



JUGEND
ERINNERT
YOUNG PEOPLE
REMEMBER

Past2Present4Future Documentary Lesson Plan

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Project implementing organisations:



Open Communication
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Past2Present4Future

Background (about the project)

Past2Present4Future ("P2P4F") was a youth remembrance activism initiative of four partner organizations from Serbia, Germany, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. In 2020 and 2021, it engaged young people from these countries in year-long activities focusing on remembrance and exploration of historical-contemporary dilemmas, focusing in specific on World War II and the lingering legacy of National Socialist crimes in Europe. P2P4F was filled with discussions, interactive workshops, field trips and visits to different memorial sites, as well as with ample opportunities for everyone to contribute their ideas, dilemmas and reflections on these topics.

Past2Present4Future documentary

We created a short documentary that features youth remembrance experiences and challenges and addresses some of the key critical questions history educators grapple with, especially when relating to contexts of historical revisionism surrounding National-Socialism and WWII events and legacy. The P2P4F documentary lasts for ~20 minutes and features P2P4F participants discussing various questions relating to the inter-dependence between past, present, and future.

The documentary can be viewed on this link: <https://hermes.hr/projectp2p4f/>

Themes

- Remembrance and exploration of historical-contemporary dilemmas;
- World War II and the lingering legacy of National Socialist crimes in Europe;
- Relevance of learning history for youth today.

Context

The youth whose opinions are featured in the short documentary come from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Germany and Serbia, and they are all in the 17 - 25 age group. Their interest in history stems from witnessing various ways in which the past interacts with the present, mostly through polarised interpretations of different historical events, current attempts at historical revisionism and the general presence of narratives about history in contemporary public discourse. The overarching, connecting thread between their visits to various sites of memory and conscience and the conversations with their peers is the question whether it is relevant for young people today to know, learn about and understand history, its events and lessons.

Goals

- Raising awareness and encouraging dialogue about the interplay between the past, present, and future;
- Encouraging critical reflection on monuments, sites of remembrance;
- Promoting multiperspectivity.

Learning Outcomes

It is expected that as a result of the class, the students will:

- Have a better understanding of how history affects the present;
- Be able to critically reflect on history, monuments, remembrance practices, historical narratives, polarisation and revisionism;
- Improve active listening, peer dialogue and presentation skills.

Material and Equipment Needed

Laptop
Beamer/projector
Speakers
Internet/wi-fi
Flip-chart papers and markers for group work activity

Duration

90 minutes (two standard lessons)

Overview of Lesson Activities (Process)

Introduction (5 minutes)

Announce to the students that they will be watching a short documentary about a group of young people from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Germany and Serbia who spent time together visiting different sites of memory, museums, filming short clips about forgotten and controversial monuments and in general discussion about the influence that history has on the present, as well as on the future. Ask them to catch notes in case they find something surprising or interesting, for the post-documentary discussion.

P2P4F documentary viewing (20 minutes)

Play the documentary for the students: <https://hermes.hr/projectp2p4f/>

Watch it in one go, without pausing.

Overview of Lesson Activities (Process)

P2P4F documentary - classroom discussion (20 minutes)

Start the conversation by asking if they found any of the images, or places shown in the short film, familiar. Can they identify any of the events featured in the documentary? (For example, for the 'Breakup of Yugoslavia' images, we can see the bombing of Dubrovnik; the destruction of the Mostar Old Bridge; the NATO bombing of Belgrade.)

Ask students to share their impressions - was there anything they found surprising, or interesting in the short documentary?

Proceed to facilitate the conversation along the same questions as the P2P4F participants were asked in the documentary:

- (1) What does 'dealing with the past' mean for you?
- (2) Why are historical events still the cause of current (political) grievances and polarisation in BiH/Croatia/Germany/Serbia?
- (3) What would it take for us to stop arguing about the past?
- (4) What do you think, is learning about history important for young people? (If yes - why? If not - why not?)

This concludes the first lesson on the P2P4F materials (45 minutes).

Overview of Second Lesson Activities (Process)

Memory Walk video clip viewing and brief discussion (15 minutes)

Announce to the students that they will watch a short video clip filmed by young people about a particular monument and the history behind it. Allow them to choose between the different Memory Walk film clips made during the P2P4F project: full playlist is available at the following link:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLVVZaYhkATqfLFSaVPR35PKI0B8kxFMpN>

Play the MW clip that the students selected. Ask them for their impressions of the video clip, the views expressed by the interviewed people - do they agree or not with what was said?

Overview of Lesson Activities (Process)

Troubleshooting History - Group Work Activity (25 minutes)

Randomly assign the students into six groups (ideally, 4 students per group though more or fewer also works). Each group should have one flipchart paper and markers, to prepare their presentation.

Take the group work challenge assignments from pages 6 and 7 (ideally, printed and cut out so that each group has their own assignment in front of them). Give the groups 10 minutes to discuss their challenges, and come up with their responses or solutions.

Facilitate the presentation of each group's results (5 min per group), allowing other groups to ask questions, offer suggestions and feedback.

Sources

- Past2Present4Future project, documentation and videos, all of which can be found on the project website: <https://hermes.hr/projectp2p4f/>

Assessment and Evaluation Options

The group historical challenges activity can be evaluated for students' seriousness and creativity applied to the assigned cases.

Another possibility for evaluation is to assign homework (similar to the themes explored in the documentary), see suggestions on page 8, and to evaluate its quality upon submission.

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GROUP 1 challenge



As part of historical revisionism trends, World War II war criminals are being glorified as national heroes or martyrs in an effort to rehabilitate them and their ideologies. How can we respond to these initiatives and individuals who support them - without antagonizing them in the process?

Come up with 5 different actions/initiatives/responses to this challenge (individual or social/collective).

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GROUP 2 challenge



When discussing the past, some groups emphasize and solely focus on their own national victimhood, without acknowledging the context in which it occurred, or the episodes or instances in which their own nation was the perpetrator. How can we promote a more comprehensive and nuanced view of history that includes confronting 'inconvenient' historical facts?

Come up with 5 different actions/initiatives/responses to this challenge (individual or social/collective).

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GROUP 3 challenge



History is sometimes used by political elites to incite conflict and division to distract from the present (and from their own corruption scandals, lack of socially beneficial policies, etc.). How can we build people's resilience against falling for this attention-distracting smoke tactic?

Come up with 5 different actions/initiatives/responses to this challenge (individual or social/collective).

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GROUP 4 challenge



History education is in some cases part of the problem due to its incomplete and politicised content, coupled with archaic methodologies focused on memorizing dates and events. How can we improve history education (content & methods-wise) so that it fosters students' critical thinking skills?

Come up with 5 different actions/initiatives/responses to this challenge (individual or social/collective).

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GROUP 5 challenge



Us versus Them modes of thinking persist to this day. Whether it is 'Serbs' vs. 'Croats', or 'Germans' vs. 'migrants/refugees', etc. the principle is the same - glorification of our kind and vilification and dehumanization of the other. What can we do to foster empathy and understanding among different groups and/or to bridge the (social & contact) gaps between them?

Come up with 5 different actions/initiatives/responses to this challenge (individual or social/collective).

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GROUP 6 challenge



The first symptom or characteristic of racism, antisemitism, Romaphobia, Islamophobia, antislavism, homophobia is - speech. Freedom of speech is an important human right and a democratic value - but the lines get blurred when the same speech descends into hatred. How can we respond to instances of hate speech, prejudice, stereotypes or historically complex slogans (e.g. ZDS) - without fully silencing those who express them?

Come up with 5 different actions/initiatives/responses to this challenge (individual or social/collective).

Homework Ideas

On the final page of this lesson plan, you can find two suggestions for homework assignments, focused on fostering students' curiosity and building their investigative skills. Both assignments can be arranged in such a way so that they are either performed individually, in pairs, or in small groups. The assignments can also be lengthier essay and/or presentation-oriented tasks, rather than brief 'historical insights' as they are currently structured.

Assignment 1

Family history - Family mystery?

Is there a well-known - or perhaps 'buried' or hidden history in your family that relates to World War II? Do you know in what way your family was affected by the World War II events? If it is a well-known story, when did you first hear about it? If it's something you are only uncovering right now - why do you think it's been 'hidden'?

Investigate by talking with your parents, grandparents; by looking at old family photo albums; by doing research in your hometown's archives, if available.

Please share with us a scanned old family photo (of a person, or a place, etc.), along with a maximum 300 words long description of a story accompanying that image.

Assignment 2

Then & Now: (how) do places remember?

Our hometowns, or places where we currently reside, hold their own memories of World War II events. Investigate a well-known, or a little-known World War II event (e.g. protest, resistance action, site of a war crime, etc.), and find an archival photo of that event/location (please make sure to provide information about the source of the archival footage). Then - take a walk to this location, and take a photo of what it looks like NOW.

Is there a commemorative plaque, or a monument, or any sign depicting the history of this place? (If not - why do you think this event you chose is not commemorated?)

Please share with us these two THEN and NOW images/photos, along with a maximum 300 words long description of a story accompanying the images.