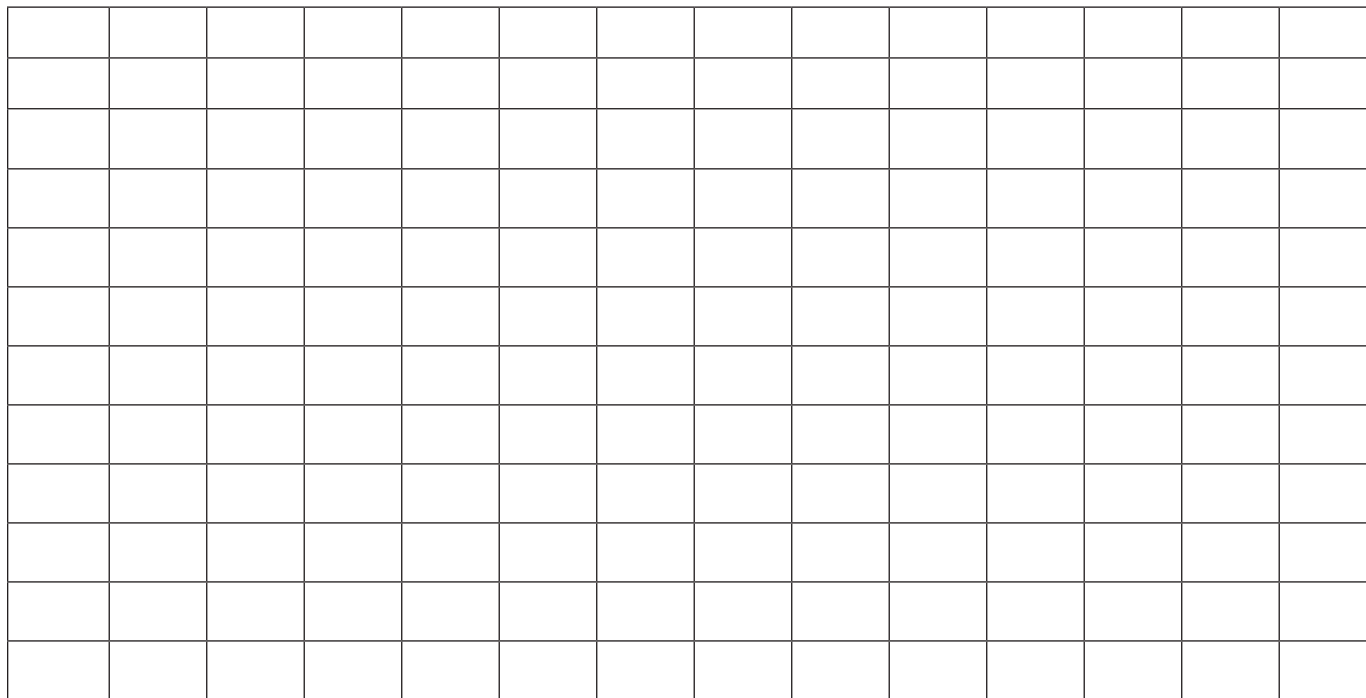
1. What is being measured in this list?
2. What country averages the most troops on the Western Front during 1918? Who averages the least?
3. How do you think America's late entrance into World War I may have affected their numbers?
4. How might this affect how other nations perceived American troops?
5. How would this impact the role of Americans in the decision-making process during and after the war?

Figure 2: Miles of Western Front occupied by American and Allied Forces in 1918

Blue Book, pg. 501

Date (1918)	American	British	French	Belgian	Total
Jan. 31	6	116	323	23	468
Mar. 20	17	116	312	23	468
Mar. 30	19	92	353	23	487
Apr. 10	31	92	348	23	494
Apr. 30	34	83	358	23	498
May 30	23	83	393	23	522
June 10	36	83	389	23	531
June 20	65	83	360	23	531
July 10	62	92	354	23	531
July 20	55	92	362	23	532
July 30	68	92	318	23	501
Aug. 10	79	93	277	23	472
Aug. 20	85	93	276	23	477
Aug. 30	90	87	262	23	462
Sept. 10	98	87	241	23	449
Sept. 30	82	83	258	28	451
Oct. 10	101	83	244	15	443
Oct. 30	79	68	248	15	410
Nov. 11	83	70	214	25	392

1. Make a line graph to track the number of miles gained over time for each unit.



2. When do American forces gain the most ground? What general trend do you notice regarding American forces?

3. What general trend do you notice regarding miles gained by British, French, and Belgian forces?

4. Does the progress gained seem consistent or are there sharp gains and losses? Why do you think this is?

5. What other variables could affect how many miles of Western Front the Americans occupied?

Figure 3: Cost of war to the United States

Blue Book, pg. 505

For the 25 months from April 1917 to May 1919 the war cost the United States more than \$1,000,000 per hour. Its total expenditure, excluding loans to the Allies, was \$22,000,000,000. At the time of the Armistice the cost was about \$200,000 per hour. The pay of officers and men amounted to only about 13 percent of this amount. The total expenditure of 22 billions was practically equal to the entire cost of running the U.S. government from 1791 to 1914, inclusive.

1. What statistic in this paragraph do you find most surprising? Why?
2. What other information would be helpful in order to evaluate America's financial sacrifices regarding the war?
3. How do you think these expenditures affected life on the home front?

Figure 4: Foreign loans made by the United States during and after the war

Blue Book, pg. 506

Post-Armistice					
Country	Pre-Armistice cash loans	Cash loans	War supplies and relief supplies	Total loans	Total payments received to Nov. 1, 1937
Armenia			\$11,959,917.49	\$11,959,917.49	
Austria			24,055,708.92	24,055,708.92	\$862,668.00
Belgium	\$171,780,000	\$177,434,467.89	29,872,732.54	379,087,200.43	52,191,273.24
Cuba	10,000,000			10,000,000	12,286,751.58
Czecho-Slovakia		61,974,041.10	29,905,629.93	91,879,671.03	20,134,092.26
Estonia			13,999,145.60	13,999,145.60	1,248,432.97
Finland			8,281,926.17	8,281,926.17	4,868,891.77
France	1,970,000,000	1,027,477,800.00	407,341,145.01	3,404,818,945.01	486,075,891.00
Great Britain	3,696,000,000	581,000,000.00		4,277,000,000.00	2,024,848,817.09
Greece		(1) 27,167,000		27,167,000.00	3,778,384.01
Hungary			1,685,835.61	1,685,835.61	468,466.52
Italy	1,031,000,000	617,034,050.90		1,648,034,050.90	100,829,880.16
Latvia			5,132,287.14	5,132,287.14	761,549.07
Liberia		26,000.00		26,000.00	36,471.56
Lithuania			4,981,628.03	4,981,628.03	1,237,956.58
Nicaragua			431,849.14	431,849.14	168,575.84
Poland			159,666,972.39	(2) 159,666,972.39	22,646,297.55
Romania		25,000,000.00	12,911,152.92	37,911,152.92	4,791,007.22
Russia	(3) 187,729,750		4,871,547.37	192,601,297.37	8,750,311.88
Yugoslavia	10,605,000	16,175,465.56	24,978,020.99	51,758,486.55	2,588,771.69
Total	7,077,114,750	2,533,288,825.45	740,075,499.25	10,350,479,074.70	2,748,574,488.89
(1) Includes \$12,167,000 authorized under act of Feb. 14, 1929.					
(2) Includes \$3,736,628.42 acquired by U.S. (Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corp. for services rendered.					
(3) Exclusive of \$5,000,000 conditional advance not availed of and returned.					

1. Who received loans before the Armistice was signed but not after? Why do you think this is?
2. Create a pie chart showing what percentage of America's loans was made both before and after the Armistice.
3. Does anything surprise you about this chart? Why or why not?
4. What countries received the most from the United States? Why do you think this is?
5. Considering the information on this chart and the information on the cost of the war (Figure 3), how do you think many Americans felt about the war after it was over?

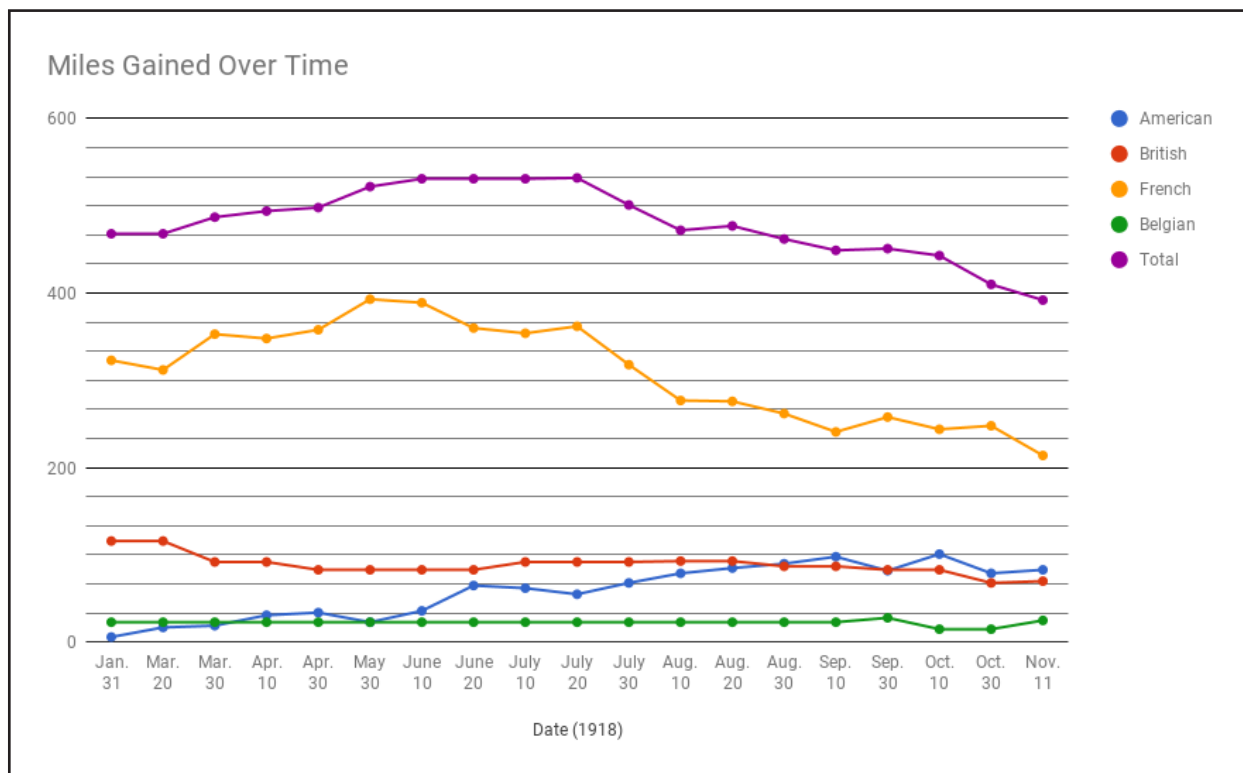
Running the Numbers Answer Key

Figure 1:

1. What is being measured in this list? *The average strength of combat divisions on Western Front in 1918.*
2. What country averages the most troops on the Western Front during 1918? *United States.* Who averages the least? *French.*
3. How do you think America's late entrance into World War I may have affected their numbers? *Fewer soldiers from the United States died than the other countries because they had been fighting for 4 years before the United States entered the war.*
4. How might this affect how other nations perceived American troops? *Relief: needed the help and morale boost; disdain: had not been fighting as long and lacked experience.*
5. How would this impact the role of Americans in the decision-making process during and after the war? *Americans felt they had "saved the day" and should have a large role, while the other nations were not comfortable with that and wanted to use their experiences as reasons to control the decisions that would be made.*

Figure 2:

1. Make a line graph to track the number of miles gained over time for each unit.



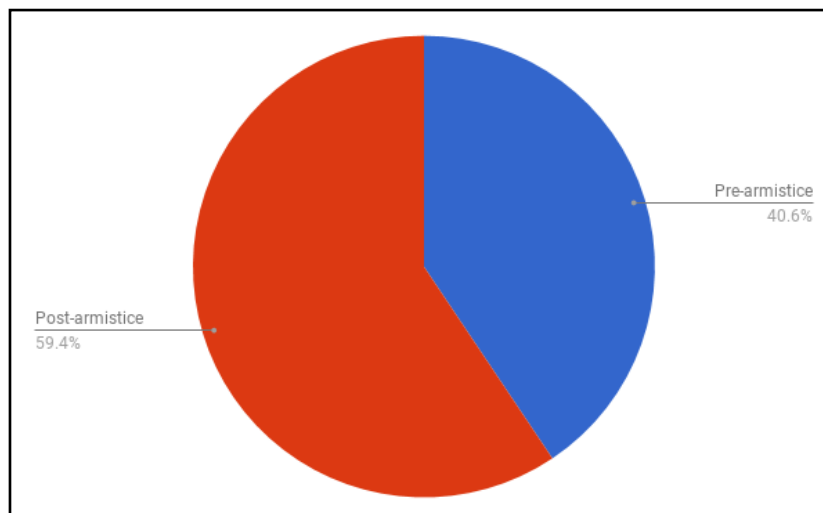
2. When do American forces gain the most ground? *October 10, 1918*. What general trend do you notice regarding American forces? *Highest from August to October*.
3. What general trend do you notice regarding miles gained by the British, French, and Belgian forces? *The number of miles occupied declines over time*.
4. Does the progress gained seem consistent or are there sharp gains and losses? *Fairly consistent*. Why do you think this is? *Small areas of land take a long time to gain or lose*.
5. What other variables could affect how many miles of Western front the Americans occupied? *Number of forces arriving, strength of other Allied forces, strength of German forces*.

Figure 3:

1. What statistic in this paragraph do you find most surprising? Why? *Answers may vary, but the large amount of dollars spent should be a surprise*.
2. What other information would be helpful in order to evaluate America's financial sacrifices regarding the war? *Knowing how much the average citizen paid for war bonds? Did the income of citizens on the home front change as a result of the war?*
3. How do you think these expenditures affected life on the home front? *People probably had to pay more in taxes and bought bonds to finance the war*.

Figure 4:

1. Who received loans before the Armistice was signed but not after? *Cuba and Russia*. Why do you think this is? *Russia dropped out of the war before the Armistice was signed*.
2. Create a pie chart showing what percentage of America's loans was made both before and after the Armistice.



3. Does anything surprise you about this chart? *Answers may vary. May be surprised that so much money continued to be spent after the armistice. Why or why not?*
4. What countries received the most from the United States? *Great Britain, France, Italy. Why do you think this is? They bore the brunt of the fighting and were allies during the war.*
5. Considering the information on this chart and the information on the cost of the war (Figure 3), how do you think many Americans felt about the war after it was over? *That it was a huge expense for the country; they were glad it was over.*