

### Unit Overview

How many days are needed to teach this lesson?	1-2 day lesson, 2-90 minute blocks
Grade Level(s)	High school (9-12)
Subject(s)	World Geography, Global Studies
Lesson Summary	<p>In this lesson, high school students will explore the impact of geography and conflict on healthcare access in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), using the article <a href="#">“In the Shadow of War, Life Begins Anew in a Congolese Maternity Ward”</a> as the focal resource. The lesson aims to deepen students' understanding of how geographic and socio-political factors shape daily life and resilience within communities in conflict zones. Through reading, discussions, and multimedia activities, students will examine the challenges faced by healthcare workers and patients, particularly in a maternity ward setting, and reflect on the theme of human resilience in the face of adversity - war and conflict.</p> <p>This lesson aligns with World Geography standards, focusing on the Democratic Republic of the Congo's physical and human systems and their impact on social and economic life. Students will build critical thinking skills, empathy, and global awareness as they analyze real-world issues and reflect on how individuals and communities adapt and support each other in difficult circumstances.</p>
Standards	<p><a href="#">*Georgia Standards of Excellence</a></p> <p>World Geography (Course Number 45.0711): The world geography course provides students with an analytical view of how geographic factors have and continue to influence human behavior on the earth. Students will examine how the physical and cultural geographic factors contribute to varying levels of cooperation within the major world regions. Additionally, students will examine the importance that political, environmental, and economic factors have in a region's development.</p> <p><b>SSWG7b:</b> Explain how Sub-Saharan Africa's physical geography and natural resources have shaped its population distribution and economic activities.</p> <p><b>SSWG7c:</b> Analyze how physical geography has impacted Sub-Saharan Africa's social and economic characteristics.</p>

Focus Pulitzer Center news story/stories	<a href="#">“In the Shadow of War, Life Begins Anew in a Congolese Maternity Ward.”</a> from <i>Women and War in Eastern Congo</i> by Sophie Neiman for <i>The Christian Science Monitor</i>
Content Advisory	This lesson contains some graphic descriptions of violence.

## Lesson Plan

### Lesson Objectives

Students will...

- Analyze the impact of conflict on daily life and healthcare access in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
- Evaluate how geography influences socio-political conditions and healthcare needs in a war-torn region
- Reflect on human resilience and community support systems in conflict zones

### Focus Pulitzer Center News Story & Additional Resources

["In the Shadow of War, Life Begins Anew in a Congolese Maternity Ward,"](#) from *Women and War in Eastern Congo* by Sophie Neiman for *The Christian Science Monitor*

Babies Can't Wait Slide Deck for Facilitation slide deck [[.pptx](#)][[.pdf](#)]

Multimedia Presentation Rubric [[.docx](#)][[.pdf](#)]

### Introducing the Lesson

This lesson explores the impact of geography, conflict, and resilience in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) through the lens of healthcare and community support systems. Centering a maternity ward in a conflict zone as a case study, the lesson highlights how geography affects socio-political and health outcomes. This lesson will provide students with a global perspective on the interconnectedness of place, politics, and community resilience, encouraging empathy and awareness about the challenges faced in regions affected by conflict. The lesson introduces students to broader themes, such as global health, the impact of geography on daily life, and the extraordinary resilience displayed in challenging circumstances.

The skills and themes explored in this lesson are critical thinking, global awareness, empathy, and resilience. These themes are essential for students to become informed global citizens. As students learn how geography and conflict intersect to impact communities, they will develop a deeper understanding of global inequality, healthcare challenges, and the ways people persevere through adversity. These themes also foster students' ability to empathize with people from different backgrounds and build critical thinking skills by analyzing complex socio-political issues. The focus on resilience also offers students a model for overcoming their own challenges, helping them understand the strength that can come from community support and resources.

### Warm-up/Opening

Ask students to brainstorm what they know about the Democratic Republic of Congo. Have them consider its geography, culture, and current events.

### Preparing to Engage with the Focus Resource(s)

To engage in the lesson, students will require a geographic context of the DRC and an introduction to conflict

zones. To support student learning, use the slide deck [[.pptx](#)][[.pdf](#)] to lead the following activities:

- Provide a brief overview of the DRC's location, major physical features, natural resources, and neighboring countries
- Discuss how the DRC's geography (e.g., rich mineral resources) has influenced socio-political dynamics and conflict
- Offer an introduction to conflict zones and explain how ongoing violence can affect infrastructure, healthcare, and daily life
- Introduce basic concepts of political instability, especially as it relates to resource-rich nations

### Exploring the Resource

1. Use the slide deck to introduce the article, "[In the Shadow of War, Life Begins Anew in a Congolese Maternity Ward.](#)" Students should read the article in groups of three. Additionally, students should:
  - Underline/circle any unfamiliar words
  - Select 2 individuals mentioned in the article and complete the chart for the individuals selected
2. Have students explore or discuss the following questions:
  - a. What are some of the main obstacles healthcare workers and patients face in this setting? Provide examples from the article.
  - b. How do healthcare workers and new mothers demonstrate resilience despite these challenges?
  - c. What role does community support play in the lives of patients and healthcare workers in the maternity ward?
  - d. How does the maternity ward in the DRC reflect the larger challenges of providing healthcare in conflict zones?

### Processing the Resource(s)

1. **Identifying Key Vocabulary.** As students read, they should highlight or circle unfamiliar vocabulary or terms specific to healthcare, conflict, or geography. For each word, they should:
  - Define it in context
  - Consider why it is important to understand the article's themes
2. **Who's Speaking and What are They Saying?** Ask students to keep a chart listing the people interviewed or described in the article (e.g., healthcare workers, mothers, family members). For each individual, they should record:
  - a. Role or title (e.g., nurse, patient, community leader)
  - b. Key quote or insight shared in the article
  - c. Relevance to the article's themes of resilience, community, or healthcare challenges
3. **Reading Activity.** Divide the class into small groups (3) and provide them with sections of the article to read, focusing on the challenges faced by healthcare workers and new mothers in the maternity ward.
4. **Guided Analysis.** As a class, review key excerpts, emphasizing how geographic factors and conflict influence healthcare access and conditions. Use guiding questions such as:
  - How does the DRC's military conflict influence healthcare access and conditions for pregnant women?

- What role does the maternity ward play in this community, especially in the middle of the country's military conflict?
- How do healthcare workers and patients demonstrate resilience?

**5. Class Discussion (15-20 minutes)**

**a. Conflict and Geography:**

- Discuss how geographic location can shape a country's socio-political challenges, focusing on natural resources, terrain, and borders
- Highlight how the DRC's location and resources contribute to both opportunity and conflict

**b. Community Resilience:**

- Explore how individuals and communities in conflict zones cope with limited resources.
- Have students reflect on the importance of support systems (e.g., families, healthcare facilities) in providing stability

**Performance Task(s)**

Option 1: Students will create a 5-8 minute multimedia presentation using PowerPoint, Google Slides, Prezi, Canva, or a short video titled "Resilience and Geography: Life in a Conflict Zone." This assessment requires students to synthesize what they've learned by exploring how geography, conflict, and community resilience are interconnected in the DRC.

Multimedia presentation components:

**1. Overview of the DRC's Geography and Conflict:**

- Describe the DRC's geographic features, including natural resources, climate, and location
- Explain how these factors contribute to socio-political instability and conflict

**2. The Maternity Ward Story:**

- Summarize the story presented in the article, focusing on the challenges faced by healthcare workers, mothers, and their families
- Highlight specific quotes from the article that reflect the resilience and determination of the individuals in the maternity ward

**3. Resilience and Community Support:**

- Explain how healthcare workers and patients find strength and build community support in the face of conflict and limited resources

**4. Multimedia Integration:**

- Use visuals such as maps, photos, or infographics that relate to the geography, healthcare issues, and resilience depicted in the story
- Include audio clips, short video snippets, or quotes

Option 2: Students will write a thoughtful and creative poem that reflects the themes, emotions, and imagery from the article. Use your own words to explore hope, struggle, and new beginnings.

Poem Response components:

a. Step 1: Choose a poem structure

- i. Free Verse: no rules about rhyming or line length

- ii. Rhyming Poem: Use words that rhyme at the end of lines
  - iii. Acrostic Poem: Write the word *HOPE* or *LIFE* vertically, and begin each line with a letter from the word
- b. Step 2: Writing
- i. Start with an image or feeling
  - ii. Use descriptive language: use your senses! What might you see, hear, or feel?
  - iii. Include themes: write about the struggle (the war) and conflict zones, resilience, and hope (new life)
- c. End on a high note: leave the reader with a feeling of hope or peace

### Assessment

#### Formative Assessment:

Participation in discussions and group activities.

#### Summative Assessment:

The rubric below is for the multimedia presentation performance task. Share the rubric by using the following handout [[.docx](#)][[.pdf](#)]

#### **2. Multimedia presentation assessment criteria:**

- a. Depth of Analysis: Understanding of how geography and conflict influence healthcare and daily life in the DRC.
- b. Use of Evidence: Effective use of examples, quotes, and details from the article and additional research to support key points.
- c. Creativity and Engagement: Effective use of multimedia elements to engage the audience and enhance understanding.
- d. Connection to Global Themes: Reflection on the universal themes of resilience and community support in conflict zones.
- e. Presentation Skills: Clarity, organization, and confidence in delivering the presentation

## Teacher Reflection

Teaching complex topics like conflict, geography, and resilience to 6th graders requires thoughtful planning and intentional engagement. By implementing this lesson plan, I aimed to help students connect real-world issues to the themes of hope, struggle, and community resilience found in [“In the Shadow of War, Life Begins Anew in a Congolese Maternity Ward.”](#) Through a combination of vocabulary identification, guided analysis, and collaborative discussion, students explored the challenges faced by healthcare workers and mothers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), while considering how geography and conflict shape daily life.

I began the lesson by emphasizing the importance of understanding key vocabulary within the article. Words related to healthcare, conflict, and geography—such as *resilience*, *conflict zone*, *maternity ward*, and *natural resources*—were highlighted by students as they read. I encouraged them to define each term in context and reflect on the importance of each term in understanding the broader themes of the article. For example, students identified *resilience* as “overcoming difficulties” and connected it to how healthcare workers and mothers persevered despite overwhelming odds. By actively engaging with the text through vocabulary, students were able to build confidence in tackling challenging topics while developing a deeper appreciation for the complexities faced by those in conflict zones.

The second activity focused on identifying voices and perspectives within the article. I provided students with a chart to record the role or title of individuals described (e.g., nurse, mother, doctor) along with key quotes that highlighted their struggles and strengths. Students quickly noticed themes of determination and support through quotes like, “*We don't stop working because of war. Babies don't wait,*” from a nurse in the maternity ward. They discussed how such insights revealed both the human impact of conflict and the vital role healthcare workers play in their communities. By connecting individual voices to the article's themes, students were able to humanize the story and recognize the importance of community resilience.

To ensure collaborative learning, I divided students into small groups and assigned each a section of the article. Each group focused on different aspects of the challenges faced by healthcare workers and mothers in the maternity ward. Afterward, the class came together to analyze key excerpts and answer guiding questions. Through these discussions, students gained a clearer understanding of how geographic and socio-political factors shape life in the DRC. The final activity involved a class discussion to deepen students' critical thinking. We examined how the DRC's geography—rich in natural resources but plagued by conflict—shapes both opportunity and instability. Students reflected on the challenges posed by terrain, borders, and resource competition, linking these ideas to socio-political instability. We also explored how individuals and communities demonstrate resilience, focusing on the importance of support systems, like families and healthcare facilities. Students concluded that community support, even in conflict zones, provides stability and hope.

By the end of the lesson, students were able to synthesize their learning into a broader understanding of how conflict, geography, and resilience intersect. They expressed empathy for the people in the story and recognized how hope persists even in the most challenging circumstances. Through engaging activities, group collaboration, and guided analysis, students not only learned about the DRC but also developed critical thinking skills to analyze

global issues. Ultimately, this lesson helped them connect the themes of struggle and resilience to their own lives, fostering a deeper appreciation for the strength of communities around the world.

About Chantee Earl:

Chantee Earl is a Clinical Associate Professor of Education at Georgia State University. Although designed for high school students, Ms. Earl facilitated this lesson in her students' 6th-grade classroom.