



## Teacher material

# Life and Leisure: The history of ordinary people

## Activity Plan

For this activity students will need some basic knowledge of World War Two. You may want to set them some reading about WW2 as a preparation task. Depending on the knowledge level of your students, you may want to provide them with a map of the countries that fought and were occupied in Europe in World War Two.

### **Task 1: engaging students' interest with an image.**

Give students a copy of the image reproduced here (See Student Material). You can ask them the following questions:

- What is the mood of the picture?
- What could be going on?
- When was it taken?
- What do they know about those years?



Picture: Norway, Elverum, 1943/44 (private collection: Igor Slavec)

### **Task 2 – matching Igor Slavec life to the places and events of WW2.**

Put students into small groups and give them the coloured cards (or text version cut up) of Igor Slavec's life story (See Student Material). Ask them to put them in chronological order. Then ask them to identify which parts of the story take place in WW2 and to open Google docs and find all the places Igor Slavec was between 1939 and 1945. Which modern European countries was he sent to? Ask students how what they have read about his life in the war gives us a context to the picture at the start of the lesson? What does the picture add to our knowledge of Igor Slavec's war years?

**Timeline of events of Igor's life story in the correct order:**



### PART 1

*Igor Slavec was born on 29 January 1925 in Laško, Kingdom of Yugoslavia (now Slovenia). In 1930 the family moved to Struževo in Kranj. Igor had a brother, Ivo and a sister, Bojana. His father Ivan was the manager of the post office in Kranj, and his mother Ela was involved with a restaurant and store merchandisers. Igor attended elementary school in Kranj, and then high school in Ljubljana during the school years 1939/40 and 1940/41. After the German occupation the area was renamed Gorenjska Oberkrain, and the village as Struževo Am Strand .*

### PART 2

*In the summer of 1941 the family had to make themselves known to the Commission appointed to investigate the racial background of the population. They were identified as Aryans and not Jews via head measurements and the use of baptismal certificates.*

*Igor was made to attend meetings of the Hitler Youth. Here he was taught in German and had to learn about the German leadership, German history from a National Socialist (Nazi) perspective. They also learnt to sing German songs and, of course, the German national anthem.*

### PART 3

*In early 1943 he was conscripted into the German army. He was 18 years old. He thought he would be home soon, as he worked in the RAD (Reichsarbeitsdienst or State labour department). However, this proved to be just the start of his two and a half years long service in the German army.*

*RAD was a labor camp. They were taught military discipline, proper behavior dishes, how to hold a shovel, how to cast material, how to dig trenches, how to ride trolleys, how to make a bed and how to clean clothing, boots, shovel, rooms and toilet. Each day they had a political lecture, where they lectured Nazi ideology.*

*14. 5. 1943, he arrived in the Bavarian city of Landsberg at the Lech, where he trained as a gunner.*

*Later in 1943 Igor was moved into the Wehrmacht (German army), in which he served until 1945. The path led him first to Austria and then Germany, Norway and Denmark. Here he had training in military discipline.*

*In August 1944 he was sent to Poland and first encountered the realities of war. He was on the frontline with the artillery. Most of his fellow soldiers were also only 19 years old. Their role was to try to hold back the advancing Soviet Army. During this time he was wounded in the leg. While recovering he helped in the kitchens and read a lot of Slovenian books.*

### PART 4

*In January 1945 the Soviets began their final offensive, and so began Igor's journey home, which led him through Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic. He was desperate to stay alive and to get home. After 27 months away, it was not as easy as he had imagined. On the way he was, together with the comrades, he was at first trapped and transported to a gathering camp. He did not get out of their and make it home to Gorenjsko until the end of October 1945. He was formally discharged from military service on 9th November 1945. At 20 years old he was happy that the war was over and that he was alive.*



*He went back to high school and passed the final exam, continuing his studies to become an engineer in a labour organisation. Igor was first employed at the factory Iskra in Kranj. For ten years (1975-1985) he worked as a director and chief editor of the newspaper Gorenjski glas. He married in April 1949 and went on to have three sons. He lives in Struževo in Kranj.*

*At home, in Struževo, life after World War II hard yet lively, as Igor describes in his memoirs. They were built new houses. Through voluntary work they built a cultural centre. They built a playground and a bowling alley. In the village there was always something going on. They organised a choir and theatre. Each year, there was a special celebration to remember Igor's brother Ivo Slavc, the organiser of the national-liberation struggle in the Kranj area, who lost his life fighting and in 1953 was declared a national hero.*

*A few years after the war, and with the help of modern technology, the survivors of the German army, slowly found contacts. Since 1987, they have had an annual traditional meeting of survivors and in pleasant conversation they discuss their common history and commemorate deceased friends and remember the time when, against their will, they were part of a bloody war.*

*After retiring Igor found time to write memoirs about their lives. He has written three books. His work room is full of books, beautifully diaries, family albums and collections of thoughts and tips about life and living. He says that his work is for the children and the next generations.*

### **Task 3: engaging with Igor's life story**

To make sure that students have fully engaged with Igor's story, you can give them the selection of pictures of his life with the captions. The pictures' captions have been muddled up (See Student material). Ask students to rearrange the captions so that they are next to the right picture, and then to put the pictures and captions in chronological order.

### **The pictures with the correct captions:**

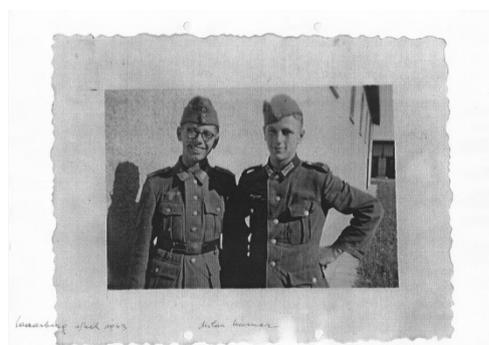


Photo 1: Igor Slavec and Milan Kumer (private collection: Igor Slavec)



Photo 2: Landsberg, Germany (private collection: Igor Slavec)



Photo 3: Landsberg, 1943 (private collection: Igor Slavec)



Photo 4: Soldiers from Gorenjska in Landsberg, 1943 (private collection: Igor Slavec)



Photo 5: Norway, Elverum, 1943/44 (private collection: Igor Slavec)



Photo 6: Meeting old fighters from the German army in Kokrica in Kranj, with a common desire and hope that such a time will never come back, not to us, not to our successors. (2010) (private collection: Igor Slavec)

#### **Task 4: influences on Igor's life**

You can then move on to let the students explore the influences on Igor's life

Students open the timeline 'Managing conflict in Europe in time of change' and use the timeline to decide which events on it had the most influence on his life. Ask them to write down what they think influenced his life, how and why.

#### **Task 5**

As a concluding activity ask students to write a letter to Igor, with their thoughts about his story and asking him any questions they have.



**Sources:**

1. All Pictures: private collection: Igor Slavec