

WHOSE TRUTH?
Operation Storm and the Battle of Vukovar

ANNEX 3: SMALLVILLE ACTIVITY¹

Optional activity (lesson 2, section B)

All instructions are to the teacher, apart from those marked 'Handout for Students'

Activity aims:

- To allow students to understand multi-perspectivity through a practical decision-making exercise
- To provide students with an every day, practical example of divergent perspectives based on incomplete information or the manner in which the person giving the information chooses to select which details to include
- To encourage students to think not only about the information itself and what this tells them about the events / facts / issues, but ALSO about the person providing the information and why they have decided to share it

The Activity:

Divide the class into 3 groups.

Give each group gets one of the following 3 sheets of information for a tourist destination called 'Smallville'. Tell them that they are 3 separate groups of tourists, all visiting 'Smallville'. Tell them that all of the groups will receive information about the SAME hotels and each group has to decide where to stay when they arrive in Smallville.

What they don't know is that while all of the groups receive information about the SAME HOTELS, the information about the hotels is different. (written by a different magazine / reviewer / etc).

¹ Activity adapted from: *A Users Guide To The Complementary History Teaching Workbooks 'Teaching Modern Southeast European History'*, 2009. Sutton, I. & Sutton, R. Copyright, CDRSEE. All materials from the publication are reproducible, free and available for download at:
<http://cdrsee.org/publications/education/jhp-teachers-manual>

Working within their groups, but not discussing with the other groups, each group has to decide where to stay.

They present their decision to the rest of the class and justify why they have chosen that particular place to stay.

As they present, other groups will probably interject immediately as one group presents (“What, why would you stay there...yes, it is a wonderful old mansion, but it is totally falling apart and the swimming pool is empty!”.... / “ Yes, it is a 5 star hotel, but it is also a construction site....why would you stay somewhere somewhere noisy and dusty!?”)– as they do this, encourage the original group to look at the source – the reviewer- and also the date of the review to see if the students can understand the point of the exercise without the teacher having to tell them.

If other students don’t comment, try to ask questions to encourage the ‘listening’ groups to do so ‘actively’ and to challenge the decisions of the other groups. Ask “is anyone lying? Do the facts contradict each other? Who has written this review? What made you decide to stay at place a) rather than place c)?”

The students will quickly see that no lie has been told in any of the pieces of information, but simply that the whole ‘story’ is not revealed.

By presenting different parts of the same ‘truth’ in each review, a different image is put forward, which affects their decisions about where to stay.

Encourage students to look at the date of the publication of the magazine / review. Encourage them to look at the name of the magazine / publication and see what they can infer about the person writing the review and why they would write such divergent reviews about the same place.

Get them to figure out that when assessing sources, they need to also think about what information HASN’T been included (as well as biases) and also to think about why (e.g. in a Tweet or in a newspaper column, details are often removed, not to deliberately hide something, but simply because they don’t fit).

They must also think about their own ideas, preferences and thoughts and consider how these affect their decision to stay at one place rather than another.

Student handout: Smallville 1

Tourist Information 1:

Places to stay in 'Smallville'

- a) **a 5 star hotel:** “ this hotel is wonderful in almost every way: great staff, amazing food, gorgeous view of forests and a river...but...half the rooms are still under construction, so there was noise all day and all night as well as concrete dust and annoying builders!!”.

Review in: *Vogue Traveller*. 2017

- b) **campsite:** “although there are tents on this campsite, there is also a beautiful hotel with many big rooms to stay in and we like this place a lot”.

Review from the book: *Family guide to medium priced holidays across the world*, 2016

- c) **family house:** “this is actually an exclusive mansion with a swimming pool, helipad, private beach and servants for anything you might like. It is perfect for a fun little holiday”.

Review in the subscription only publication: *Luxury Tourist- exclusive holidays and private jets*, 2015

- d) **2 star hotel:** “the hotel is very ugly and doesn't have TV or internet. Far away from downtown”

Review on the blog: *fashion-fan-sparkly-unicorn-youtubestar*, 2018

Student handout: Smallville 2

Tourist information 2:

Places to stay in 'Smallville'

- a) 5 star hotel:** "The restaurant is excellent"

Review in: *Gastronomy monthly-your guide to the Michelin-standard restaurants of Europe*

- b) campsite:** "very small campsite, can't access it by public transport, no recycling facilities, loud music all night, no wifi and toilets that are not environmentally friendly".

Review in: *Eco-trips around Europe magazine quarterly, 2017*

- c) family house:** "Incredibly expensive old mansion – NOT a 'family house' at all!. It is in the middle of nowhere, is full of marble and old antiques and has no fence around the swimming pool....all TOTALLY unsuitable for families with children....!"

Comment posted on the website: *Family Holidays, 2017*

- d) 2 star hotel:** "the hotel is very ugly and in a boring area full of old museums and stuff, but it has wonderful food, lots of beer and has parties every night"

Comment on an on-line forum: *CheapStudentTravel.beer.org*

Student handout: Smallville 3

Tourist information 3:

Places to stay in 'Smallville'

- a) **5 star hotel:** “Wonderful hotel. Perfect in every way. Gorgeous NEW rooms, great food and lovely staff”.

Review on: *Trip Adviser, 2018*

- b) **campsite:** “Amazing campsite with its own solar-powered shuttle bus that takes you there from the airport, free wifi and next to a gorgeous river with loads of funky sports, things to do and with excellent recycling facilities. Highly recommended”

Review in: *Hiking and back-packing holidays, 2018*

- c) **family house:** “a mansion that is completely ruined without any heating in any of the rooms or electricity or running water. There is a swimming pool, but it is empty. The helipads are in disrepair and there is no private chef”.

Review in: *Le Luxe Voyager-the magazine for the aristocratic traveler, 2018*

- d) **2 star hotel:** “very nice staff and situated in the quiet historical area of town, with loads of great museums and wonderful old architecture near by and lots of art galleries. Very loud parties at night, however....”

Review in: *Culture-Vultures travel magazine*