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WAYS OF KNOWING

# IB AFRICA, EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL CONFERENCE 2014

ROME • 16–19 OCTOBER



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# **Nonrational ways of knowing in the history classroom**

*Focus on emotion and imagination*

Charlotte Vale

[cvale@romeinternationalschool.it](mailto:cvale@romeinternationalschool.it)



# Overview

- Emotion in history as a way of creating empathy and connection with the past
- The possible dangers of personal emotion and attachment; creating objectivity and overcoming emotion
- Desensitising students to history with over use of emotion
- Imagination as a WOK in history; examples of counterfactuals
- Debate surrounding counterfactuals



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# Emotion and worldviews

## How can journalists be objective when writing about dead children?

Being calmly rational about Gaza feels like a very particular form of madness. Journalism must convey the emotion too

## Jon Snow's Gaza appeal risks reducing reporting to propaganda

Journalists have cried 'something must be done' before, but they must avoid emoting

## Was it okay for U.K. journalist to make emotional, personal video about Gaza children?

Video by Jon Snow, news anchor for Britain's Channel 4 News, went viral. BBC chief says presenters must retain image of impartiality.

## **You can't keep emotions out of the Israel-Palestine issue, so don't try**



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# Questions to help create objectivity

- Do you feel emotional about this event?
- What emotions do you feel?
- Why do you think you have these emotions?
- What are the positives and negatives of your emotional view?
- Are you able to OPVL all the sources of evidence with the same objectivity?
- Can you imagine how someone else may feel about this event?



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# Taking emotion too far



Photo by Charlotte Button

- It is possible for students to have a positive emotional attachment to the past by engaging with their present and learning about the consequences and legacy of what they are studying.
- We do not need to shock or scare students to allow them to care and use their emotions to learn more.



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# Imagination in history

- Creating 'primary sources' that hold a certain bias
- Counterfactuals - "It is, at the very root, the idea of conjecturing on what did not happen, or what might have happened, in order to understand what did happen" *Black and MacRaild* Studying History



# Hitler's rise to power

- If the Wall Street Crash doesn't happen in 1929 how likely is it that the Nazi party still sees a huge spike in public support in the 1930 election?
- What other factors contributed to Hitler's popularity? Are these enough without the Wall Street Crash?
- How far does the Wall Street Crash affect the chronology of Hitler's rise to power?





# The League of Nations

- What if the USA had not rejected the Treaty of Versailles and joined the League of Nations – evaluate the potential impact of American involvement during the 1920s and 30s



THE GAP IN THE BRIDGE.



# More counterfactuals...

- What if there had been no insurrection in The Two Sicilies or Piedmont would this affect the timeline of Italian Unification?
- What if Germany had rejected the Treaty of Versailles as Turkey rejected the Treaty of Sèvres?
- What if Trotsky had succeeded Lenin – would this affect the post-war settlements?
- What if Bizone was delayed or not created?



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# Debate surrounding counterfactuals

## 'What if' is a waste of time

Counterfactual history is misguided and outdated, as the first world war debate shows



**Richard J Evans**

The Guardian, Thursday 13 March 2014 10.30 GMT

 Jump to comments (263)



## Altered Pasts: Counterfactuals in History by Richard J Evans review – a ruthless, forensic demolition

Evans's rigorous demolition of what-if? narratives decries counterfactual history as a fundamentally reactionary pursuit



**Owen Hatherley**

The Guardian, Thursday 17 April 2014 07.30 BST





# Emotion and imagination in history: plenary

- Emotion in history – allow and encourage students to connect with their present to develop empathy with the past
- Acknowledge emotion – allow students time to reason and create objectivity, don't shock or scare students
- Create opportunities for students to use imagination through the creation of sources and counterfactual questioning