Using the Timeline Method
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This is not a standard activity plan, but rather an overview of the benefits and different ways of using digital and hardcopy photograph-based timeline cards in (history) education. In the JustNow toolbox, we have created several timelines that teachers, educators and youth workers are warmly invited to use in their instruction.

BENEFITS OF THE TIMELINE METHOD

The timeline method provides a list of events that took place in chronological order. In the JustNow project, we used the timeline method in order to provide a comprehensive and innovative overview of different events, key personalities, concepts and milestones in order to provide educators with a tool that they can use in their classrooms.

There are multiple advantages* to using a timeline as a teaching method:

1.Timelines help students/participants organize and process information.
Throughout the process of organizing the timeline, students/participants are encouraged to make connections and look for patterns. Where possible, timelines can be created to cover different perspectives and/or areas of information (e.g. cultural, political, economic, etc.), thus making them comprehensive and not merely chronological.

2. Timelines are flexible.
Starting with the basic timeline, students/participants are able to add their own (life history) events into the general history timeline, using post-its or markers on a whiteboard. If it is a digital timeline, students/participants are able to add events or entries, depending on their interests and relevance for the topic in question.

3. Timelines are visual.
Pictures, maps, images, graphics are memorable. They are often able to illustrate an event or convey an emotion that a dry textbook text cannot. You can encourage the students/participants to interpret the images they see on the timeline, further spurring their imagination and creativity in the process.

4. Timelines are assessment tools.
Timelines can be used to test students'/participants' knowledge, to analyze new information, refresh their memory, or add a new perspective on a historical period or a topic already covered in the classroom using standard methods of instruction.

5. Timelines help students/participants reflect.
The timeline method, with its linearity, exploration of causes and effects and multiple perspectives helps students/participants reflect on the interconnectedness between events, individuals, concepts and contexts. This can foster critical thinking and a trans-disciplinary understanding of the subject at hand.

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6. Timelines work for a variety of learning styles and preferences.
The versatility of the timeline method means that it can be attractive to visual learners who prefer images, photos, and graphics. Learners more focused on information and data will be more preoccupied with the text, narratives, descriptions of the images, as well as with trying to identify and insert the eventual missing links. Timelines can be adapted to speak to different ways of learning.

GOALS & LEARNING OUTCOMES

Some of the learning goals and outcomes* that can be reached through the application of the timeline method are:

- Enhancing students'/participants' ability to analyze non-linear relationships;
- Assisting students'/participants' in understanding historical context (timelines contextualize individual events, people, inventions, in relationship with others);
- Teaching students/participants to analyze on a micro-, macro-, or mega-scale;
- Fostering students'/participants' focus on details;
- Building students'/participants' ability to develop arguments;
- Increasing students'/participants' ability to compare time periods / concepts across time periods;
- Develop students'/participants' visualization of change (and continuity) over time and space.

Different Options for Applying the Timeline Method

GROUP TIMELINE READING & DISCUSSION

Materials needed: Printed/hardcopy timeline cards, tape, year cards taped on a timeline on the classroom wall or blackboard

Preparations:
Spread out the timeline cards you wish to focus on during the lesson onto a table, in a pile. Have the year cards taped on a line on the classroom wall or blackboard.

Instructions:
Ask each student/participant to select one (or two) cards from the pile. They should select on the basis of what is visually appealing or what seems interesting to them – they should not read the backside caption when selecting their respective card(s).

- Tell the students/participants to familiarize themselves with the card(s) they selected, to read the caption on the cover, to ask the teacher/educator if there was anything they found unclear.
- Divide the class into several groups, depending on the number of categories you will have for the group discussion (the teacher/educator decides on the relevant or applicable categories in advance):

  a. ask all those with timeline cards/images of individuals/persons/historical figures, to go to one corner;
  b. ask all those with timeline cards/images depicting culture, sports, entertainment (music, arts, literature, movie images) to go to another corner of the classroom;
  c. ask all those with images of conflict/war to go to another corner of the classroom;
  d. ask all those with images of symbols and maps (flags, emblems, etc.) to go to another corner of the classroom;
  e. etc.

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* This section is an adaptation from: Danielle Picard, Derek Bruff, 'Digital Timelines,' Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching, available at: https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/digital-timelines/ (accessed: May 10, 2018)

- Once the groups are formed, have them compare their respective cards in a group discussion (What types of images do we have in our group? What are the similarities between the images? What are the differences? What mood or message do the images convey? What do they teach us about this subject/historical period? etc.).
- After the group discussions, the teacher/educator starts inviting the students to present their chosen card(s) and to stick them onto the timeline (on the wall/blackboard), in a chronological order. (What made you choose this card? What does your card represent?)

This is the simplest way of doing an introductory lesson to a topic using the timeline cards in their physical form.

TIMELINE CARDS – POSTER ASSIGNMENT

Materials needed:
Printed/hardcopy timeline cards, tape, flipchart papers, markers.

Preparations:
Spread out the timeline cards you wish to focus on during the lesson onto a table, with images clearly visible to the students/participants. (Best to keep the number of cards to a minimum, so as not to burden the students/participants with too much choice.)

Instructions:
- Ask each student/participant to select one card from the pile. They should select on the basis of what is visually appealing or what seems interesting to them – they should not read the caption on the back when selecting their respective card(s).
- Tell the students/participants to familiarize themselves with the card(s) they selected, to read the caption on the cover, to ask the teacher/educator if there was anything they found unclear.
- Create several groups (of 4-5 students/participants in each group) randomly (e.g. by having students/participants count from 1-5).
- In each group, have the students/participants compare their respective photos, and discuss: "I selected this picture because….." Then ask the group to discuss, which picture in their group reveals the strongest or the most important message?
- Once they have selected one image/timeline card (or, if they can explain the connections, they can use multiple cards) – ask the group to create a poster. They can tape the card onto the flipchart paper and draw or write around the picture. The goal is to make a poster that can properly convey the message and history conveyed in the photograph/image(s).
- Once all the groups have prepared their posters, it is time to present them to the rest of the group.
- All the groups have to present their posters, and ideally each member of the group should say something. Listen to all the presentations and ask the students/participants to provide their comments and questions to the presenting group. The teacher/educator facilitates the discussions.

At the end of the class, the teacher/educator should reflect on the key images/timeline cards selected for this activity, and reflect on the strengths of the historical components of each of the cards, closing the class in a way that gives students/participants something to ponder.

TIMELINE CARDS – BINGO ASSIGNMENT

Materials needed:
printed/hardcopy timeline cards, PowerPoint or other presentation with 30 or more quiz questions.

Preparations:
spread out the timeline cards you wish to focus on during the lesson into a table, with images clearly visible to the students/participants.

Instructions:
- Prepare an extensive quiz on the subject covered in your chosen timeline cards set. The questions could be true/false, multiple choice, short essay or yes/no type.
- This lesson is for revisiting a topic, final revision prior to an exam, etc.
- Divide the group into teams of two or three students/participants. Each team is randomly assigned a couple of timeline cards from the set (as 'cheat' cards or quiz assistance). They have 5 minutes to familiarize themselves with the cards in each group, perhaps briefly talk about them.
- Start projecting the quiz questions, making sure that they are timed (with countdown timer visibly displayed). The group that has the question answered can raise their hand to offer the answer – if they offer the correct answer, the quiz moves on to the next question, and the group has gained a point. If they offered an incorrect answer, the countdown continues until another group offers the correct answer.
- The fast pace of the questions in the quiz, the friendly competitiveness and the likely small 'reward' offered for the winners (something symbolic) is guaranteed to make this an efficient revision of a subject area or a historical period.

PERSONAL TIMELINE REFLECTION

This activity is useful for getting the students/participants to reflect on the importance or relevance of the topic that is being studied, to their own personal lives. (For e.g. with the Human Rights timeline, you can get the students/participants to explore when was the first time they heard about the concept of 'human rights'; in what way these rights influence their everyday lives, etc.). Alternatively, you can also get the students/participants to use this method to reflect on their own personal choices and life events that led them to that particular point in their lives (e.g. choosing a particular field of study; having certain talents, etc.).

Materials needed:
Timeline cards (printed/hardcopy), A3 blank papers, (colorful) pens/markers, tape, old newspapers.

Preparations:
Spread out the timeline cards on one desk, and different old newspapers on another desk in the classroom. Give each student/participant 1 A3 blank paper, which will be their assignment paper for the class.

Instructions:
- Ask the students/participants to select one timeline card from the pile (based on visual appeal, without reading the description on the backside)
- The students/participants are then asked to put this card in the center of their A3 paper (using non-permanent tape) and to explore in what way this card/its message is relevant or connected to their everyday life. This is an individual activity (each student/participant is working on their own respective poster). They can consider questions such as:
  - Think back to the time when you first heard about this event/person (whatever is depicted on the image);
  - How does this image make you feel? Why did you select it?
  - What do you think is the relevance of this (historical event, person, symbol, and concept) for our lives today? Is it in any way relevant for your life?
  - What is the one thing that you would change in the world (inspired by this card)?
- The students/participants should be invited to use newspaper articles (images, headlines), cut them out and use them in their collage-poster creations.
- When everyone is done (suggested time for the activity is 30min), the students/participants can put up their poster creations on the wall of the classroom, and the remaining 15 minutes of the class can be spent in a silent 'gallery walk' where students/participants explore each other's creations.

HOMEWORK IDEAS

- Whether individually or using group work, students/participants can be tasked with the creation of their own timelines, which would then be presented in class. The teacher/educator can assign the topic/subject/historical period, or the students/participants can select a topic of their own. A variety of sources should be used in constructing timelines – encourage students/participants to use the internet, library, and encyclopaedia, newspapers, to interview their parents or grandparents, other teachers/educators. Students/participants with interest in digital or graphic design tools could be encouraged to create their own digital or (info) graphic timeline – these student/participant creations could later be displayed on the wall of the classroom, or on the school website. (There are multiple online tools for creating timelines, for e.g. https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/timeline, https://www.tiki-toki.com/, https://www.sutori.com/, https://timeline.knightlab.com/)
- Another homework assignment could be to assign a single timeline card to each student/participant, for further home research. They could explore additional information and be required to write short research essays, which could then be presented to the group in the next session.

ONLINE IMPLEMENTATION

Owing to the advances in education digital technology, it is relatively easy to implement working on timeline cards within an online class.

In the case that you wish to use the existing JustNow timeline cards sets in the digital format, please use one of the following educational timeline websites (most of these are free of charge), to transfer the content into the online format:

- Sutori: www.sutori.com
- Tiki Toki: www.tiki-toki.com
- Timeline by KnightLab: https://timeline.knightlab.com/
- Timetoast: www.timetoast.com
- Timepath: https://timepath.co/education
- Timegraphics: https://time.graphics/
- Free Timeline: http://free-timeline.com/

The benefit of digital timelines is that they can support additional formats of information beyond text and images – they can have multimedia, hyperlinks, maps.In an online educational activity that is based on using digital timelines, the instructor can give students/participants some time to familiarize themselves with the content, and then facilitate a plenary discussion about the their experience of the topic covered in the timeline. (Was there any information they found surprising? What information did they find intriguing?, etc.) In addition, digital timelines are an excellent way of getting students/participants to create their own in-depth research as part of homework. They could choose a single historical persona or an event, and then create a 10-15 card digital timeline of this person's life, or an event's chronology. The overall collection of these homework-digital timelines could then be used for peer education, allowing learners to collaborate and enhance their collective knowledge and understanding of a specific topic.