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Itinerary #9 Write your Syrian Journey



Competences



1.1 Browsing, searching and filtering data, information and digital content

1.2 Evaluating data, information and digital content



2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies



3.1 Identifying needs and technological responses



5.2 Identifying needs and technological responses

Tags

- Cooperation
- Stereotypes
- Empathy
- Creative writing

Time frame

6-8 hours

Audience

16 and over

Overview

The pedagogical itinerary that we propose is based on the assumption that in order to counteract hate speech among teenagers, it is necessary to work both on the cognitive front, educating about the importance of the search for information, the verification of sources and fact checking, and on the front of emotions, through an approach based on the recognition of one's own and others' feelings.

The BBC video game, *Syrian Journey*, plays a central role in this itinerary and constitutes the starting point for a collective writing task.

Syrian journey is a BBC digital project that explores the exodus of the Syrian people. It consists of three parts: a "newsgame", stories from survivors, and a proposal for a discussion based on the presentation of a series of evocative objects, addressing the question "what would you bring if you had to leave your country of origin?".

The narrative basis of the game is very pared back, and lends itself to being enriched with details.

Using the game as a starting point to build a credible story, the participants are stimulated on the one hand to read up on the Syrian situation and the events related to the war, and on the other to humanise the characters, identifying and thus deconstructing the stereotypes related to refugees and their journeys.

Within this itinerary, the video game is not the only media used. Indeed, the video "Rentrez chez-vous" by the rap duo BigFlo & Oli is put forward, in which a reversal of perspective is proposed, and the two protagonists must leave a Europe devastated by war to reach the other side of the Mediterranean.

Context

This activity can be proposed in formal and non-formal educational contexts.

Given the sensitivity of the issue, and the emotional impact that the media used may have, we suggest being very cautious about proposing this itinerary to children under the age of 16 and who have experienced migrant experiences similar to those narrated.

The participants' level of knowledge of the languages in which the project materials are furnished (mainly English and French) should be verified. It may be helpful to provide translations.

Objective

This set of activities uses the video game in order to stimulate a creative writing task, in the pursuit of several objectives:

- to stimulate a process of decentralisation of the gaze;
- to stimulate identification and empathy;
- to learn how to research and acquire accurate information;
- to activate a meta-reflection on how the narrative techniques used change the way we perceive a story.

Required Media

Syrian Journey is a BBC project which consists of three parts:

- an interactive "butterfly effect" newsgame, in which the protagonist, who is leaving Syria with his/her family to reach Europe, makes choices that will determine his/her destiny;
- a photographic section, showing images of objects brought by some Syrian refugees with them during the trip, aimed at stimulating a process of identification;
- videos that tell the true stories of some of those who survived the journey that brought them to Europe from Syria.

Video of the rap *Rentrez chez vous* by the Toulouse duo, Bigflo & Oli. The video, in animated form, sees the rappers themselves as protagonists of the story. In an inverted reality, which sees France hit by the destruction of war, the two undertake different itineraries in order to reach the other side of the Mediterranean. One will perish during the journey, while the other, once he reaches his destination, will be rejected on arrival by a hostile crowd with signs bearing the words "rentrez chez vous!", or "go home".

Working Methods

The itinerary we propose intends to connect the rational and cognitive sphere with the irrational and emotional one, in the belief that these two planes are closely interconnected, and that both play an important role in counteracting hate speech.

Access to accurate information is not in itself sufficient to deconstruct online hate speech. Emotions play a central role in online exchanges and in the construction of hate speech. Indeed, neuro-scientific research shows how emotional and rational thought overlap and influence each other. This is the reason why fact checking is often not sufficient on its own to deconstruct faith in fake news with a high emotional impact. The task of creating a story and enriching the events illustrated in the game with details forces the participants to activate both of these aspects.

Indeed, they are asked to create a story that is plausible. They therefore need to carry out documentation and fact checking work in as much detail as possible. At the same time, what makes a story interesting is its personalisation, bringing about a sense of identification in the reader. Getting the participants to imagine the protagonists' emotions pushes them to go beyond the neutrality of the story, and to ask themselves: how would I feel if I found myself in the same situation?

The creative act of building a story which will be read and enjoyed by someone else compels the participants to adopt the reader's point of view, thus decentralising the perspective.

The techniques used here range from storytelling, to cooperative learning techniques (in particular Windows is used), brainstorming and group discussion.

Given the sensitivity of the issue, participant care takes on a central role. The teamwork element favours the collective assumption of responsibility, whereas where participants are required to make a more personal contribution, an anonymity agreement is honoured, whereby the whole group of participants undertakes to preserve the anonymity of the others, for example by not investigating who made a particular contribution.

Working Methods

SEGMENT 1

Overview

The first segment aims to introduce the subject matter being studied (the war and the exodus of the people fleeing it) through the adoption of a decentralised gaze. The decentralisation of the gaze will then be the guiding thread of the whole educational itinerary.

Time: 2 hours (times may vary based on level of awareness and number of participants)

Media

Video of the rap *Rentrez chez vous* by BigFlo and Oli

Syrian Journey game, in the section "What would you bring if you had to leave your country of origin"

Methods

This activity serves to get into the topic. Watching the video allows you to activate a decentralised gaze in the participants. The horrors of war brought into a "familiar" European context and the need to leave the country of origin lead to a reflection: "... what if it happened to me"?

In this phase, the work is initially individual and is carried out anonymously. Collective restitution takes place through the exchange of materials by the participants and reading aloud. Symbolically, therefore, each participant conveys the experiences of others through his own voice.

Equipment

- interactive multimedia whiteboard or large screen for collective viewing of the video and the game's Internet page. If an Internet connection is not available, we suggest recording the video separately and saving the photographic materials on a USB stick for example;
- blackboard or flipcharts, markers;
- photocopies with the text and possibly also translation of the rap piece "Rentrez chez vous" by Bigflo et Oli;
- sheets of different colours with the questions for participants, pens / markers;
- container to collect participants' responses.

The leader of the activity presents him or herself, introduces the activity and asks each of the participants to say their name and the name of an object that they would not be able to leave behind should they have to leave their home. Once the activity is over, participants are shown the section of the *Syrian Journey* game "What would you bring with you?"

The activity leader shows the participants the video "Rentrez-chez vous" and asks what are the first words that come to mind immediately after viewing. At this stage it is not necessary to provide a translation of the text. The words that emerge are written up on a board. The leader distributes the lyrics and, if necessary, the translation of the song. Participants watch the video again (given how tough this material is, this step

Working Methods

can be skipped if the participants are too emotionally shaken up). A few questions are asked in a plenary, asking the participants not to answer for the moment:

- What would happen if a war broke out in the place where you live?
- What would you do if the place where you live all of a sudden became unsafe for you and your family?
- What would you feel if you lived an experience similar to the one told in the song?
- The experience of lockdown following the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic has changed our existence for a certain time. In your opinion, did this give us the tools to understand what happens when our daily lives are turned upside down?

4 sheets of different colours are distributed to the participants (each question has a corresponding colour) and participants are asked to respond individually and anonymously. The anonymity agreement set out, binding all those present not to try and identify the authors of the answers.

The leader collects the participants' answers in a container and redistributes them randomly.

Each participant will read another person's answers aloud.

A discussion of the activity follows.

The first segment ends with a group greeting. The participants arrange themselves in a circle and everyone finds a word or a short phrase to greet the person on his/her left.

SEGMENT 2

Overview

Based on the experience of the game, the participants begin the collective writing process. Divided into groups, they elaborate the identikits of the characters in their story.

Time: 2-3 hours

Media

Syrian Journey video game

Methods

Story telling; cooperative learning

Equipment

- Frames on which to build the stories (depending on the age and level of involvement of the participants, you can decide whether to provide them with more detailed frames, or whether to leave them more freedom)
- An interactive multimedia whiteboard or a large screen connected to the Internet. The room where the activity takes place must be prepared in advance, with tables large enough to allow groups of four to sit around them. Each group should have at their disposal a computer or tablet connected to the Internet from which they can play *Syrian Journey*. If it is impossible to have these tools, participants can use personal mobile phones.
- Updated materials on the current situation in Syria.
- Blank sheets on which to note the progress of the story.

Working Methods

- Identikit sheets on the protagonist of the game.

Collective greeting: the participants, in a circle, say a word about the previous meeting.

Subsequently, they are divided into groups of 4 and arranged around the tables.

They are asked if they have any information about the Syrian context.

Up to date materials are distributed about Syria before and after the outbreak of the conflict (materials from the BBC website, newspaper clippings, other materials...).

Participants see the videos in the "testimonials" section of the *Syrian Journey* site.

To stimulate the discussion, the activity leader asks some questions:

- Did the stories you saw move you? Have they somehow changed your perception of reality?
- What role do emotions play in the perception of a given situation?
- Can an "interesting" story help to spread accurate information? Why?

The video game *Syrian Journey* is introduced.

In groups, the participants play the video game.

Each participant is assigned a role:

- The time manager
- The moderator, who makes sure that everyone is able to express their opinion
- The manager of the choices (which must be taken after everybody has been consulted), who is also the one who clicks on the button of the option chosen by the participants.
- The group memory manager (who keeps track of the route taken).

The activity leader distributes the identikit sheet of the characters with the following questions:

Who is the protagonist? What is their name? How old are they?

What activities do they or did they do before the outbreak of the conflict?

The game is about a family. How many people is it composed of? What are the other members of the family called? Are there children? How old are they?

In the plenary, each group hands around to the others the identikit of the characters of its story.

The materials produced are collected by the activity leader to be redistributed in the next session.

Working Methods

SEGMENT 2

Overview We enter the heart of the collective writing. Each group of participants elaborates their own story.	Initial greeting in plenary. Each participant says his name and a word about his/her mood. Participants recreate the same groups from the previous segment.
Time: 2-3 hours	Each group has a very short narrative outline of their protagonist's journey and an identikit of the characters. Starting from these elements and carrying out investigative work, the participants will enrich the story with details in order to make it compelling. What do the characters feel in a given situation? What reasoning leads the protagonist to make one decision rather than another? And even what colours does the protagonist see, what flavours do they taste? Which narrative style is most effective for telling the story of the protagonists?
Media Videogame <i>Syrian Journey</i>	Participants will use the electronic devices available to find background information, comparing the sources and checking their reliability .
Methods Collective writing; cooperative learning; story telling	At the end of the study programme, each group tells their own <i>Syrian Journey</i> in plenary.
Equipment Same setting as the previous segment.	

In a nutshell

To counteract hate speech, often based on fake news and misleading narratives, it is not sufficient to merely get informed. It is necessary to go to the origins. Why is the narrative of hatred so gripping? What role do emotions play in the credibility of a story? A path of creative writing, which brings together the search for accurate information and an empathic approach, seems to us a possible way to build a new awareness.

Additional options / Variations

This itinerary can be carried out in multiple sessions of 2-3 hours, or over a single longer session. In this case, the greeting and "goodbye" activities can be replaced with movement games, which reduce the tension.

The proposed activities are in English or French. In the event that participants do not know these languages, it is possible to provide them with translations, or, in the case of the group game, to designate a person in charge of language who will be able to help with online translating tools.

Sources / Links

Below, by way of example, we list some links to websites in English that can be useful for finding news and information on the situation in Syria:

- www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html
- www.bbc.com/news/topics/cg4t1wvvgant/syrian-civil-war
- syriancivilwarmap.com

Links in Italian

- www.internazionale.it/tag/paesi/siria
- www.limesonline.com/tag/siria
- www.atlanteguerre.it/conflict/siria
- *Syrian Journey* project: www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32057601
- *Rentrez chez-vous* video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=gM328Z0JKjA

Rentrez chez vous

Bigflo & Oli

Album: *La vie de rêve*, 2018

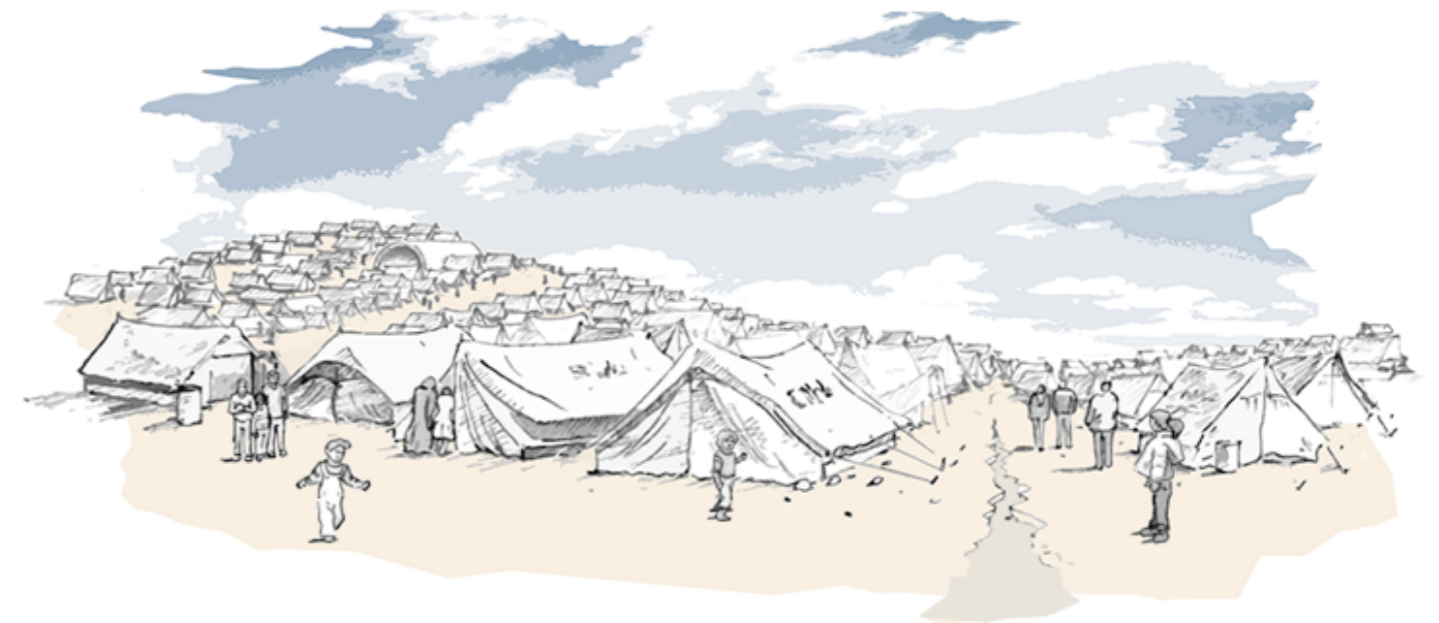
Ça y est, ils ont fait sauter la tour Eiffel
 Ça y est, ils ont fait sauter la tour Eiffel
 On pensait pas qu'ils oseraient mais le mal est fait
 Comment on a pu en arriver là? Difficile à croire
 La nuit a été calme, ils ont bombardé que trois fois
 Je suis monté à Paris retrouver ma copine
 La guerre nous a pris par le col, nous a sorti de la routine
 Remplacé les fleurs par les pleurs, les murmurs par les cris
 Son immeuble a été touché, j'ai pas trouvé sous les débris
 Je vais rentrer bredouille, rejoindre ma famille dans le premier train
 Le départ est prévu pour demain matin
 Les hommes sont capables de merveilles et des pires folies
 Ça fait quatre jours que j'ai pas d'ouvelles d'Oli
 Putain c'est la guerre!
 On a cassé nos tours d'ivoire
 Moi qui l'ai connue qu'au travers des livres d'histoires
 J'veille sur la famille, c'est vrai, nos parents s'font vieux
 On entasse des bus, on bloque les routes, on s'protège comme on peut
 Et la foule fuit ces fous sans camisole
 Paraît qu'ils exécutent des gens place du capitol
 Quatre billets pour un ferry, une chance de s'évader
 Une nouvelle vie de l'autre côté de la Méditerranée
 Les balles nous narguent, on a peur d'être au mauvais endroit
 Mon frère m'a dit "si j'reviens pas, partez sans moi"
 Difficile d'être au courant, ils ont coupé le réseau
 Ça fait bientôt quatre jours que j'ai pas d'ouvelles de Flo
 Bien sûr les bruits des wagons bondés me rendent insomniaque
 Certains ont mis toute leur maison au fond d'un petit sac
 Le train s'arrête et redémarre, me donne des hauts-le-cœur
 On a fait en deux jours ce qu'on faisait en six heures
 J'dois rejoindre la famille au port de Marseille mais j'ai pris du retard
 J'crois bien qu'ils vont partir sans moi, quel cauchemar!
 Pas grave, j'les rejoindrais en barque
 Pas de réseau, impossible de choper une barre
 J'vois une enfant au sol, lui demande si elle est seule
 Elle dit qu'elle a vu ses parents couchés sous des linceuls
 Les hommes sont capables de merveilles et des pires folies

Ça fait bientôt six jours que j'ai pas d'ouvelles d'Oli
 Direction Marseille! Un tas d'tout dans la soute
 On fait semblant d'pas voir tous les corps qui longent la route
 Les villes ont changé, la vie et l'horreur aussi tôt
 Les métros sont des dortoirs, les cinémas des hôpitaux
 Sous le port, on s'bouscule, on s'entasse devant
 D'un coup l'ferry apparaît, certains tueraient pour une place dedans
 À bord, je pleure l'état de ce monde
 On a attendu mon frère jusqu'à la dernière seconde
 On veut pas être là-bas, on veut juste être autre part
 Enfin respirer comme le lendemain d'un cauchemar
 Le bateau démarre, je fixe son sillage sur l'eau
 Ça fait bientôt sept jours que j'ai pas d'ouvelles de Flo
 Arrivé sur le port de Marseille avec la petite fille dans mes bras
 Presque un jour de retard, ils sont tous partis sans moi
 Mais j'ai les contacts d'un passeur, une plage et une heure
 Plus de trente, entassés, bien sûre, on ne voyage pas seul
 Il me dit "choisis la fille ou ton sac pour jeter du lest"
 Puis je vide mes poches et lui donne tout ce qu'il me reste
 Et me voilà parti, acteur d'une drôle de fable
 À la conquête du paradis sur un bateau gonflable, on navigue loin d'ici
 Et plus les vagues s'agrandissent, plus notre espoir rétrécit
 Et ça tangué, et ça tangué, certains tombent dans le ventre de la bête
 Nous voilà en pleine tempête
 En une seconde, la fille m'échappe et plonge
 J'entends ses cris emportés par la mer qui gronde
 La pluie, le sel et les larmes se mélangent
 Une femme s'agrippe à mes hanches et m'entraîne dans la danse
 Le bateau se retourne, on se colle et on coule
 Nos appels à l'aide sont perdu dans la houle
 Dire qu'il n'y a pas longtemps j'étais avec mes amis
 On allait de bar en bar pendant toute la nuit
 Mes poumons se remplissent d'eau et mes yeux se ferment
 Mon âme éteint sa lanterne
 Les hommes sont capables de merveilles et des pires folies
 Je n'aurais plus jamais de nouvelles d'Oli
 Le bateau accoste, première vision, des barbelés
 Ça, mon frère ne m'en avait pas parlé
 Encore des armes et des pare-balles

ESSENTIAL MATERIALS

On nous fait signer des papiers dans une langue qu'on ne parle pas
On nous fouille, nous désinfecte comme des animaux
On nous sépare de mon père, pas le temps de lui dire un dernier mot
Dans des camps provisoires, des couvertures, un matelas
Un niçois me raconte qu'il est là depuis des mois
Toulouse me manque déjà, ma mère s'endort dans mes bras
Elle me répète tout bas que Flo nous rejoindra
La chaleur étouffe, on a vidé toutes les bouteilles
Dans le journal, j'apprends qu'ils ont fait sauter la Tour Eiffel
Le lendemain on nous entasse dans des bus
Les autres sur les uns, qui peut le moins peut le plus
Des centaines de fous accompagnent notre départ
Des poings brandis en l'air, des cris, des sales regards
Je croise celui d'un type qui scande avec ferveur
C'est la première fois du périple que j'ai vraiment peur
Je ne vois que lui au milieu de la foule
Sur sa pancarte il est écrit "rentrez chez vous"
Mais j'suis désolé, on ne peut pas accueillir tous les Français
On ne peut pas accueillir tous les Français
Ils arrivent par milliers
Si ils avaient un minimum d'honneur
Ils retourneraient dans leur pays et ils combattraient pour la France
Ils combattraient pour défendre leur famille et puis leur honneur
C'est comme ça, je suis désolé
On vient, on vient de Nantes là, et ils ont tout détruit
Tout détruit à Nantes, il reste plus rien
On avait, on avait tout, là-bas, on a perdu tout ce qu'on avait
Euh, je sais pas quoi faire, je sais même pas où aller
J'ai perdu des gens de ma famille
Aujourd'hui, la plupart des problèmes que notre pays connaît
C'est de la faute des Français
Je suis désolé, avant qu'ils arrivent chez nous tout allait bien
Donc, on ne peut pas non plus accueillir des gens
Qui viennent chez nous foutre le bordel

- Translation into Italian (by Lorenzo Masetti):
www.antiwarsons.org/canzone.php?id=59064&lang=it
- Translation into English:
lyricstranslate.com/en/rentrez-chez-vous-go-back-home.html



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