

BROKEN PROMISES

In this lesson, students will examine letters, agreements, and official statements that were written during World War I and shortly after it ended. These documents show how the British made conflicting promises to Jews and Arabs during this period.

Essential Questions

- What role did the Allied Powers (especially the British Government) play in setting up conflicts in the region which persist today?
- Why did the British Government make promises that conflicted with each other?

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Understand the connection between the broken promises made to Arabs and Jews during World War 1 and current challenges in the Middle East.
- Situate a modern conflict in its historical, cultural, and geographical context.
- Derive information from political maps.
- Determine the central ideas or information from a primary text.
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases used in a text.

Materials Needed

MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES

- Video: *Broken Promises*, available online
- Adobe Spark: *Broken Promises: Primary Sources, Key Words, and Maps*, available online

PRIMARY SOURCES

All of these sources are available as pdfs or online in an interactive digital format.

- DOCUMENT 1: Hussein- McMahon Correspondence (1915) and Maps
- DOCUMENT 2: The Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) and Map
- DOCUMENT 3: The Balfour Declaration (1917)
- DOCUMENT 4: The Feisal-Weizmann Agreement (1919)
- DOCUMENT 5: The Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22 (1919)

HANDOUTS

- Tweet the Document Exercise
- SOAPSTone Graphic Organizer
- Exit Slip

Lesson Plan

1. INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Broken Promises: Ask the students to talk to their elbow partners about times when they've experienced promises being broken. Has a friend broken a promise? A parent or guardian? A family member? What did it feel like? Is there any way to make up for a broken promise? What do broken promises do to relationships? At this point, the teacher can segue into the topic of the class: **What happens when nations make promises that they can't or won't keep?**

2. INTRODUCTION TO LESSON 2

Watch the film, *Broken Promises*, available online; if you didn't do Lesson 1, watch the film, *Land Matters*, also online. Alternatively, you may introduce the topic with the following **talking points**:

- To understand the Arab-Israeli conflict, it's important to consider the broken promises that the British made to Arabs and Jews as they tried to secure allies in the Middle East during World War I.
- During WWI, the geographic territory that now comprises the State of Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank, was known as "Greater Syria" and had been part of the Ottoman Empire for six centuries.
- Because of its geographic location, this region is a land bridge connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe and was strategically important to the Allied Forces (Britain, France, Russia, and later the United States and Italy) in their fight against the Central Powers (primarily Germany and the Ottoman Empire).
- Britain first engaged Arab leaders as allies during World War I by promising them independence at the end of the war (as seen in **DOCUMENT 1: The Hussein-McMahon Correspondence**).
- Shortly after, Britain enlisted Jewish support in the war effort by promising to create a Jewish national home in the ancient Jewish homeland (as seen in the **DOCUMENT 3: Balfour Declaration**).
- While some Arab and Jewish leaders recognized the benefits of the establishment and maintenance of respective territories within this region (as seen in the **DOCUMENT 4: Faisal-Weizmann Agreement**), the ruling powers (Britain and France) secretly made an agreement to exercise political control through spheres of influence (as seen in the **DOCUMENT 2: Sykes-Picot Agreement**).
- Shortly after World War I ended, European nations formed the League of Nations as a way to settle international disputes and prevent future conflict. The **DOCUMENT 5: Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22**, provides the framework for what should be done with the colonies and territories that had controlled by the Central Powers before the war.

3. PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS

Primary source documents can either be printed and copied or students can access them using web-based resources available online. The options below can be used in conjunction with each other, with the first providing a broad overview and the second, a much more in-depth analysis. If time doesn't permit, one or the other can be selected.

- **Option 1:** Working in small groups, students will analyze primary source documents using the social media platform, Twitter. This activity works best with **Documents 1-3**. Each group should have one **Tweet the Document handout** and one of the first three documents. Each group will do their own document analysis using the Tweet format (see handout). Explain that Twitter is an online news and social networking site where people communicate in short messages called Tweets. Using a maximum of 280 characters, the Tweeter's ideas are explained in brief but meaningful phrases, promoting the focused and intentional use of language. Hashtags (#) are used to categorize Tweets so that they are part of a narrowed conversation and are easier to find in a Twitter search. They are also used to add extra emphasis to the Tweet, similar to bullet points.
- **Option 2:** Students should form groups of four or five so that they will be able to work independently and then in small groups evaluate five primary source documents. Distribute the primary source documents so that each group receives a full set. If there are only four students in a group, they can skip either Document 4 or 5. Each student should read the introduction to the text to get a sense of authorship, audience, setting, time, and type of document. Then, each student will read the assigned primary source document, using the **SOAPSTone Graphic Organizer** to record pertinent details. Students will then present their findings to their small groups.
 - **Variation:** Students form groups of two (or three) and each pair will work on one text and fill out the **SOAPSTone Graphic Organizer** together. The small groups then present their findings to the class so that the whole class is exposed to the full set of documents.
- **Option 3:** In order to make use of both types of primary source analysis, students may use the **Tweet** exercise for **Documents 1-3** because they are shorter and more conducive to the Tweet format. Using the **SOAPSTone** exercise for **Documents 4-5** gives students the opportunity to focus on the more nuanced language in these sources, especially with regard to purpose and tone.

4. CONCLUSION

Students can answer the questions on the **Exit Slip**, either as part of a class discussion or individually.

DOCUMENT 1: Hussein-McMahon Correspondence (1915)

Beginning in the summer of 1915, Sir Henry McMahon (1862-1949), British High Commissioner in Cairo, exchanged letters with Hussein Ibn Ali (1853/54-1931), the Sherif of Mecca. In these letters, which became known as "The Hussein-McMahon Correspondence," McMahon agreed to support Hussein's request for Arab independence in exchange for Arab support against the Ottoman Empire in World War I. NOTE: The maps that accompany this document were not part of the original correspondence; they represent the request that Hussein made and the response that McMahon provided. What precisely was promised later became the subject of great debate.

EXCERPT

From Sir Henry McMahon, 24 October 1915

I have received your letter of the 29th Shawal, 1333 [September 29, 1915 in the *Islamic calendar*], with much pleasure and your expressions of friendliness and sincerity have given me the greatest satisfaction.

I regret that you should have received from my last letter the impression that I regarded the question of the limits and boundaries with coldness and hesitation; such was not the case....

I have realised, however...that you regard this question as one of vital and urgent importance. I have, therefore, lost no time in informing the Government of Great Britain of the contents of your letter, and it is with great pleasure that I communicate to you on their behalf the following statement, which I am confident you will receive with satisfaction.

The two districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the limits demanded....

I am empowered in the name of the Government of Great Britain to give the following assurances and make the following reply to your letter:

1. Subject to the above modifications, Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs in all the regions within the limits demanded by the *Sherif of Mecca*.
2. When the situation admits, Great Britain will give to the Arabs her advice and will assist them to establish what may appear to be the most suitable forms of government in those various territories.
3. On the other hand, it is understood that the Arabs have decided to seek the advice and guidance of Great Britain only, and that such European advisers and officials as may be required for the formation of a sound form of administration will be British....

I am convinced that this declaration will assure you beyond all possible doubt of the sympathy of Great Britain towards the aspirations of her friends the Arabs and will result in a firm and lasting alliance, the immediate results of which will be the expulsion of the Turks from the Arab countries and the freeing of the Arab peoples from the *Turkish yoke*, which for so many years has pressed heavily upon them.

Source: *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*. W. Laqueur and B. Rubin, editors. New York: Penguin Books, 2008.

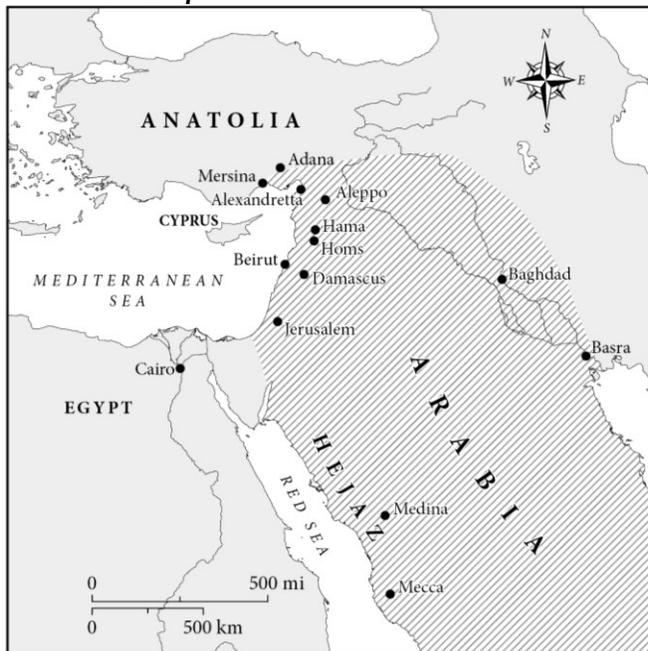
KEYWORDS

Islamic calendar: lunar calendar with 12 months and 354 or 355 days; began in 622 CE (which became Year 1) to mark the year that Muhammad (whom Muslims view as the last prophet) migrated from Mecca to Medina with his followers and established the first Muslim community

Sheikh: an Arab leader; a title often given to a chief of a tribe or family

Sherif of Mecca: leader responsible for overseeing the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina and the surrounding Hejaz (in what is today Saudi Arabia); traditional title given to descendants of Muhammad's grandson, Hasan ibn Ali

Turkish yoke: Ottoman rule

Hussein's Request

Above: The area with diagonal lines (ARABIA) represents what Hussein originally requested as territory for a future Arab state. See Schneer, Jonathan, *Balfour Declaration the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Random House, 2012).

McMahon's Response

Above: In his letter, McMahon offers Hussein everything to the right of the thick dark line (which corresponds to Arabia on the map to the right, but was technically called the Villayet of Damascus because it was part of the Ottoman Empire). The area in the shaded region, McMahon said, was not properly Arab and could not be included.

DOCUMENT 2: Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)

On May 9, 1916, Great Britain and France reached a secret agreement, drafted by their representatives Mark Sykes and Francois George-Picot, respectively. As part of this agreement they outlined their spheres of influence in the Middle East, territory for an Arab state or confederation of Arab states, dividing most of the Ottoman Empire into areas of British and French control which would take effect at the end of World War I. This agreement became public in March 1917. See accompanying map.

EXCERPT

It is accordingly understood between the French and British Governments—

- That France and Great Britain are prepared to recognise and protect an independent Arab State or a **Confederation** of Arab States (A) and (B) marked on the annexed map, under the **suzerainty** of an Arab chief. That in area (A) France, and in area (B) Great Britain, shall have priority of **right of enterprise** and local loans. That in area (A) France, and in area (B) Great Britain, shall alone supply advisers or foreign **functionaries** at the request of the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States.
- That in the blue area France, and in the red area Great Britain, shall be allowed to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire and as they may think fit to arrange with the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States.
- That in the brown area [yellow on the map] there shall be established an international administration, the form of which is to be decided upon after consultation with Russia, and subsequently in consultation with the other Allies, and the representatives of the Shereef [alternative spelling for Sherif] of Mecca.

Source: *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict.* W. Laqueur and B. Rubin, editors. New York: Penguin Books, 2008.

KEYWORDS

confederation: association, partnership

functionaries: officials, employees

right of enterprise: the right to control their own business interests

spheres of influence: areas where British and French interests would have priority over local governments

suzerainty: a situation in which the Arabs could be in charge of their own internal affairs but where Great Britain or France, as the dominant states, would still control foreign affairs



DOCUMENT 3: The Balfour Declaration (1917)

On November 2, 1917, British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour (1848-1930) wrote a letter, endorsing the British Government's establishment of a Jewish national home in the geographic territory of Palestine. Lord Rothschild, to whom the letter was addressed, was the unofficial leader of the British Jewish community.

Foreign Office,
November 2nd, 1917.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet

'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object. It being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.'

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A. J. Balfour', with a small flourish above the first name.

Source: Balfour Declaration November 2, 1917. The Avalon Project at Yale Law School. Web.

KEYWORDS

Zionist Federation: group founded in 1899 to advocate for a permanent homeland for the Jewish people

DOCUMENT 4: Feisal-Weizmann Agreement (1919)

On January 3, 1919, Emir Feisal (1885- 1933), son of Hussein ibn-Ali and an Arab leader and military commander, and Chaim Weizmann (1874- 1952), President of the Zionist Organization, entered into an agreement with each other to formalize the national aspirations of both the Jews and the Arabs with the aim of establishing independent states for both peoples. Note: In this agreement, the term Palestine referred to a Jewish state.

EXCERPT

His Royal Highness the *Emir* Feisal, representing and acting on behalf of the Arab Kingdom of Hedjaz, and Dr. Chaim Weizmann, representing and acting on behalf of the Zionist Organisation, mindful of the racial kinship and ancient bonds existing between the Arabs and the Jewish people...have agreed upon the following Articles:

- Article I: The Arab State and Palestine [Jewish State] in all their relations and undertakings shall be controlled by the most *cordial* goodwill and understanding...
- Article II: The definite boundaries between the Arab State and Palestine shall be determined by a Commission to be agreed upon by the parties *hereto*.
- Article III: *Measures* shall be adopted...for carrying into effect the British Government's Declaration of the 2nd of November, 1917 [the Balfour Declaration].
- Article IV: All necessary measures shall be taken to encourage and stimulate immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale... In taking such measures the Arab peasant and tenant farmers shall be protected in their rights and shall be assisted in forwarding their economic development.
- Article V: No regulation or law shall be made prohibiting or interfering in any way with the *free exercise of religion*....
- Article VI: The *Mohammedan* Holy Places shall be under Mohammedan control.
- Article VII: The Zionist Organization will use its best efforts to assist the Arab State in providing the means for developing the natural resources and economic possibilities *thereof*.

Reservation by the Emir Feisal [above, in Arabic, next to his signature]

If the Arabs are established as I have asked in my manifesto of 4 January, addressed to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, I will carry out what is written in this agreement. If changes are made, I cannot be *answerable* for failing to carry out this agreement.

Source: *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*. W. Laqueur and B. Rubin, editors. New York: Penguin, 2008.

KEYWORDS

answerable: responsible; blamed for

cordial: warm, friendly

Emir: commander, prince, or ruler

free exercise of religion: the right to choose and practice a religion

hereto: to this document

measures: systems, procedures

Mohammedan: old-fashioned term for Muslim; not used today

reservation: stipulation; a condition that must be met

thereof: the thing that has just been mentioned; in this case, the Arab State

DOCUMENT 5: Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22 (1919)

As World War I was coming to a close, many of the European powers sought to form an international organization to settle disputes between nations. Member nations would agree to defend each other if attacked and would not declare war without the consent of the others. The Covenant of the League of Nations is the document which created the League of Nations and defined its mission. The League of Nations formally came into being in 1920 as a result of the Paris Peace Conference. This section of the Covenant talks about what should be done with the colonies and territories controlled by the Central Powers before World War I.

EXCERPT

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the *strenuous* conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this *Covenant*...

The *tutelage* of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as *Mandatories* on behalf of the League.

The character of the *mandate* must differ according to the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions and other similar circumstances.

Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire [Ottoman Empire] have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be *provisionally* recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.

Other peoples, especially those of Central Africa, are at such a stage that the Mandatory must be responsible for the administration of the territory under conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience and religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals, the prohibition of abuses such as the slave trade, the *arms traffic* and the liquor traffic, and the prevention of the establishment of fortifications or military and naval bases and of military training of the natives for other than police purposes and the defense of territory, and will also secure equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of other Members of the League....

The degree of authority, control, or administration to be exercised by the Mandatory shall, if not previously agreed upon by the Members of the League, be explicitly defined in each case by the *Council*.

Source: The Covenant of the League of Nations, 1919. The Avalon Project at Yale Law School. Web.

KEYWORDS

arms traffic: illegal buying or selling of weapons

covenant: agreement, contract

Council of the League of Nations: one of the central units within the League of Nations

mandate: a region or territory assigned to one of the Allied Powers by the League of Nations

mandatories: countries assigned to administer or govern a region

provisionally: for the time being, temporarily

strenuous: demanding, difficult

tutelage: instruction, guidance

Getting Social with History

STUDENT NAME(S): _____



Social media has become a go-to tool for communication, including learning about global events.

This activity allows you to harness this popular medium, through the style of whichever platform you prefer (i.e., Instagram, X, TikTok, etc.), to analyze and report about historical events.

Let's get learning through #postsaboutthepast and #hashtagthroughhistory!

DIRECTIONS:

1. **Select the Document:** Choose a historical document or primary source that you want to analyze.
2. **Read Thoroughly:** Carefully read the document to understand its content, context, and purpose.
3. **Identify Key Elements:** Note important dates, names, events, and themes. Highlight quotes or sections that stand out.
4. **Create a Post:** Create a post that shows your understanding of the main idea(s)/key point(s) of the document under study through creative and concise text.
 - a. **Use Hashtags and Tags:** Include relevant hashtags and tag influential accounts or experts to increase visibility and engagement.
 - b. **Visuals:** Enhance posts with images, infographics, or short videos to make the content more engaging and accessible.

POST IDEAS + EXAMPLES

- **Introduction Post:** Briefly introduce the document, its significance, and its historical context. Use a compelling hook to grab attention.
Example: "Discover the secrets of the Magna Carta, the cornerstone of modern democracy! 📜 ✨ #HistoryUnveiled #MedievalMysteries"
- **Summary Post:** Summarize the main points or events described in the document.
Example: "The Magna Carta, signed in 1215, limited the power of the king and laid the foundation for legal rights. #HistoryHighlights #MedievalEngland"
- **Analysis Post:** Offer insights or analysis on a particular aspect of the document, such as its impact or underlying messages.
Example: "The Magna Carta's emphasis on 'justice' and 'law' reshaped the English legal system. Its influence is still felt today! #LegalLegacy #HistoricalImpact"
- **Discussion Post:** Pose a question or prompt discussion among your followers.
Example: "How do you think the Magna Carta influenced modern constitutions? Share your thoughts! 🤔💬 #ThinkTank #ConstitutionalHistory"

- **Conclusion Post:** Conclude with a summary of your analysis and a call to action.
Example: "Understanding the Magna Carta helps us appreciate the roots of our legal system. Dive deeper into history! #LearnMore #HistoryMatters"

POST WORKSPACE

Author or creator:

User handle:

Date:

POST:

HASHTAGS:

#

#

IMAGE (OR TIKTOK/REEL PLANNING):

SOAPSTone – Graphic Organizer

NAME(S): _____

Title of Primary Source:		
	Close Reading	How do you know? <i>Cite specific evidence in the text.</i>
SPEAKER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the speaker? • What can you tell or what do you know about the speaker that helps you understand the point of view expressed? 	
OCCASION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the time and place of the piece? • What is the current situation (that prompted the writing)? • Is this a political event, a celebration, an observation, or a critique? • Identify the context of the text. 	
AUDIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the readers to whom this piece is directed? It may be one person or a specific group. • Does the speaker specify an audience? • What assumptions exist in the text about the intended audience? 	
PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the purpose behind the text? (Why did the author write it? What is his goal?) • What is the message? • How does the speaker convey this message? 	
SUBJECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What topic, content, and ideas are included in the text? • State the subject in a few words or a short phrase. 	
TONE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the attitude of the author? • Is the author emotional, objective, neutral, or biased about this topic? • What types of diction (choice of words), syntax (sentence structure), and imagery (metaphors, similes, and other types of figurative language) help reflect the tone? 	

Exit Slip

1. What promises did the British make during World War I?
2. Why did the British make conflicting promises? Which promises did they break?
3. What kind of agreement did Faisal and Weizmann make with each other?
4. What do you think happened in the region after World War I because of broken promises?