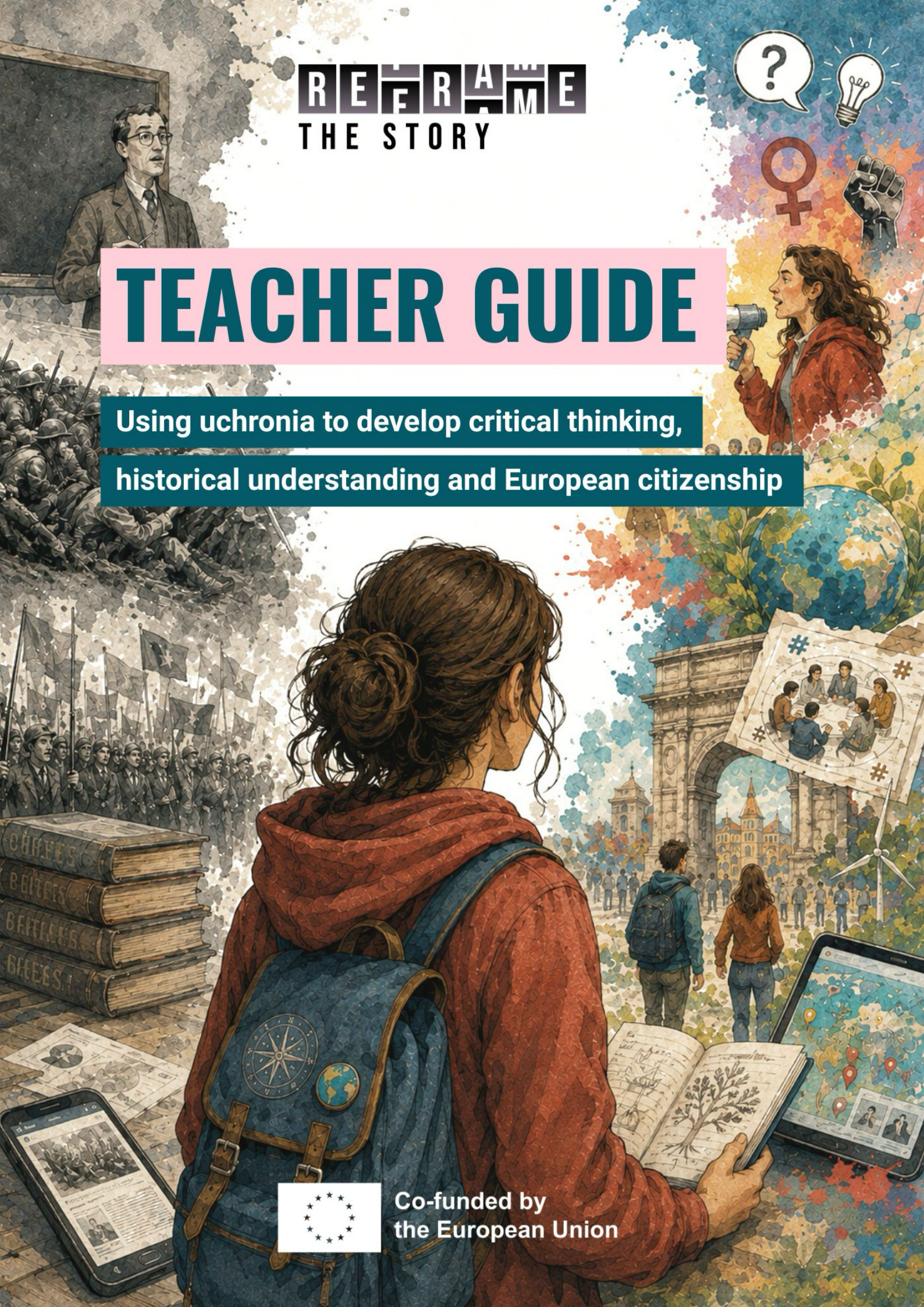
REFRAME THE STORY

TEACHER GUIDE

Using uchronia to develop critical thinking, historical understanding and European citizenship



Co-funded by the European Union

Project Information

Project name	Reframe the Story
Project number	2025-1-FR01-KA220-SCH-000364132
Action type	KA220-SCH - Cooperation partnerships in school education
Call	2025 - Round 1 KA2
Publication date	October 2026
Website	https://reframethestory.eu/

Credits

This pedagogical guide was developed within the framework of the Erasmus+ project Reframe the Story by the project consortium: Les Apprimeurs (France, coordinator), ELAN - European Literacy for All Network (Belgium), Narva Pähklimäe Kool (Estonia), Secondary School No. 7 Galați (Romania), and 41st School St. Patriarch Evtimii (Bulgaria).

License

This pedagogical guide is licensed under a Creative Commons CC BY-NC 4.0 license.

Unless otherwise stated, the illustrations in this guide were created with the assistance of artificial intelligence (AI) tools.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union.
Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

ABOUT REFRAME THE STORY

Using uchronia to rethink history education

History is more than a collection of dates, events and famous figures. It is an interpretation of the past, built from sources, evidence and multiple perspectives. Understanding how these narratives are constructed has become an essential competence in a world shaped by social media, algorithms and the constant circulation of information.

Reframe the Story is a European Erasmus+ cooperation project that explores how uchronia—the exploration of plausible alternative historical scenarios based on real events—can become a powerful educational tool.

Rather than asking students to memorise historical facts, the project encourages them to investigate historical causality, compare interpretations, question assumptions and understand that history is shaped by decisions, constraints, chance and human choices. By asking *"What if history had unfolded differently?"*, learners develop a deeper understanding of both the past and the present while strengthening their critical thinking and civic awareness.

Bringing together schools and educational organisations from Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, France and Romania, the project combines research, classroom experimentation and international cooperation to develop practical resources that support innovative and inclusive history teaching.

The partnership

Reframe the Story is funded by the Erasmus+ Programme and brings together five organisations with complementary expertise in education, literacy and history teaching.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed as a practical resource for teachers rather than a theoretical handbook. Its purpose is to help educators integrate uchronia into classroom practice through concrete activities, pedagogical recommendations and examples collected across Europe.

Throughout the guide, you will discover:

- the educational foundations of uchronia and historical thinking;
- practical classroom activities and teaching strategies;
- recommendations for fostering critical thinking and inclusive learning;
- approaches for addressing sensitive historical topics;
- ideas for assessment and reflection;
- examples drawn from classroom practice.

Although the guide primarily addresses history teachers working with learners aged 8 to 15, many of the proposed activities can also be adapted to citizenship education, literature, philosophy, foreign languages and social studies.

Historical activities in this guide use evidence-based, plausible alternatives. In literature and philosophy, teachers may also use deliberately imaginary “what if?” scenarios to explore narrative choices, values and consequences. These extensions should be clearly identified as fiction or thought experiments, with learning objectives appropriate to the subject. Rather than presenting a rigid methodology, this guide offers a flexible framework that teachers can adapt to their own curriculum, classroom context and students' needs.

How to use this guide?

The guide has been designed for flexible, non-linear reading. You can explore it according to your classroom needs.

If you want to...	Start with...
Understand the educational foundations	Sections 1–3
Discover practical classroom activities	Sections 4–6
Work with controversial or sensitive topics	Section 7
Assess students' learning	Section 8
Clarify key concepts	Glossary

The project website provides complementary materials that accompany this guide, including national studies; classroom good practices; a glossary of key concepts; project news and updates.

https://reframethestory.eu

CONTENT

P. 6	RETHINKING HISTORY DIDACTICS
P. 12	WHY USE UCHRONIA IN HISTORY EDUCATION?
P. 19	WHAT STUDENTS REALLY LEARN THROUGH UCHRONIA
P. 24	A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE ON HISTORY AND NARRATIVES
P. 30	WORKING ON STEREOTYPES, BIASES AND DOMINANT NARRATIVES
P. 36	INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGIES
P. 42	FROM DEBATE TO DIALOGUE, MANAGING SENSITIVE TOPICS
P. 46	LIGHT ASSESSMENT IN UCHRONIA ACTIVITIES
P. 53	CONCLUSION
P. 55	GLOSSARY
P. 56	BIBLIOGRAPHY

01 RETHINKING HISTORY DIDACTICS

From memorisation to critical understanding

> **"History is the only discipline that teaches students that things have not always been as they are now and that, therefore, they can be changed in the future.**
>
> Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (2015)

1.1 WHY HISTORY MATTERS TODAY?

History is not about the past; it is about understanding the present through the lens of its antecedents. Connecting it to current reality is essential for the following reasons:

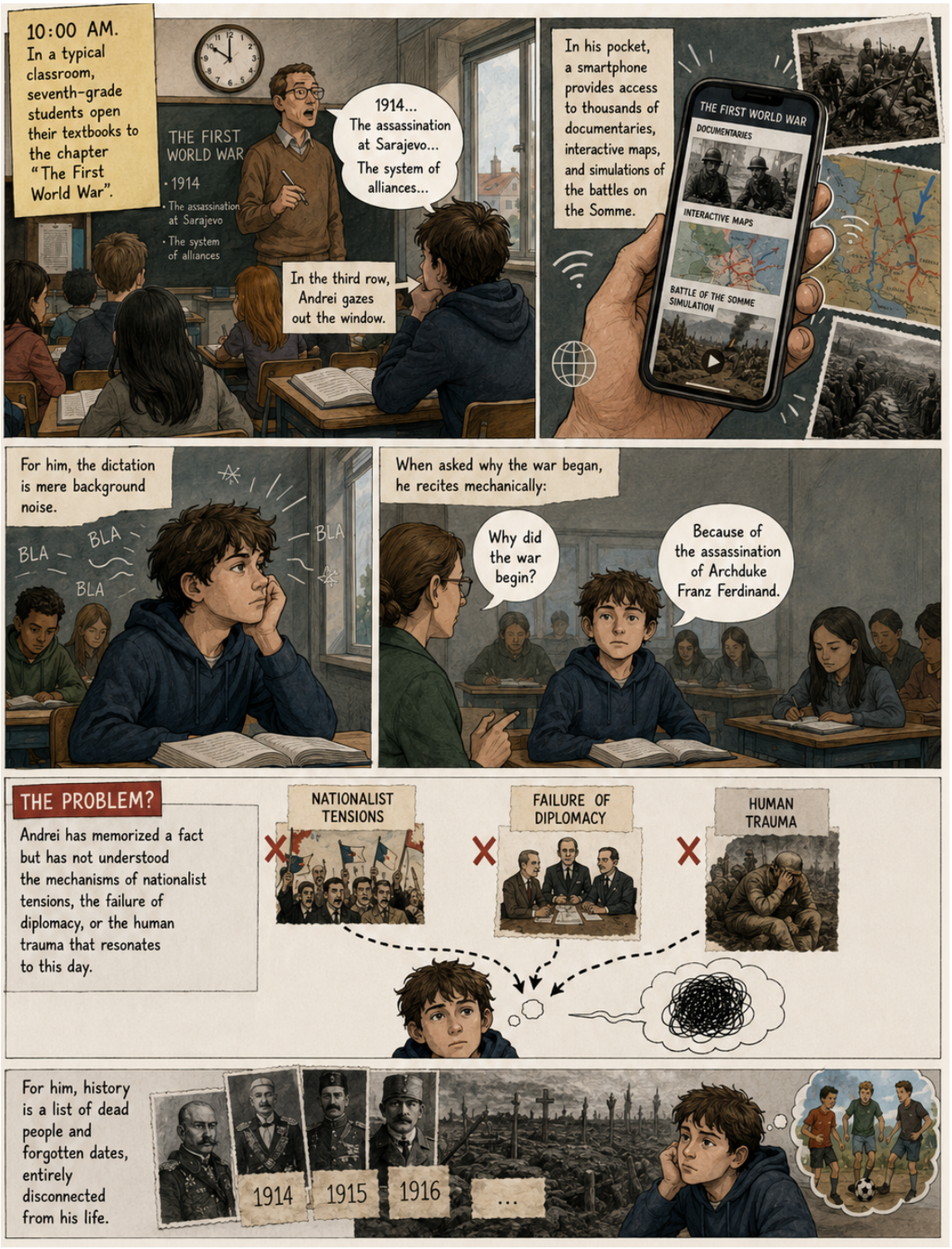
- **Combating misinformation:** In an era of "fake news," the historical method—source verification, contextualisation and analysis of authorial intent—provides valuable tools for identifying misinformation.
- **Identity and alterity:** Understanding past conflicts aids in managing diversity and building tolerance based on knowledge rather than slogans.
- **Civic education:** Today's democratic institutions are the result of historical struggles. Without knowing this trajectory, students cannot value or defend democratic principles.

In today's educational landscape, the discipline of history stands at a fundamental crossroads. It is no longer sufficient to transmit a catalog of facts; we must develop analytical competencies in an era of information overload. In this educational context—marked by the proliferation of content personalization algorithms and the risk of "filter bubbles"—history teaching must migrate from the transmission of a linear narrative toward the formation of a discipline of thought.

Transforming the classroom into an "evidence analysis laboratory" means that history ceases to be a finished story, becoming instead a method of continuous interrogation regarding the validity of information (Wineburg, 2018).

1.2 THE CONVENTIONAL DYNAMICS OF AN EVERYDAY HISTORY LESSON

The gap between traditional teaching methods and students' expectations often becomes visible in everyday classroom situations. The following example illustrates this challenge.



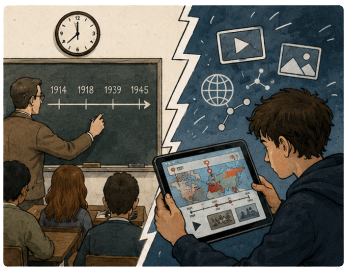
1.3 WHY MANY STUDENTS STRUGGLE WITH TRADITIONAL TEACHING?

Traditional history teaching, rooted in encyclopedic content, rigid chronology, teacher-centred instruction, rote learning, and limited contemporary relevance, now faces major methodological challenges.



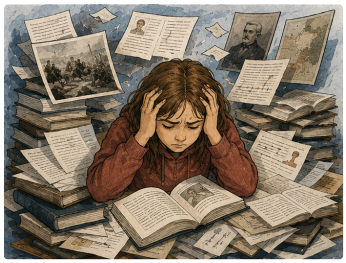
1 • Why does this matter?

Students rarely see the value of memorising the succession of rulers if they cannot understand how past decisions shaped today's institutions, rights and democratic societies. History becomes meaningful when it explains how freedoms such as voting, free speech and equality were achieved through long historical struggles.



2 • An outdated learning format

Students live in a fast-paced, visual and interactive world, yet history is still often taught through long lectures and passive note-taking. Traditional formats may not always support the active engagement and enquiry-based learning encouraged by contemporary educational approaches.



3 • Too much content, too little thinking

Pressure to cover extensive curricula often leaves little room for source analysis, discussion and investigation. Instead of building historical understanding, students are expected to memorise an increasing number of disconnected facts.



4 • History without enquiry

History is too often presented as a finished story rather than an investigation. Students need opportunities to analyse evidence, compare perspectives, question sources and understand that historical interpretation is built through critical thinking.

1.4 RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

Research Phase

To establish a solid evidence base for the project, partners carried out the following complementary research activities:

- **242 questionnaires** completed (211 students and 31 educators).
- **5 national studies** analysing current history teaching practices.
- **26 good practices** collected across partner countries.
- **Literature review** on history education, critical thinking, multiperspectivity and counterfactual history.

Key figures

Activity	Result
Students surveyed	211
Educators surveyed	31
Total respondents	242
Educators familiar with uchronia	100%
Educators using uchronia	65%
Students unfamiliar with the term "uchronia"	72%
Students interested in this approach	Large majority

Key findings

- **Teachers know the concept.** Participating educators were familiar with uchronia and most already use counterfactual questions in their teaching.
- **Students rarely recognise it.** Although teachers use elements of uchronia, most students do not identify it as a structured learning method.
- **Strong demand for active learning.** Students expressed a clear preference for interactive, enquiry-based approaches rather than passive memorisation.
- **A gap exists between practice and perception.** Counterfactual activities remain occasional and are rarely presented as an explicit pedagogical strategy.
- **Evidence supports innovation.** The findings confirm the relevance of developing structured tools based on alternative history, multiperspectivity, historical debate and critical thinking.

Implications for the project

The research directly informed the design of the Reframe the Story methodology. The project therefore focuses on:

- making uchronia an explicit teaching method;
- strengthening causal reasoning and critical thinking;
- promoting enquiry-based learning through historical investigation;
- developing practical classroom resources centred on debate, multiperspectivity and alternative historical scenarios.

1.5 WHAT TEACHERS CAN EXPECT FROM THIS GUIDE?

History is not only about understanding what happened, but also why events unfolded as they did. This guide uses **uchronia** as a structured teaching method to help students explore historical causality, question assumptions, and recognise that societies are shaped by human choices rather than historical inevitability.

Rather than replacing chronological teaching, this approach enriches it by making students active participants in historical enquiry.

What this guide offers

Teachers will find practical tools to:

- integrate **uchronia** into history lessons through a clear pedagogical framework;
- foster **critical thinking, causal reasoning and historical empathy**;
- engage students through enquiry, debate, simulations and collaborative problem-solving;
- assess reasoning, argumentation and decision-making rather than factual memorisation;
- design inclusive and interdisciplinary learning experiences adapted to different ages and learning profiles.

Classroom implementation

The methodology is intentionally flexible and can be adapted to different educational contexts.

Teachers can use…	Examples
Short or extended activities	Single lessons (45–60 minutes), multi-session projects or workshops
Active learning methods	Role play, debates, crisis simulations, source investigations
Digital resources	Online archives, AI-assisted research, interactive and multimedia tools
Assessment strategies	Critical thinking, historical reasoning, argumentation and empathy
Inclusive approaches	Collaborative work, multimodal resources and differentiated activities

For historical enquiry, students begin with reliable sources, identify a plausible point of divergence and explore its consequences. Teachers guide the enquiry and help students distinguish documented history from hypotheses. Section 2.3 presents the learning cycle and the teacher's role.

02 WHY USE UCHRONIA IN HISTORY EDUCATION?

A heuristic tool for deconstructing historical narratives

> **"Historical thinking is neither a natural process nor something that springs automatically from psychological development."**
>
> Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* (2001)

If historical thinking must be learned, then students need opportunities to question evidence, explore causality and test hypotheses. Uchronia provides precisely this kind of intellectual laboratory, transforming history lessons into spaces of enquiry rather than simple transmission of knowledge.

2.1 WHAT IS UCHRONIA?

Uchronia (from the Greek *ou*, "not", and *chronos*, "time") is a method of exploring history by asking **"What if...?"**. It modifies a real historical event and examines the logical consequences of this change. In historical research, this approach is commonly referred to as **counterfactual history** (Ferguson, 1997). In this guide, historical enquiry uses uchronia as an evidence-based exploration of plausible alternatives. Literary uses may follow different conventions.

Rather than rewriting history for entertainment, uchronia is used as a **heuristic tool**. It helps learners question the idea that history was inevitable and understand that historical events result from decisions, constraints and multiple interacting factors (Tetlock & Belkin, 1996; Ferguson, 1997).

What uchronia is...

- A structured exploration of alternative historical scenarios.
- A method for analysing historical causality.
- A way to investigate how individual decisions, structural forces and chance shaped historical outcomes.
- An opportunity to develop critical thinking through evidence-based reasoning.

...and what it is not

- A fictional story disconnected from historical evidence.
- A game where any outcome is possible.
- A replacement for learning historical facts.
- An invitation to judge the past using present-day values.

In an evidence-based historical activity, students begin with a **well-defined point of divergence**—a real historical moment where events could plausibly have unfolded differently. From this point, students build hypotheses using historical evidence and logical reasoning rather than imagination alone.

The core principles of uchronia

A rigorous uchronia follows four simple steps:

- Identify a historical turning point.
- Modify a single variable.
- Predict the chain of consequences using historical evidence.
- Compare the alternative scenario with real history to better understand causality.

By reconstructing these causal chains, students move beyond memorising dates and begin to understand how historical processes are shaped by human choices, structural constraints and contingency. Rather than asking only **"What happened?"**, uchronia encourages them to investigate **"Why did it happen this way?"**

2.2 WHY USE UCHRONIA IN THE CLASSROOM?

Uchronia is more than a creative exercise. When grounded in historical evidence, it becomes a powerful learning strategy that transforms students from passive recipients of knowledge into active investigators of the past.

Rather than asking **"What happened?"**, students begin asking **"Why did it happen?"** and **"Could it have happened differently?"** This shift encourages deeper historical understanding while developing essential 21st-century skills.

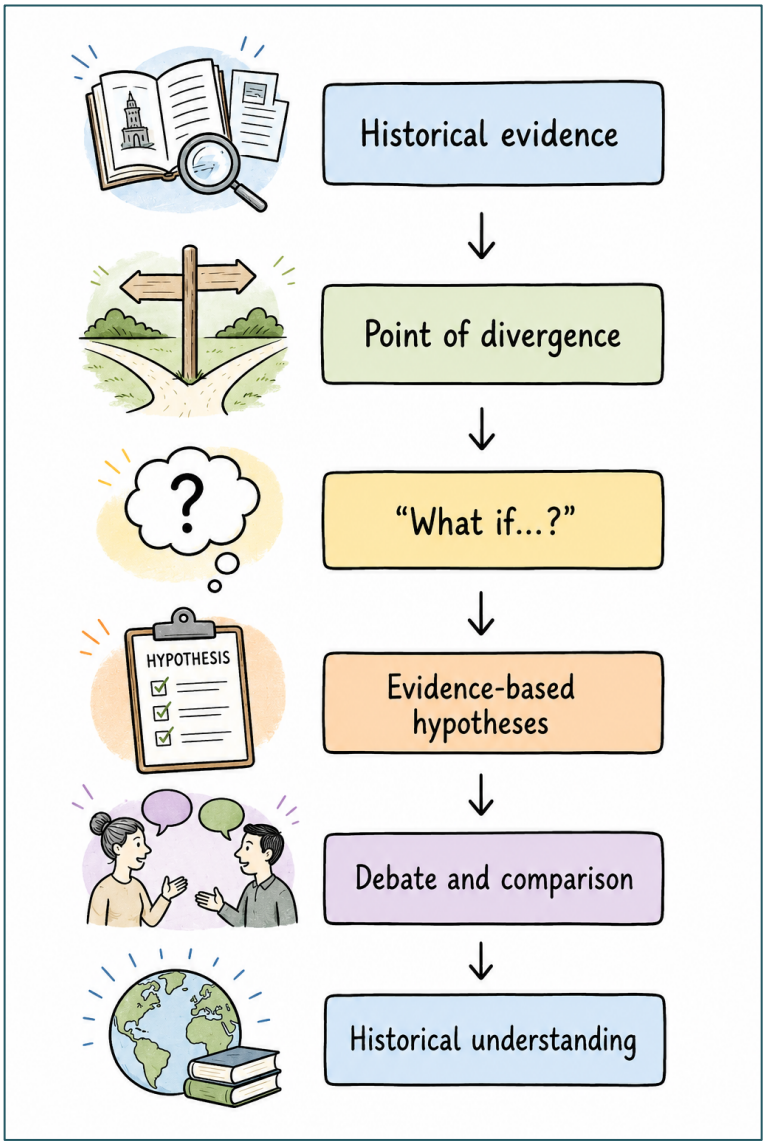
Educational benefits

Uchronia helps students...	Because students learn to...
Understand causality	identify how decisions, events and circumstances influence one another.
Challenge historical determinism	recognise that history results from human choices rather than inevitable outcomes.
Develop critical thinking	build and justify evidence-based hypotheses instead of memorising facts.
Strengthen historical empathy	understand decisions within the values, knowledge and constraints of the period.
Increase motivation	engage actively through investigation, debate and collaborative problem-solving.

Research in history education shows that enquiry-based approaches improve engagement, conceptual understanding and long-term retention by encouraging students to reason with historical evidence rather than simply reproduce information (Wineburg, 2001; Seixas & Morton, 2013).

2.3 FROM WHAT IF? TO HISTORICAL THINKING

Uchronia follows a simple but rigorous learning cycle. In historical enquiry, students establish the factual context before developing an alternative scenario.



Students first investigate a real historical event before identifying a plausible turning point. They then explore the consequences of a single change using historical sources and logical reasoning. Finally, they compare their scenario with real history to understand why events unfolded as they did.

The objective is not to rewrite history, but to deepen students' understanding of historical causality.

The teacher's role

Using uchronia does not require teachers to become storytellers. Instead, they guide historical enquiry and ensure that every discussion remains grounded in evidence.

The teacher's role is to:

- provide accurate historical knowledge and reliable sources;
- help students identify a plausible point of divergence;
- challenge unsupported assumptions and encourage evidence-based reasoning;
- facilitate discussion and comparison between alternative scenarios and historical reality.



2.4 ADDRESSING COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Although uchronia is increasingly recognised as a valuable educational approach, it also raises legitimate questions among teachers and parents. Most concerns stem from misconceptions about how the method is implemented in the classroom.

Concern	Reality
"Students will confuse fiction with history."	Uchronia always begins with accurate historical knowledge. Students can only build an alternative scenario after identifying a real historical event and supporting their hypotheses with historical evidence. Rather than replacing facts, the method reinforces them (Ferguson, 1997; Tetlock & Belkin, 1996).
"It encourages imagination instead of historical rigour."	Educational uchronia is not fantasy. Every scenario must remain historically plausible, taking into account the political, social, technological and cultural context of the period. Evidence and logical reasoning always guide the exercise.
"It may legitimise dangerous ideologies."	Exploring alternative outcomes does not justify them. On the contrary, analysing scenarios such as the victory of totalitarian regimes helps students understand the fragility of democracy, recognise the mechanisms of propaganda and reflect on ethical choices.
"There is no time for this."	Uchronia is a teaching strategy, not an additional topic. A short "What if...?" activity can replace part of a traditional lesson while improving engagement, historical reasoning and long-term retention.

2.5 UCHRONIA IN POPULAR CULTURE

Although many teachers may be unfamiliar with the term *uchronia*, they have almost certainly encountered it in literature, films, television series or video games.

These works explore a simple question: **What if history had unfolded differently?**

They provide accessible examples that can be used to introduce the concept in the classroom or spark discussion with students.

Medium	Example	Point of divergence
TV series	The Man in the High Castle	The Axis powers win the Second World War.
	For All Mankind	The Soviet Union reaches the Moon before the United States.
Film	Inglourious Basterds	Hitler is assassinated during the Second World War.
Graphic novels	Superman: Red Son	Superman lands in the Soviet Union instead of Kansas.
	Watchmen	Superheroes alter the political balance of the Cold War.
Novel	*The Plot Against America* (Philip Roth)	Charles Lindbergh becomes President of the United States in 1940.
Video games	Wolfenstein	Nazi Germany wins the war.
	Fallout	An alternative technological history leads to nuclear catastrophe.
	Assassin's Creed	Historical events are shaped by secret organisations.

These examples illustrate that uchronia is not simply a literary genre but a widely used narrative device for exploring historical causality, political choices and societal change. They can provide engaging starting points for discussing historical evidence, plausibility and the consequences of human decisions.

Many additional examples, references and teaching resources are available on the Reframe the Story project website.

03 WHAT STUDENTS REALLY LEARN THROUGH UCHRONIA

A heuristic tool for deconstructing historical narratives

Uchronia is much more than a strategy for teaching history. By exploring plausible alternatives to real historical events, students develop a broad range of social, cognitive and communication skills that extend well beyond the history classroom.

Rather than memorising a fixed narrative, learners investigate evidence, question assumptions, compare perspectives, justify their reasoning and work collaboratively to build coherent historical scenarios. In doing so, they become active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of historical knowledge.

The classroom activities developed through the Reframe the Story project illustrate how uchronia can foster empathy, cooperation, communication and critical thinking, while encouraging deeper reflection on power, justice, identity, citizenship and collective responsibility.

3.1 SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPED THROUGH UCHRONIA

Empathy

Uchronia encourages students to step into the perspective of people living in different historical, social or political contexts. Rather than judging historical actors with today's values, learners seek to understand the constraints, motivations and choices that shaped their actions.

This develops both emotional and cognitive empathy while helping students recognise that historical experiences vary according to social class, gender, culture, political position or access to power.

Teachers may observe students:

- considering minority perspectives;
- questioning stereotypes;
- defending viewpoints different from their own;
- replacing quick judgements with curiosity.

> **Example**
>
> During the Atheicité role-play activities, students defended positions related to secularism, freedom of expression and citizenship that differed from their personal opinions, helping them understand the complexity of democratic debate.

Cooperation

Alternative history is rarely built individually. Students work together to investigate evidence, discuss hypotheses and construct coherent scenarios.

These collaborative activities promote negotiation, shared decision-making and collective problem solving while reinforcing the idea that disagreement can improve understanding rather than prevent it.

Teachers may observe students:

- sharing responsibilities;
- negotiating ideas;
- building on classmates' contributions;
- encouraging quieter students to participate.

Communication

Uchronia requires students to explain, justify and defend their ideas. Whether through debates, storytelling or presentations, learners learn to communicate complex historical reasoning clearly and support their arguments with evidence.

The fictional dimension often reduces the fear of making mistakes, encouraging more active participation.

Teachers may observe students:

- using more precise historical vocabulary;
- explaining causal relationships;
- asking clarifying questions;
- speaking with greater confidence.

> **Example**
>
> In the *Chroniques alternatives* project, groups combined storytelling and AI image generation to create plausible alternative histories. Explaining both their historical reasoning and creative choices strengthened discussion and argumentation.

Critical thinking

Perhaps the greatest contribution of uchronia is its ability to challenge historical determinism. By asking "What if?", students explore causality, contingency and the complexity of historical change.

Rather than accepting a single narrative, they learn to compare interpretations, distinguish evidence from speculation and evaluate the consequences of different decisions.

Teachers may observe students:

- asking more sophisticated questions;
- comparing interpretations;
- identifying bias and assumptions;
- justifying conclusions with evidence.

> **Example**
>
> In What if Henry VIII had kept Catherine of Aragon as queen?, students investigated the political, religious and social consequences of an alternative decision. The activity shifted discussion from simple speculation towards evidence-based historical reasoning.

3.2 OBSERVING LEARNING THROUGH UCHRONIA

The impact of uchronia is often visible through classroom interactions rather than through traditional tests alone. As students debate, collaborate and construct alternative historical scenarios, teachers can observe how they reason, communicate and engage with others.

These observations provide valuable evidence of learning and can complement more formal forms of assessment.

Competence	Observable indicators
Empathy	Considers different perspectives; questions stereotypes; shows curiosity instead of immediate judgement; takes historical context into account.
Cooperation	Shares responsibilities; negotiates ideas; listens actively; supports classmates during collaborative tasks.
Communication	Explains reasoning clearly; justifies opinions with evidence; asks clarifying questions; participates confidently in discussions.
Critical thinking	Connects causes and consequences; compares interpretations; questions assumptions; distinguishes evidence from opinion.

FOCUS - An observation grid for classroom activities

The following questions can be adapted to almost any uchronia activity, whether students are taking part in a debate, role-play, historical investigation or collaborative storytelling.

During the activity…	Teachers may observe…
Discussion and debate	Are students listening to different viewpoints? Do they justify their opinions with historical evidence?
Collaborative work	Do students share responsibilities, negotiate ideas and support one another?
Role-play	Do students reason from the perspective of their historical character rather than judging with present-day values?
Alternative scenarios	Are proposed changes historically plausible? Do students explain their consequences logically?
Reflection	Do students connect historical choices with broader questions about society, citizenship or ethics?

FROM OBSERVATION TO ASSESSMENT

These competencies can be observed through students' discussions, decisions, collaborative work and reflections. They do not always require formal assessment: noticing how students justify an idea, consider another perspective or revise their reasoning can already provide valuable evidence of learning.

When assessment is needed, it should focus on the learning process and the quality of students' reasoning rather than on the format or polish of the final production.

Chapter 8 provides practical tools for observing progress, giving feedback and supporting pupil self-assessment.

04 A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE ON HISTORY AND NARRATIVES

Understanding how historical narratives are constructed

> **“In our textbook, 1945 is presented as ‘The Liberation’, but my grandmother always says it was the beginning of another occupation.”**

History is not a single, fixed story. The same event may be remembered as a liberation or an occupation, a victory or a defeat, a beginning or an end, depending on the country, the generation or the community concerned.

This chapter explores how uchronia can help students understand that while historical facts are based on evidence, the narratives built around them are shaped by perspective. It focuses particularly on the European context, where national histories coexist with multiple collective memories.

4.1 HISTORY IS CONSTRUCTED THROUGH PERSPECTIVES

Students often see history as a fixed collection of objective facts. Yet historical narratives are always constructed through choices: which events are emphasised, whose voices are included, which words are used, and which connections are made between events.

These choices do not make history "false". They reflect different cultural, political and social contexts.

Our national studies show that historical thinking and multiperspectivity are now recognised as important objectives across European curricula. The challenge is no longer whether multiple perspectives should be taught, but how teachers can integrate them into already crowded programmes.

Keep in mind:

- Facts remain the same; interpretations may differ.
- Different perspectives are not necessarily contradictory.
- Comparing narratives strengthens historical understanding rather than weakening it.

4.2 NATIONAL HISTORIES AND EUROPEAN MEMORIES

Throughout history, nations have constructed their own narratives, and history education has long contributed to social cohesion. As political scientist John Coakley observed, national histories often feed the "spirit of nationhood": textbooks select events, highlight heroes, and frame turning points in ways that reinforce a shared identity and present the nation as unique.

With the development of European integration in the second half of the 20th century, these national narratives suddenly had to coexist with a new shared narrative. Before 1989, teaching European history was largely shaped by Western European perspectives, emphasising a shared heritage and a common identity. But after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the focus shifted considerably. Teaching European history required integrating a wider range of experiences. Many Central and Eastern European countries had to fully revise their curricula, rediscovering silenced pasts (erased under imperial and Soviet rule) and acknowledging internal diversity. From this point on, Europe came to be defined less by a single shared narrative than by its diversity (ethnic, linguistic, religious, social, and cultural). It increasingly came to be seen as a space where multiple memories coexisted. Hence, when exploring history with your students, it is important to remember that:

Despite these evolutions, textbooks remain strongly shaped by national contexts. One of the teacher's roles is therefore to help students take a step back and develop critical thinking toward these resources. Use these documents as the starting point of a discussion on national perspectives.

To become informed and active European citizens, students need opportunities to explore the diversity of European historical experiences and memories. This can help them go beyond very simplistic, "black and white" or "us versus them" vision of past shared events.

Two complementary approaches can support these goals:

National curriculum reforms

This approach is well illustrated by the German case, where history education increasingly emphasized multiperspectivity and transnational perspectives, moving away from explicitly nationalist approaches to history education. This conscious shift can be explained by a desire to move away from nationalist narratives, shaped in part by a difficult 20th-century history.

In the classroom:

Teachers can introduce the comparison of perspectives, helping students understand history as a dialogue between interpretations. Uchronia can be an effective tool for this. For instance, a very commonly used example of alternative history is: “What if Hitler had never come to power in Germany in 1933?”. This can lead to the following question “How might different European countries remember the 20th century today?”

4.3 WHY COMPARE PERSPECTIVES?

Comparing perspectives develops far more than historical knowledge.

It develops amongst students	Because students learn to...
Critical thinking	identify bias, question sources and distinguish facts from interpretations.
Historical reasoning	understand that events can be interpreted differently without changing the evidence.
Problem solving	explore several explanations instead of searching for one "correct" answer.
Empathy	understand how historical experiences shaped different communities.
Democratic dialogue	discuss disagreement respectfully and appreciate diverse viewpoints.

4.4 WHY IS UCHRONIA PARTICULARLY USEFUL?

Uchronia naturally creates distance from established narratives. Instead of asking students to defend a particular interpretation, it invites them to investigate possibilities.



1 • It multiplies viewpoints

Changing one historical decision encourages students to imagine how different individuals, groups or countries might have experienced the consequences.



2 • It reduces polarisation

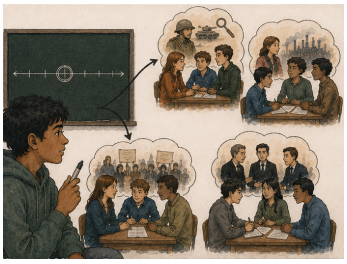
By exploring hypothetical scenarios, students move away from judging who was right or wrong and begin asking richer historical questions.

- Who benefits from this narrative?
- Whose experience is missing?
- What other interpretations are possible?



3 • It encourages intercultural dialogue

When students compare their uchronias with those produced in other countries, curiosity replaces judgement. Historical comparison becomes a dialogue rather than a debate.



4 • It makes multiperspectivity manageable

Rather than presenting every possible interpretation, teachers can assign different perspectives to small groups working from the same point of divergence. Several narratives are then explored within a single lesson.

FOCUS - Classroom activity

How would this story be told in another European country?

Duration: 30-45 minutes

Step 1 • Choose a familiar event (5 min)

Select a historical event already studied in class.

Examples:

- the end of the Second World War;
- the fall of the Berlin Wall;
- a national revolution.

Step 2 • Introduce the challenge

Ask: **How might this event be presented in another European country?**

Step 3 • Explore alternative narratives *(20 min)*

Divide students into small groups and assign each group a different European country.

Invite them to consider questions such as:

- How would people there remember this event?
- Who would be presented as heroes, victims or decision-makers?
- Which aspects would receive greater attention?

Note

If students simply change the narrator while keeping the same sequence of events, they are comparing perspectives.

If they imagine that the different perspective changes subsequent events and construct a plausible alternative timeline, they are creating a uchronia.

Step 4 • Compare *(10 min)*

Groups present their work.

Possible formats include:

- a newspaper headline;
- a textbook extract;
- a television news report;
- a museum panel;
- a short debate.

Optional extension

Ask: **What if this version had become the dominant European narrative?**

Students then explore how collective memory and potentially subsequent history might have developed differently.

Possible adaptations

- **Younger learners:** create illustrated posters instead of written texts.
- **Multilingual classrooms:** compare the vocabulary different languages use to describe the same event.
- **International partnerships:** exchange narratives with a partner class in another European country.

05 WORKING ON STEREOTYPES, BIASES AND DOMINANT NARRATIVES

> **"The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete."**
>
> Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Calling Western countries 'developed' or portraying the Middle Ages as a period of pure darkness and superstition: here are two examples of biased statements that are nonetheless not so rare to hear. They reflect information people have absorbed from textbooks, films, social media, family conversations... but they are the product of simplified narratives.

This section dives into the concepts of stereotypes and historical biases, exploring their effect on students and presenting how uchronia can be a practical tool to uncover them in the classroom.

5.1 PERSPECTIVE, BIAS AND STEREOTYPE: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

As discussed in Chapter 4, historical narratives are never entirely neutral. Every account reflects choices about what to include, whose voices to privilege and which words to use. However, it is important to distinguish between perspective and bias.

Concept	Definition
Perspective	The point of view from which history is presented. Every source has one.
Bias	A tendency to select or interpret evidence in ways influenced by personal, cultural or political assumptions.
Stereotype	An oversimplified representation of a group that ignores individual diversity and historical complexity.

Every source reflects a perspective, shaped by the position of the person who produced it: their nationality, social background, gender, or historical context. Perspective is inevitable and does not automatically make a source unreliable. A historical bias, however, goes further: it refers to the tendency to interpret, select, or present evidence under the influence of cultural, political, ideological, or personal viewpoints. A bias may be unconscious, a confirmation bias (seeking information that supports existing beliefs), or arise from "blind spots".

In all cases, it produces a partial and sometimes judgemental representation of the past. Every source has a perspective, but not every source is biased. Helping students understand this distinction is a key step in developing historical thinking. This is especially important when using uchronia: alternative narratives should foster multiperspectivity without reinforcing biased interpretations. For this reason, working with uchronia must always go hand in hand with critical thinking.

Finally, biases are also closely connected to stereotypes. These are simplified and often unnuanced ideas about individuals or groups shaped by past experiences and dominant narratives.

By reducing complexity to a single perspective, stereotypes overlook individual differences and specific contexts.

On a practical point of view, it is important for teachers to:

- Make sure the students are aware of the existence of these biased narratives
- Do some constant self-reflection to try to identify their own biases
- Constantly pay attention to potential stereotypes or biases that could appear in the classroom, including when creating alternative stories.

5.2 HOW SIMPLIFIED NARRATIVES SHAPE STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY?

Simplified historical narratives do more than influence what students know about the past; they also shape how they interpret the present. When history is presented as a series of simple oppositions, students may begin to view contemporary social and political issues through the same binary lens.

Over time, repeated versions of the same story can become dominant narratives: interpretations that feel so familiar they are accepted as objective truth rather than one possible perspective. These narratives influence not only what students remember but also what they notice, question, or overlook when encountering new information.

One way to challenge these assumptions is through multiperspectivity and uchronia, which encourage students to explore history from viewpoints that are often absent from traditional accounts.

Individual level: making invisible voices visible

Historical accounts are always limited by the available sources. As Robert Stradling points out, some groups left abundant written records, while others—such as ordinary people, enslaved populations or colonised communities—remain underrepresented in the archives.

Teachers can invite students to reconstruct an event from one of these overlooked perspectives or imagine how history might have unfolded if these actors had exercised greater influence. The objective is not to replace evidence with fiction, but to reveal the limits of historical reconstruction and encourage more inclusive historical thinking.

National level: questioning dominant narratives

National histories often reflect the perspective of the dominant social or cultural group. Although many curricula now include a wider range of voices, some perspectives continue to receive far greater attention than others.

Uchronia helps students question these imbalances through questions such as:

- What if a marginalised group had held political power?
- What if colonised peoples' demands for self-determination had been recognised in 1919?

Comparing these alternative scenarios with established historical narratives encourages discussion about power, representation and historical agency.

Societal level: developing critical media literacy

Historical narratives are also shaped by films, television, social media and other forms of popular culture. These media often simplify complex events, reinforce stereotypes and privilege familiar perspectives. Today, misinformation and AI-generated content make critical analysis even more important.

Uchronia offers a constructive way to address these issues. Rather than directly challenging students' beliefs, it invites them to ask "What if things had been different?" Exploring plausible alternatives helps students identify assumptions embedded in dominant narratives, recognise whose perspectives are missing, and understand that history is the result of choices rather than inevitabilities.

Ultimately, uchronia does more than question historical narratives: it equips students to analyse them critically and to appreciate the complexity of the past.

FOCUS - Classroom activity

Reversing the narrative

Duration: 40 minutes

Step 1 • Analyse the dominant narrative *(5 min)*

Provide students with authentic historical sources (colonial propaganda posters, newspaper illustrations, political speeches or textbook extracts).

Ask them to observe without judging:

- How are Europeans represented?
- How are colonised peoples represented?
- Which words, images or stereotypes appear repeatedly?

Step 2 • Introduce the uchronia *(5 min)*

Present the counterfactual scenario:

What if powerful African or Asian empires had colonised Europe during the 19th century?

Remind students that the scenario should remain historically plausible by taking into account the political, technological and economic context.

Step 3 • Create an alternative narrative *(10 min)*

Working in small groups, students produce one of the following:

- a colonial propaganda poster about Europe;
- a newspaper article describing Europeans from the colonisers' perspective;
- a history textbook extract explaining why Europe needed to be "civilised".

Encourage them to imitate the language, arguments and visual conventions found in the original historical sources.

Step 4 • Gallery walk *(10 min)*

Display the students' productions around the classroom.

- Invite students to circulate, observe the different creations and identify recurring stereotypes or rhetorical techniques.

Step 5 • Debrief *(10 min)*

Discuss the activity together:

- Did reversing the roles feel strange? Why?
- Which stereotypes became more visible after the reversal?
- Are these representations natural, or are they produced by historical power relations?
- Can similar mechanisms still be found today in films, the media or school textbooks?

Facilitation tips

- Keep the exercise grounded in historical evidence rather than fantasy.
- Ensure that stereotypes are explicitly analysed during the debriefing, not reproduced uncritically.
- Encourage students to identify narrative framing, bias and power relationships.
- Finish by connecting these mechanisms to contemporary media representations.

Sensitive topic: This activity is better suited to older students and should only be used after students have studied colonial discourse and historical sources. Teachers should avoid asking students to reproduce racist language or imagery and should provide carefully selected examples.

Further resource

Bigflo & Oli – "Rentrez chez vous" (music video)

This song offers a contemporary reflection on prejudice, exclusion and reversed perspectives, making it an effective starting point for discussing how narratives shape perceptions of "the other."

06 INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGIES

Making every pupil part of the story

> **Inclusive pedagogy does not mean designing different activities for different students. It means designing activities that offer multiple ways to participate from the outset.**

Uchronia naturally supports this approach because it values interpretation rather than a single correct answer. Students can contribute through discussion, drawing, writing, role-play, audio, or collaborative problem-solving, allowing a wider range of learners to engage meaningfully.

6.1 CREATING A SUPPORTIVE, CREATIVE AND INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

This flexibility makes uchronia particularly valuable for students with learning difficulties, multilingual learners, neurodivergent students, learners with low self-confidence and students who are disengaged from traditional history lessons. More importantly, the same adaptations generally improve learning for the whole class, not only for those identified as having specific educational needs

Uchronia naturally encourages...	Which particularly benefits...
Multiple interpretations	students with learning difficulties
Collaboration	multilingual learners
Creativity	neurodivergent students
Different forms of expression	students with low confidence
Shared decision-making	disengaged learners

Accessibility is most effective when it is planned from the beginning rather than added afterwards. In practice, inclusive uchronia activities are often built around six simple principles.

Offer different ways to participate

Not every pupil needs to contribute in the same way. Some may enjoy debating ideas, others creating illustrations, building timelines or organising information.

Create a safe framework

Before the activity, establish a few simple rules:

- listen without interrupting;
- question ideas rather than individuals;
- distinguish historical evidence from personal opinion;
- allow students to change their minds;
- avoid asking students to represent an identity or experience that makes them uncomfortable.
- Sensitive or controversial questions should always be introduced with clear historical context and carefully selected sources.

Offer different ways to demonstrate learning

Assess historical reasoning rather than a single production format. Students might present their work through:

- a newspaper article;
- a podcast;
- a comic strip;
- a timeline;
- a role-play;
- a digital presentation.

Use accessible communication

Provide short instructions, explain key vocabulary, and combine written, oral and visual information whenever possible.

Encourage collaboration

Working in mixed-ability groups allows students to learn from one another and reduces the pressure associated with individual performance.

Scaffold historical thinking

Break complex tasks into smaller steps and provide examples before asking students to construct their own alternative scenarios.

Assess the reasoning, not the medium

Whether students create a poster, a debate or a written text, assessment should focus primarily on the coherence of their historical reasoning and the quality of the evidence used.

Example

Instead of asking every pupil to write an essay about an alternative historical scenario, invite them to choose how they will communicate their ideas:

- design a propaganda poster;
- record a radio interview;
- write a newspaper article;
- create an illustrated timeline;
- perform a short role-play.

The historical expectations remain identical; only the mode of expression changes.

6.2 INCLUSIVE STRATEGIES THAT WORK IN EVERY CLASSROOM

Many barriers to participation can be reduced through simple classroom adaptations that benefit all learners.

Classroom challenge	Practical adaptations
Reading difficulties	Short texts, visuals, timelines, icons
Writing difficulties	Oral responses, podcasts, role-play
Multilingual learners	Multilingual brainstorming, peer translation
Low confidence	Small-group discussion before whole-class sharing
Neurodivergent learners	Predictable structure, clear instructions, step-by-step activities

Teachers frequently report that these adjustments lead to:

- increased participation;
- greater confidence during discussions;
- more spontaneous idea-sharing;
- reduced fear of making mistakes;
- stronger peer support.

Importantly, these strategies rarely benefit only one group of students. They generally improve clarity, engagement and participation across the whole classroom.

6.3 RE-ENGAGING STUDENTS THROUGH UCHRONIA

Some students disengage from history because they perceive it as a subject based mainly on memorisation and fixed answers.

Uchronia changes this dynamic. Instead of asking students only to recall what happened, it invites them to investigate why events happened and how they might have unfolded differently.

Students become active historians rather than passive recipients of information. They are encouraged to:

- question assumptions;
- debate evidence;
- imagine plausible alternatives;
- justify their choices;
- connect past and present.

Example

Instead of asking:

"When did the Roman Empire fall?"

ask:

"What if the Roman Empire had never fallen? How would Europe look today?"

The historical knowledge remains essential, but students now use it to reason, argue and create.

Teachers often observe:

- stronger emotional engagement;
- greater persistence during activities;
- richer classroom discussions;
- increased initiative and curiosity.

FOCUS - An Inclusive Uchronia Checklist

Before launching an activity, ask yourself the following questions.

✓ Can students choose different ways to participate?

✓ Can they demonstrate their understanding using different formats?

✓ Are the instructions supported with visuals or examples?

✓ Can students work collaboratively?

✓ Does the activity value reasoning more than writing ability?

✓ Can every pupil make a meaningful contribution?

If the answer is yes to most of these questions, the activity is already moving towards a more inclusive design.

Remember: Inclusion does not mean lowering expectations.

It means removing unnecessary barriers so that every pupil has the opportunity to demonstrate historical understanding.

Further resources

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

The UDL framework provides practical principles for designing learning environments that are accessible to all learners.

CAST – Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

Cooperative learning

Kagan, S. (1994). *Cooperative Learning.*

Inclusive education

The UNESCO portal offers examples of inclusive teaching practices and policy guidance.

UNESCO – Inclusive Education

Accessible communication

Easy-to-Read guidelines developed by Inclusion Europe can help teachers produce more accessible classroom materials.

Inclusion Europe – Easy-to-Read Guidelines

07 FROM DEBATE TO DIALOGUE, MANAGING SENSITIVE TOPICS

History often deals with topics that remain sensitive today: war, migration, discrimination, religion, colonialism, identity or political conflict. These issues may provoke strong emotions because they connect with students' personal experiences, family histories or current events.

7.1 CREATE A SAFE FRAMEWORK BEFORE THE DISCUSSION

The teacher's role is not to eliminate disagreement, but to create a learning environment where different viewpoints can be explored respectfully and critically.

Uchronia provides a particularly useful framework for this work. Because students discuss a plausible alternative rather than defending an existing position, conversations often become less confrontational and more exploratory. Instead of asking *"Who is right?"*, students begin asking *"What evidence supports this interpretation?"* or *"What might have happened differently?"*

Successful discussions begin before the first question is asked.

Agree on a few simple ground rules with the class, for example:

Listen to understand, not to reply.

- Criticise ideas, not people.
- Support arguments with evidence.
- Accept that several interpretations may coexist.
- Everyone has the right to speak—or to remain silent.

Structured discussion formats also help reduce tension. Small-group discussions, think-pair-share activities or fishbowl conversations give students time to organise their ideas before speaking to the whole class.

7.2 FACILITATE RATHER THAN REFEREE

Teachers do not need to decide who is right during every discussion. Their role is to guide historical reasoning and keep the dialogue productive. Useful facilitation techniques include:

Ask for evidence

Instead of: "Do you agree?"

ask: "What historical evidence supports that idea?"

Rephrase before responding

Invite students to summarise another person's argument before presenting their own.

Slow the discussion down

When emotions rise:

- pause the discussion;
- summarise the different viewpoints;
- ask students to write for one minute before continuing.

These simple strategies shift attention from winning an argument to understanding different perspectives.

7.3 MANAGING SENSITIVE MOMENTS

Some topics require additional care because they may relate to students' identities or personal experiences.

Before introducing a sensitive issue, ask yourself:

- Could this topic affect some students personally?
- What misconceptions might emerge?
- What support might students need?

If emotions become visible, acknowledge them without abandoning the learning objective.

For example:

"This topic clearly raises strong feelings. Let's take a moment to understand why before continuing our historical analysis."

Recognising emotions helps students feel heard while maintaining an analytical approach.

7.4 TYPICAL CHALLENGES IN UCHRONIA ACTIVITIES

Most difficulties encountered during uchronia projects are predictable and can be addressed through simple facilitation strategies.

Challenge	Possible response
In a group, students disagree on the point of divergence	Allow groups to develop two alternative scenarios before comparing them.
A student feels uncomfortable playing a historical figure	Analyse the person's decisions instead of asking students to defend them.
Students introduce implausible ideas	Ask students to return to the sources and identify which historical constraint makes the idea unlikely.
One student dominates the discussion	Assign structured roles (facilitator, historian, evidence checker, presenter).
The debate becomes emotional	Pause, summarise the discussion and refocus on historical questions.

The objective is never to avoid disagreement, but to transform it into historical enquiry.

FOCUS - Classroom activity

From Debate to Dialogue

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Step 1 • Introduce a historical question *(5 min)*

Present a question that allows multiple evidence-based interpretations.

For example: Could the First World War have been avoided?

Step 2 • Think individually *(3 min)*

Students write one argument supported by historical evidence.

Step 3 • Pair discussion *(10 min)*

Each student must first summarise their partner's argument before presenting their own.

Step 4 • Whole-class dialogue *(10 min)*

Collect the different hypotheses in asking:

- Which arguments are best supported by evidence?
- Which assumptions differ?
- What additional information would help us decide?

Step 5 • Debrief *(10 min)*

Discuss the discussion itself.

- Did you change your mind?
- Which argument surprised you?
- What made the discussion respectful?
- How did evidence help move beyond opinion?

Further resources

Difficult histories and controversial issues

EUROCLIO offers resources and classroom examples for teaching complex and contested historical topics.

EUROCLIO

Democratic culture

The Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture includes tools for dialogue, empathy and critical thinking.

Council of Europe – Competences for Democratic Culture

08 LIGHT ASSESSMENT IN UCHRONIA ACTIVITIES

Observing learning progress without grading

Uchronia activities reveal skills that traditional tests may overlook, including historical reasoning, critical thinking, multiperspectivity and collaboration. Assessment should therefore consider both the final production and how students use evidence, explain causes and consequences, compare perspectives and revise their ideas. This chapter suggests simple ways to observe these skills without systematically using formal assessment.

8.1 WHAT SHOULD TEACHERS ASSESS?

The objective is not to assess how imaginative or spectacular a scenario is. It is to observe whether students can create a plausible alternative based on historical knowledge. Five dimensions are particularly relevant.

Historical reasoning

Can the pupil:

- identify a plausible point of divergence?
- connect causes and consequences?
- use relevant historical knowledge?
- distinguish documented history from speculation?

Critical and creative thinking

Can the pupil:

- propose several possibilities?
- question initial assumptions?
- compare different outcomes?
- revise an idea when evidence contradicts it?

Creativity does not simply mean inventing something original. In uchronia, it means producing an alternative that is both imaginative and historically coherent.

Multiperspectivity

Can the pupil:

- consider how different groups might experience the same event?
- identify missing or marginalised viewpoints?
- understand that an outcome may benefit some people and disadvantage others?

Collaboration and communication

Can the pupil:

- listen to other ideas?
- explain their reasoning clearly?
- contribute to shared decisions?
- build on or respectfully question a peer's proposal?

Reflection

Can the pupil:

- explain what they learned?
- identify a difficulty?
- describe how their thinking changed?
- suggest how their work could be improved?

8.2 A SIMPLE OBSERVATION GRID

Teachers do not need to observe every pupil against every criterion during every activity. Select two or three dimensions according to the lesson objectives.

Suggested scale

✓✓ Consistently observed

✓ Occasionally observed

— Not observed during this activity

A blank or a dash does not necessarily indicate a difficulty. The behaviour may simply not have been visible during that particular activity.

The grid should remain a memory aid, not become another detailed marking system.

8.3 WHAT OBSERVATION LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

Useful observations are short, precise and based on visible behaviour.

For example:

- Used information from the source to support the proposed divergence.
- Explained two possible consequences before choosing one.
- Identified which social group would benefit from the scenario.
- Asked the group to consider another perspective.
- Changed an initial idea after hearing a counterargument.
- Helped a quieter pupil contribute.
- Clearly distinguished historical fact from invention.
- Explained why the final scenario remained plausible.

8.4 FOCUS ON THE PROCESS, NOT ONLY THE FINAL PRODUCT

A polished poster or well-written story does not automatically demonstrate strong historical reasoning. Conversely, a simple oral presentation may show a sophisticated understanding of causality and perspective.

When observing the process, teachers can ask:

- How was the point of divergence selected?
- What evidence influenced the group's decisions?
- Were several consequences considered?
- How were disagreements resolved?
- Did the scenario change during the activity?
- Can students explain why their alternative remains plausible?

This approach also makes assessment more inclusive. Students can demonstrate understanding through speech, images, timelines, role-play or collaborative discussion rather than through writing alone.

Flexible assessment should remain aligned with the learning objective: the format may vary, but the expected historical reasoning should remain clear. CAST's Universal Design for Learning guidance similarly recommends reducing unnecessary barriers, offering flexible assessment options and involving learners in evaluating their own progress.

FOCUS - Classroom activity

The two-minute observation

Before the activity

Choose:

- one group or three students to observe;
- two assessment dimensions;
- one specific behaviour for each dimension.

For example:

- Dimension : Behaviour to observe
- Historical reasoning : Uses evidence to justify a consequence
- Collaboration : Builds on another pupil's idea

During the activity

Observe the selected students for approximately two minutes.

Record:

- one piece of evidence;
- one possible next step.

Example

Evidence observed

Léa explained that the new alliance was plausible because both countries had a common economic interest.

Possible next step

Consider how this alliance might affect neighbouring countries.

At the next activity, observe a different group. Over several lessons, the teacher gradually builds a broader picture without completing a full grid for every pupil each time.

8.5 GIVING SHORT AND USEFUL FEEDBACK

Effective feedback should highlight what the pupil has demonstrated and suggest one manageable next step. One precise observation and one clear improvement are more useful than a long list of strengths and weaknesses.

A simple structure is:

- I noticed…
- This shows…
- Next time, try…

Example 1 • Historical reasoning

I noticed that you identified several consequences of the altered event. This shows that you understand historical causality. Next time, try to rank these consequences from the most immediate to the most long-term.

Example 2 • Multiperspectivity

I noticed that you explained how the decision affected political leaders. Next time, consider how ordinary civilians or minority groups might experience the same change.

Example 3 • Collaboration

I noticed that your group listened to several proposals before making a decision. Next time, record the reasons why one scenario was selected over the others.

8.6 STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

Light assessment should also help students recognise their own progress.

At the end of an activity, invite them to complete one or two sentences:

- One idea I contributed was…
- One piece of evidence that influenced our scenario was…
- Our scenario became more plausible when…
- A perspective we initially overlooked was…
- One idea I changed during the activity was…
- One difficulty our group encountered was…
- Next time, I would…

For younger students or shorter activities, use a simple exit ticket.

Exit ticket

Today I…

□ used historical evidence;

□ considered another perspective;

□ explained one consequence;

□ listened and contributed to the group;

□ revised one of my ideas.

One thing I understand better now:

Self-assessment should not ask students to assign themselves a grade. Its purpose is to help them identify evidence of learning and decide what to improve.

8.7 WHEN A GRADE IS REQUIRED

Light assessment can still support formal grading when the school context requires it. Use a small number of criteria linked directly to the objectives of the activity.

Criterion	Emerging	Developing	Secure
Historical evidence	Uses little or unrelated evidence	Uses some relevant evidence	Selects and explains relevant evidence
Causal reasoning	Lists isolated consequences	Explains some causal links	Builds a coherent chain of consequences
Multiperspectivity	Presents one viewpoint	Mentions different viewpoints	Compares their experiences and interests
Reflection	Describes the final product	Identifies strengths or difficulties	Explains how and why thinking changed

The format of the production should not become the main criterion unless visual, oral or writing skills are themselves part of the learning objectives.

FOCUS - Practical checklist

Before the activity
✓ Identify two or three observable learning objectives.
✓ Explain these objectives to the students.
✓ Decide which students or groups you will observe.
During the activity
✓ Record short examples rather than general impressions.
✓ Observe listening and reasoning as well as speaking.
✓ Distinguish historical knowledge from the quality of the presentation.
After the activity
✓ Give one strength and one next step.
✓ Include a short pupil reflection.
✓ Use observations to adapt the next lesson.
Remember The purpose of light assessment is not to measure every contribution. It is to make learning visible enough to guide students and teachers towards the next step.

Further resources

Formative assessment

The OECD describes formative assessment as the frequent assessment of students' progress in order to identify learning needs and adapt teaching. Its resource includes research and examples from secondary education.

Universal Design for Learning and assessment

CAST provides practical guidance on aligning assessment with learning goals, offering flexible ways to demonstrate understanding and involving students in reflection on their progress.

Key references

Black, P. & Wiliam, D. (1998). *Assessment and Classroom Learning. Assessment in Education,* 5(1), 7–74.

Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning*. Routledge.

CONCLUSION:

REFRAMING HISTORY TOGETHER

History education is not only about knowing what happened. It is also about understanding why events unfolded as they did, whose perspectives shaped the narratives we inherit and how different choices might have produced different outcomes.

Uchronia offers a powerful way to explore these questions. By introducing a plausible point of divergence, students investigate causes, compare consequences and distinguish historical evidence from speculation. Imagination, when grounded in reliable sources, becomes a tool for historical enquiry.

Thinking historically

A meaningful uchronia activity always begins with documented history. Students must understand the context, actors and constraints of the period before imagining an alternative path.

Through this process, they learn that:

- historical events have multiple causes;
- decisions affect groups differently;
- outcomes were not necessarily inevitable;
- narratives are constructed from selected sources and perspectives;
- plausible hypotheses must remain consistent with evidence.

Making different perspectives visible

Uchronia encourages students to ask who benefits, who is disadvantaged and whose experience is missing from the dominant account.

It can bring local, national and European memories into dialogue without reducing them to a single version of history. The objective is not to replace one dominant narrative with another, but to understand how different interpretations emerge while continuing to examine historical claims through evidence.

Learning through dialogue

Alternative history rarely produces one correct answer. This creates opportunities for students to explain their reasoning, listen to other interpretations and revise their ideas.

They learn to:

- support arguments with evidence;
- compare different perspectives;
- question assumptions;
- disagree respectfully;
- construct knowledge collaboratively.

These abilities contribute to critical thinking, media literacy and democratic citizenship.

A final invitation

Teachers do not need to transform their entire curriculum to begin using uchronia. A single question, a short source comparison or a carefully chosen point of divergence can open a meaningful historical enquiry.

The essential principles remain simple:

- begin with evidence;
- change one element at a time;
- explore plausible consequences;
- include multiple perspectives;
- offer different ways to participate;
- assess reasoning and reflection;
- distinguish clearly between history and fiction.

To reframe the story is not to rewrite history as we wish it had happened. It is to understand how historical narratives are constructed, examine the choices that shaped the past and recognise that the future is also influenced by human decisions.

ESSENTIAL TERMS USED THROUGHOUT THE GUIDE

Uchronia	An exploration of an alternative version of history based on a change to a real historical event. In educational contexts, it can be used as a method for investigating causality, contingency and plausible historical alternatives.
Point of divergence	The precise moment when history changes direction and the alternative timeline begins.
Alternative history	A reconstruction exploring what might have happened if a historical event had unfolded differently.
Counterfactual thinking	Reasoning about what could have happened if a real situation had been different.
Historical causality	The relationship between causes and consequences in history.
Historical contingency	The idea that history was not inevitable and depended on contexts, choices and chance.
Historical plausibility	The credibility of an alternative scenario based on evidence and coherent historical logic.
Multiperspectivity	The examination of an event through several social, cultural or political viewpoints.
Dominant narrative	A widely accepted version of history that may marginalise other perspectives.
Narrative bias	The influence of cultural, political or ideological perspectives on how events are told.
Historical simulation	A structured reconstruction used to explore how systems or conflicts might evolve differently.
Revisionism	Distortion or denial of established facts; unlike uchronia, it is not clearly presented as fiction.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES

Foundations	Sam Wineburg — Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts (2001)
Foundations	Niall Ferguson (ed.) — Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals (1997)
Foundations	Philip E. Tetlock & Aaron Belkin (eds.) — Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics (1996)
Assessment	Paul Black & Dylan Wiliam — Assessment and Classroom Learning (1998)
Assessment	John Hattie — Visible Learning for Teachers (2012)
Inclusion	CAST — Universal Design for Learning Guidelines
Uchronia	Charles Renouvier — Uchronie, l'utopie dans l'histoire (1876)
Uchronia	Lucian Boia — Pentru o istorie a imaginarului (2000)
Uchronia	Koen Aerts, Maarten Van Ginderachter & Antoon Vrints (eds.) — Het land dat nooit was (2014)
Fiction	Philip K. Dick — The Man in the High Castle (1962)
Fiction	Octavia E. Butler — Kindred (1979)
Fiction	Harry Harrison — Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah! (1972)
European works	Jaan Kross — Taevakivi (1972)
European works	Enn Vetemaa — Möbiuse leht (1985)
European works	Stéphane de Lobkowicz — La Reine Astrid n'est pas morte à Küssnacht (2011)
European works	Victor Cilincă — Das Mioritza Reich (2013)



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union.

Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Project Code : 2025-1-FR01-KA220-SCH-000364132

reframethestory.eu