

METHODOLOGY THREE

— BASIC FACTS, THE STORY OF A WITNESS AND THE EXPEDITION TO THE GULAG IN AUGMENTED REALITY (AR)

The central approach here is that students work with a research diary and augmented reality. In fact, research-oriented teaching allows them to act like scientists, because the aim is not just to teach them to answer questions, but to give them the space to formulate their own assumptions and hypotheses, for which they then look for evidence and can also refute the assumptions of their classmates.

Students should make guesses and hypotheses based on what they already know. It does not matter if the first hypotheses are not correct, because the important thing is to test their truth. This method of teaching is not yet very common, which is why we summarise the key points here so that you can decide whether to use it.



This method is useful if...

- I want students to experience the work of a real researcher - formulating hypotheses, collecting and analysing data, evaluating it critically.
- At school we have tablets/students are allowed to use their mobile handsets.
- I want the students to work together, communicate and share roles.
- I don't mind noise in class.
- I welcome it when students ask interesting questions, including those to which I don't currently know the answer.
- I think I can handle a potential failure of the device.
- I don't mind taking a back seat as a teacher.



This method is not useful if...

- I want to convey as many facts as possible in as little time as possible.
- I have no tablets and students are not allowed to use mobile phones.
- My students are not yet able to organise their work independently and need the guidance of a teacher.
- The noise in the classroom bothers me.
- I don't feel comfortable when students ask me questions I don't know the answer to.
- I'm afraid something will break or will not work.
- I'm comfortable with me running the class entirely.

Objectives:



Students will learn the basic facts about the period of Soviet repression. They will compare the individual story of a witness with the wider historical context. They will identify different perspectives of small and big history. They will collaboratively formulate a research question on a given topic, establish a hypothesis and attempt to verify it using sources in a research diary. They will present the results of their investigation to classmates, including their attitudes towards totalitarian regimes and human rights abuses. On the basis of their research, the students will form their own value system based on respect for human rights and democratic values.

Aids:

Computer, projector, speakers, tablets, printed research journals (at least one copy per group), sheets of paper and stationery.

Time:

Three lessons

Method of work:

The students will watch a video and discuss it, working in groups with the research journal, presenting the results of their research and reflecting on them collectively.

PHASE 1 / 10 min.

Evocation



Description

See the separate methodology “Evocation”. Select 1 or more activities.

The evocation phase is particularly important in teaching about Soviet repression. Students often do not have sufficient knowledge of the topic (unlike, for example, popular topics from the Middle Ages or World War II). Therefore, they may not consider it important and may not be willing to be interested in it at all. Evocation allows them to activate their existing knowledge and ideas and link them to new learning. This will stimulate their curiosity and motivation to learn more about the subject. At the same time, you will find out what ideas or myths students enter the lesson with. You can then build on these in the awareness phase and set them straight.

During the evocation phase, make sure to mention that you will be working with digital technologies in class, and it follows that we will have to follow rules for handling them. It is best to let the students define what those rules should be, including the consequences of any non-compliance. Pupils can certainly name rules like these in their own words:

- We handle the equipment carefully and gently.
- We do not use it for activities that are not part of the learning process (e.g. surfing the net, playing games).
- We respect the teacher’s instructions when handing over equipment.
- We report any technical problems.
- We help our classmates if they are having trouble with controlling the equipment.
- When the activities are over, we return the equipment in good order to the teacher



Comments and tips

Select one of the methods listed separately in the Evocation Methodology according to your time availability.



Comments and tips

Here are perhaps lesser-known words and possible definitions:

repression – harsh suppression of resistance or dissent to the regime

empire – a large state controlling many countries

chaos – utter confusion, disorder

terror – violence inflicted on a population to intimidate

agitation – spreading ideas and thoughts to influence people

archive – collection of historical documents

persecution – persecution of people because of their views or identity

Soviet – relating to the Soviet Union

sabotage – deliberately damaging or obstructing an activity

espionage – secretly obtaining information for a foreign power

standard – an established rule, measure or requirement

amnesty – pardon, remission of offences

camp – Gulag camp

PHASE 2 / 5–10 min.

We specify the meaning of the words



Description

Before you play an instructional video or work with the memories of a witness, it is a good idea to review with your students any concepts that may be unclear. Here we have selected some of the terms that appear in the video that are unfamiliar, especially to younger students. Below are also some ways in which the meanings of the terms can be learned.

Option 1 SIMPLE EXPLANATION

State a concept that you think might be unfamiliar to the students and discuss its meaning with them. The idea is not to find the exact definition, but to make the meaning of the words clear to the students in a way that is age-appropriate. Feel free to give examples from other backgrounds. “The concept of A is as if...”

Option 2 BINGO

Preparation:

- Prepare 12 cards with word definitions.
- Give each student a random selection of 9 definitions in a 3x3 square grid.

The course of the game:

- Read the words from the list to the students one by one.
- The students’ task is to mark the definition of the word on their card.
- The first person to mark 3 words in a row (vertically, horizontally or diagonally) and shout “Bingo!” wins.

Option 3 HOT CHAIR

One student sits with their back to the board while the teacher writes the word on the board. The other students must then explain the word to the student who sits with their back to the board without saying it directly. The pupil in the hot seat then has to guess what the word is. This game can be played quickly with several different words and students.

Option 4 SEARCHING FOR A DEFINITION

For this activity, you need to prepare pieces of paper in advance with the expressions and, separately, with the corresponding definitions. Hand out the pieces of paper randomly and ask the students to find their “partners” with the corresponding expression or definition. This is a quick and interactive activity that forces students to communicate and discuss the meanings of words, put definitions into context, and think critically.

Option 5 LIVE IMAGES

Students stand in a circle, eyes closed, the teacher reads the term and pupils have to try to express its meaning with their bodies. Then they open their eyes and comment. Interestingly, students often spontaneously create a corresponding living sculpture without being aware that they know the term.



Comments and tips

Here are the questions that can be answered after watching the video:

1. When and for what reason were the first labour camps established in the Soviet Union?
2. How many people were imprisoned in the camps during the existence of the Gulags and how many died in them?
3. What were the typical working conditions and daily routine of prisoners in the gulags?
4. Who all might have been victims of imprisonment in a labour camp and for what reasons?
5. What was the fate of the people after their release from the gulags and when were the camps officially closed?
6. Why should we deal with the subject of the Gulag in our country?

PHASE 3 / 5–10 min.

Video WHAT WAS GULAG

Description

This educational video clearly summarises key facts about Soviet repression. It provides a comprehensive macro view of the historical development of repression, focusing on the Stalin era and the European context of the Gulags.

The video can be used for a brief introduction to the subject at the beginning of the lesson.

Simply play the video and invite students to focus on answering their existing questions about the topic or identifying key information.

Here is the link to the video: www.gulagxr.eu/video-a-pribehy

After watching the video, be sure to ask what was new for the students. For example, it was new to many students in the pilot lessons that the Gulag was not just one camp, but a whole system of camps. Others did not realise the scale of the system and the number of victims. Most pupils were then unaware of the European dimension of repression.

This is also related to the question of why we should deal with the topic of the Gulag in our country.

Before the next stage, you can also ask what students need to know next to deepen their understanding of Soviet repression and tailor the teaching accordingly.

In our experience, the students mostly wanted to know the story of a real-life witness from our country. We offer this as a possible next step.



Tip: Instead of playing the full film at once, you can also play the video in parts and let students guess what happens next. They can guess other facts or events before the video finishes the story. This can activate their existing knowledge (e.g. about World War II, the impact of Stalin's death, etc.).

Tip: If you are short on time and have already covered the topic of Soviet repression in a previous lesson, you can skip this section. Alternatively, replace it by drawing a timeline and recording the significant events in the history of Soviet repression together with the students.



The story of a witness

Description

Select a witness's story from the story archive.

The memories of the witness bring a dimension of small history into the teaching and thus appropriately complement the information from the previous video. They allow us to see Soviet repression through the prism of the suffering of a particular person. All the videos are quite emotionally demanding, so remind pupils of the rules for the situations when watching the story is too mentally demanding for someone.

Here are a few variations of how you can work with the video of a witness.

1. Have students record the main points of the memoirist's story as they listen. Then, in pairs, compare their notes and create a timeline of his or her life.
2. Divide the video into 3 parts. After each part, stop and have students discuss in groups what they have just learned and how the story affects them.
3. Instruct students to note down 3 emotionally powerful moments from the story as they listen. Then have them analyse these moments in pairs - why they are emotional, what they say about the conditions in the Gulag, etc.
4. Pass out the papers and have each student draw a scene from the story that struck them. Then display and discuss the creations.
5. Finally, ask the students questions such as: What did you find most interesting about the story? What did you find most surprising? What emotions did it evoke in you? What event in his life led to the repression? Did the memoirist have the opportunity to avoid repression?



Comments and tips

Tip: Check that the students have understood the story. Just ask a few verification questions during the video or at the end of the video. Who was the victim of repression? Why did she go to the gulag? etc.

Tip: Witnesses can sometimes be difficult to understand (weak voice, accent). It is therefore always a good idea to have subtitles running at the same time.

Tip: If you don't have tablets at school but can use phones, you can ask students to use their own phones to follow the stories of your chosen witnesses. All the stories are easily accessible via our project page on [Vimeo](#).

Tip: Check that students have understood the story. Just ask a few verification questions during or at the end of the video. Who was the victim of repression? Why did she go to the gulag? etc.

Tip: If you have known your students for a long time, you can try an experiment. Ask the students to recall an important event in the life of the school that they are all likely to remember (e.g. the first day of school, an important field trip, etc.) and then ask them questions such as "What was the headmaster wearing that day?", "What colour was the bus?", "Who was sitting in the front row?" etc. Again, the pupils can write their answers on slips of paper and show or say them directly. Most likely they will vary slightly. This demonstration can be used to show that a person does not have to lie, but his or her recollection may differ in detail from how someone else remembers the event. This is due to the way human memory works. Therefore, it is a good idea to verify or supplement the witness's account with information from other sources. In short, a witness can serve as one source of knowledge about the past, but they should not be the only one.

Tip: In addition to following the stories of a single witness, you can also choose to divide the class into groups and assign a different witness to each group. See the methodology **BASIC FACTS AND COMPARISON OF STORIES OF SEVERAL WITNESSES**. However, allow for the need to increase the time.



Research diary

Description

What to do before class:

- Print out the research diaries. We recommend 1 journal per 2-3 students.
- Take a look at the research diary, check out the individual pages marked with the AR icon. Do you understand them? Is everything clear to you? If not, watch the instruction video.
- Install the Gulag XR app available from the Google Play Store on all tablets.
- If as a school you allow pupils to work on their own mobiles, ensure pupil access to the school wifi in advance and do not force pupils to use their own tariff for downloading data.
- Here are the basic rules for using the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) method: :
 1. Establish clear rules for the use of the equipment during lessons. For example, when they can use it and for what. Make sure the rules are followed.
 2. Ensure equal access to education. Not all students have their own modern devices. Prepare an alternative for them. Alternatively, depending on the social situation in your school, do not use this method!
 3. Think about security. Teach students about safe device use and data sharing. Be mindful of protecting students' privacy. Pupils are expected to share devices. Can student A access pupil B's sensitive messages?
- Prepare a backup plan in case of technical problems with the operation of the equipment.

TEACHING PROCEDURE

1. Explain to the students the aim and the flow of the activity. For example: you will try out the work of a real researcher. This activity is based on the real events and experiences of the Gulag XR researchers when they actually went to Russia to explore the remnants of the former camps. You can follow the researcher's story on the left side of the diary, where the story of a real person – Štěpán and his friends - is described in comic shorthand. On the right side are entries from his diary. This page also acts as an augmented reality trigger. Simply open the Gulag XR app on your tablet or mobile phone, point your device's camera at the page, and it will trigger augmented reality to help you answer the research questions on that page. You can write notes in your journal or on paper. You will be divided into groups and each group works independently at their own pace. Each group will choose one spokesperson to present the research findings to the other groups at the end of the class. Each group is assigned page numbers of the journal to research. Some pages are common to all groups, some are only for one group.
2. Before dividing the students into groups and handing out the devices, show everyone clearly how the app works and the page numbers for the group to follow.
3. Divide the students into six groups. Ideally the group should be no smaller than 2 and no larger than 5 students. If there are too few students, it is possible, for example, to divide them into only 5 groups and omit one topic from the research diary.
4. Distribute the equipment to the students and make sure all groups understand the assignment and the equipment works.
5. Group work – students work according to the assignment in the research journal, develop hypotheses and find answers. The teacher supervises, helping to solve the problems, but does not answer the research questions instead of the pupils - that is their job and the point of the whole activity.
6. Keep track of the time and keep students informed of how much time they have left. They should have at least 5 minutes to discuss together who will present the research findings and what the group wants to communicate to others.



Comments and tips

Tip: If you have chosen V-CH-D (I know-I want to learn-I learned) as your evocation activity, it is a good idea to use it here to formulate the "I learned" column

Tip: Collaboration and communication is an important part of this lesson. During the lesson, pay attention to what is happening in the groups. In the reflection stage, you can also ask questions about co-operation and communication, or appreciate moments that you noticed. For example, it may be that a group was not very successful in their own historical research, but perhaps they communicated well, collaborated, helped you solve technical problems, were able to divide up their work well, made great progress from their initial state of knowledge, etc. These are all very crucial aspects of teaching, perhaps even more important than the historical material itself.



7. Presentation – each group will briefly summarise the process and results of their investigation. If your class is not used to this way of working, it is a good idea to establish the rules of what you want to happen during the presentation beforehand. A few basic rules will suffice, for example:

- The speaker introduces themselves and says which group they will be presenting for.
- The speaker briefly summarises the topic, goal and process of their group's work.
- The presentation should last no more than 5 minutes to allow for all groups to take turns.
- Others listen attentively, let the speaker finish and do not comment on the presentation prematurely.
- After the presentation there is space for 1–2 additional questions to clarify or deepen the topic. Questions must be factual.
- The presentation is followed by a short summary and thanks to the speaker.
- Everyone respects the different opinions and ways of working of the other groups. We do not evaluate who was “the best”.
- The teacher moderates the presentations and ensures that the rules are followed. They appreciate the quality work of the groups.

However, it is always better if the class makes the rules than if you as a teacher set them authoritatively.

PHASE 6 / 5–20 min.



Reflection

Description

Reflection at the end of the lesson on Soviet repression is important because it helps students to better structure and experience the knowledge they have gained about the workings of the totalitarian system. It forces them to summarise the main facts and the fate of specific people. At the same time, it forces them to think about the impact of the existence of the gulags on individuals and society as a whole and to relate these events to the present. In this way, pupils can realise the value of human rights and freedoms. They have the opportunity to express their own views on the topic and to ask additional questions. You, as the teacher, get feedback on their understanding of the material.

Here are tips on how to reflect:

- If you worked with a mind map in the evocation phase, use it. Have the students fill in the mind map in a different colour with the 5 key words that stuck with them from the lesson. Then discuss why they chose these words and how their understanding of Soviet repression has deepened compared to 40 minutes ago.
- If you have worked with the question “Why should we learn about Soviet repression at all?” in the evocation phase, then ask it again and ask a few students to reflect on their shift.
- Ask 3 open-ended questions: what new things did you learn? How did the memoirist's story affect you? What information did you find in the research diary? What questions did the topic raise? Have them reflect briefly orally or on paper.
- On the board, write “Key takeaways” and “Questions to think about”. Invite students to add ideas freely. Finally, summarise and comment on the contributions.
- Ask about 1–2 things that most interested the students and 1–2 questions that came to mind. Leave space for sharing.
- Anonymous reflection on a piece of paper – 1 thing that interested me + 1 question on the topic. Those who want to can share, those who don't can stick it on a flipchart or whiteboard.



- In pairs or small groups, ask students to work together to draft a short text on Soviet repression that could appear in a new history textbook.

If you have the time and are used to it, you can ask questions such as:

- *What did this class give me?*
- *What would I like to commend anyone in this room (including myself) for?*
- *What do I think caused such evil?*
- *Is the topic of the Gulag still relevant today?*
- *What could be done to commemorate the victims of repression?*
- *What can I do to prevent something like this from happening again?*

Invite the students to sit comfortably in a circle. Wait until they are quiet and take a “talking stone”. A talking stone means that only the person holding the object can speak. Have them speak briefly and only to the point. Let them briefly recap each part of today’s lesson. Ask the students (whoever wants to) to comment on the questions or tell others anything they think is important and relevant to the topic. Anyone who does not want to speak will pass the pebble on and will not be forced to speak.

RATING



Criterion-based assessment of students’ progress is important in teaching (not only) about Soviet repression because it allows the teacher to better diagnose the level of their understanding of key facts, the development of their historical thinking and attitudes towards ethical values. Reflection on the fulfilment of the criteria also provides feedback for further teaching. We believe that you have set up your own assessment system appropriate to your objectives. Here is a suggestion of how an assessment system might be set up, for example, including possible examples of student responses. Assume three levels of mastery of the topic.

BASIC LEVEL

Description of the criteria:

The student can give only basic facts about the functioning of the Gulag. They can only very roughly place it in the historical period of the existence of the USSR. They can retell a brief story of a particular prisoner. They perceive the relationship between causes and effects superficially. They do not show any significant interest in the issue of human rights violations and democratic values. They cannot formulate a research question (e.g. why prisoners did not escape) or can do so only very vaguely. When working with questions in a research diary, the student is unable to bring their own hypotheses. Effort towards verification is minimal; they wait to see what the teacher or others in the group say.

Example of a student’s speech:

“The gulags were in Russia because Stalin was there and made people work hard. Mr. Novak was imprisoned there.”

MEDIUM LEVEL

Description of the criteria::

Students can describe the functioning of the Gulag, place it in the Stalinist period and distinguish between several types of repression. They can analyse a specific prisoner’s story. They can describe several causes and consequences of repression. They can discuss the issues and ask questions. They demonstrate partial understanding of the values of democracy and human rights. They can formulate a research question (e.g. What were the main reasons why prisoners hardly escaped from the gulags?), albeit not accurately. When working through the questions in the research diary, they attempt to come up with their own hypotheses, but need guidance in doing so. Verification of hypotheses is more superficial, relying on general assumptions rather than available sources.

Example of a student’s speech:

“Prisoners in the Gulag worked in inhumane conditions. It was the worst under Stalin. Mr. Novak was imprisoned on trumped-up charges. I think it was unjust. Isn’t that a violation of human rights?”

HIGH LEVEL

Description of the criteria:

The student can describe in detail the functioning of the Gulag and distinguish between different types of repression. They can explain the historical context of their origin and development, including the causes and consequences. They can describe how repression changed over time. They can analyse the specific fates of prisoners and reflect on them from an ethical perspective. They can actively discuss three issues of democracy, freedom, and human rights. The student can formulate a clear, specific, and well-defined research question related to the topic (e.g., What specific factors caused prisoner escapes from the gulags to be rare?) They can actively develop their own hypotheses while working with a research diary. When verifying hypotheses, they try to rely on available sources, not just their own assumptions. Alternatively, they offer ways in which the hypotheses could be verified. The student demonstrates the ability for deeper analysis and critical thinking.

Example of a student's speech:

"The Gulags were camps in the Soviet Union where people were sent for forced labour. They started after the revolution, when the communists came to power. At first it was mainly their opponents, but then under Stalin it became widespread and anyone who didn't like or agree with them could end up there. They imprisoned a lot of people when they were collectivizing and building factories in the 1930s. They had to do hard and dangerous labour, often somewhere in Siberia or building factories. A lot of people died there.

One of the prisoners was Mr. Novák, an ordinary worker and even a communist. They arrested him and accused him of being a spy, although this was not true. He spent five years in a labour camp in Siberia, where he contracted tuberculosis. When he was released, he was no longer able to work normally and supported himself as best he could. His story shows how the whole regime violated human rights and destroyed people's lives. From a moral point of view, it is terrible. That is why it is important to defend democracy and freedom so that such things do not happen again."



As this activity also focuses on collaboration and presentation, here we offer possible criteria for evaluating these aspects. It is important to keep in mind that a student who is, for example, high in the cognitive domain may be low in the collaborative category, etc.

● BASIC LEVEL

Is minimally involved in group work. Can only state some of the findings of their group when presenting.

● MEDIUM LEVEL

Actively cooperates in the group. Summarises the main findings and workflow during the presentation.

● HIGH LEVEL

Is an active member of the group, helping others. Presents the results of work clearly and concisely. Asks follow-up questions.