



***Experiencing facets of World War II: The Battle of Dunkirk and Life in the "Secret Annex"***  
**– VEGA Teaching Scenario**

**Topic:** Gaining insights on World War II and a sense of the many travesties caused by immersing into the Battle of Dunkirk (1940) and 'walking' through the "Secret Annex", the refuge of the Frank's, a persecuted Jewish family in a Nazi-occupied country.

**Subject(s):** History and World War II

**Age / Grade:** 14-15 years old (3<sup>rd</sup> class of secondary school) and/or 17-18 (3<sup>rd</sup> class of high school)

**Short description of the VR games in this scenario:**

1) [Save Every Breath | DUNKIRK 360 Experience:](#)

"The Dunkirk VR Experience", in the format of a 360-short film, puts viewers on the beaches of Dunkirk, surrounded on all sides by the Germans and waiting to be rescued by a rag-tag armada of fishing boats and commercial vessels commandeered by Winston Churchill in a last-ditch effort to save the British Expeditionary Force. The 360-short film is inspired by the Battle of Dunkirk (May 26th to June 4th 1940).

(Film duration: 4:37')



(Source: <https://www.mettle.com/wp-content/uploads/Save-Every-Breath-Dunkirk-VR-34p9nx0h4gv32fxuurn3ls.jpg>)

## 2) **Anne Frank House VR:**

During World War II, Anne Frank, a thirteen-year-old Jewish girl and her family were forced to go into hiding to escape persecution from the Nazis. For more than two years, the Franks and 4 others would live in the “Secret Annex” of an old office building in Amsterdam, sharing the burden of living in hiding in confined quarters with the constant threat of discovery. Anne Frank House VR offers a unique and emotional insight into these two years. Experience the world-famous Secret Annex in a never before seen way. Travel back to the years of the Second World War and wander through the rooms of the Annex that housed the group of 8 Jewish people as they hid from the Nazis. Immerse yourself in Anne’s thoughts as you traverse each faithfully recreated room, thanks to the power of VR, and find out what happened to the Annex’ brave inhabitants.

(Experience duration: around 30 minutes playtime)



(Source: <https://annefrankhousevr.com/> )

### **Introduction to the scenario:**

In the scenario students will get an overview of the most important historical events of the Second World War, while experiencing in an immersive and interactive way through VR applications and 360 videos, how it is to be a combatant during the war, as well as a persecuted individual surviving in Anne Frank's refuge. The goal is to offer a unique and memorable experience of the WWII era and inspire values of solidarity, understanding, peace and respect of human dignity, while also offering a glimpse into fear, despair, pain and isolation.

## **Learning outcomes:**

The students are able to:

- Describe the most important factors that destabilized the existing balance of power in the period between 1932 and 1940.
- Recount the circumstances which led to the commencement of World War II.
- Compare the differences between how WWI and WWII started.
- Gain knowledge about the extent of human, material and monetary loss as an outcome of the Second World War.
- Understand the impact of WWII on a moral level.
- Comment on the circumstances that lead to Shoah and recount the impact of such crimes against humanity for the collective human memory.

## **A selection of learning outcomes from the Cypriot Curriculum:**

- Cultivation of a historical thought process and forming a historical consciousness;
- Keeping students motivated about the historical past and the preservation of historical memory, with the aim of forming active and democratic citizens;
- Approaching historical facts in a critical, unbiased and free of stereotypes manner;
- Encountering multiple interpretations of the past by approaching and interpreting historical facts and phenomena in various ways;
- Using modern technologies in a productive way for the study and recounting of the historical past.

## **Formative assessment**

**Number of students:** 15-20 (3 students per group)

**Duration:** 7 lessons of 40-45 min each

**Prerequisites:**

1. Smart phones with internet connection to the YouTube app or having downloaded the video "Save Every Breath | DUNKIRK 360 Experience"
2. Cardboard VR
3. VR glasses with the application "Anne Frank's House VR"
4. Check that the internet is working
5. Gather information to introduce the students to the topic and accompanying materials (videos, pictures, etc.):
  - Research on the Battle of Dunkirk
  - Research on the events of 1930s that led to WWII and key moments of the war
  - Research on the Holocaust and the story of the Frank family
6. Questions on Mentimeter;
7. Template for the WWII timeline
8. Whiteboard on Miro
9. Exercise sheet on the "Anne Frank House VR" app.

**Before the program begins (preparatory work for teacher):**

- Watch the video "Save Every Breath | DUNKIRK 360 Experience" on VR CardBoard and read up on the Battle of Dunkirk [FYI, the video needs the YouTube app to play in 360];  
Read the text: <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/dunkirk>
- Create the introductory questions on Mentimeter or on a flipchart
- Find a template for the WWII timeline through Preceden
- Sign up on Miro and create a whiteboard for this session
- Familiarize yourself with the "Anne Frank's House VR" app and learn how to operate the controllers;  
Watch the VR trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCFUuyi-lIc&t=8s&ab\\_channel=AnneFrankHouse](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCFUuyi-lIc&t=8s&ab_channel=AnneFrankHouse)

Watch the video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbRrnIq5xnM&t=721s&ab\\_channel=AndyThePlayer](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbRrnIq5xnM&t=721s&ab_channel=AndyThePlayer)

- Ensure that the VR glasses and remote controls are fully charged;
- Create the exercise sheet on the “Anne Frank House VR” app and print out a sufficient number of copies to hand out to the students;
- Divide the students into working groups (with equipment; up to 3) and discussion groups (up to 5 persons);
- Prepare the students emotionally and psychologically about the intensity of the content to be viewed. Inform them, that in case they need some support during the viewing, they shouldn't hesitate asking.

**The main part of the scenario:**

**Part one (2 lessons of 40-45 minutes):**

**Lessons 1&2:**

**Preparations:**

- Bring markers for the wordcloud or prepare the question “What do you know about the Second World War?; What emotions does it bring up?” on Mentimeter: <https://www.mentimeter.com/>.
- Timeline for historical facts:  
Free templates (only sign up required): <https://www.preceden.com/>  
Template on WWII: <https://www.preceden.com/timelines/695894-world-war-ii-timeline>
- Create a whiteboard on Miro for this session (only sign up required): <https://www.miro.com/>
- Watch the video “Save Every Breath | DUNKIRK 360 Experience” on VR CardBoard and read up on the Battle of Dunkirk [FYI, the video needs the YouTube app to play in 360];  
Read the text: <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/dunkirk>

### **Learning sessions:**

- The educator inquires the students about what they know about the Second World War and what emotions it brings up. A 20 minute discussion is held on this and the educator keeps notes in the format of a wordcloud (offline). Alternatively, the educator can prepare the question on Mentimeter, the students write their responses online and a discussion is held to present the results.
- Following the discussion and an overview of WWII key moments and events that led it by the educator, the students have to put the historical facts of WWII in a row using either a ready-template by the Preceden application (<https://www.preceden.com/timelines/695894-world-war-ii-timeline>) or by creating their own timeline on the app's free version.
- Afterwards, the educator asks the students to view the short 360 video: "After talking about WWII, could you imagine being in a battle yourself?" Either before or after projecting the video, the educator can give information to the students about the battle of Dunkirk (see link in preparation).
- The students discuss their thoughts and emotions emerging through the video in groups of 5 and take notes through Miro, a free online whiteboard app.  
A debriefing about the video follows where the students present the outcomes of their discussion in plenum.

### **Debriefing:**

- How is the assignment and cooperation going?
- Does everyone understand the assignment and know what to do?
- How did you feel when experiencing the Battle of Dunkrik?
- What comes to mind now when you think about WWII?
- Did all students have the opportunity to experience the 360 video and take part in the activities?

## Part two (3 lessons of 40-45 minutes):

### Lessons 3-5:

#### Preparation:

- Bring the VR glasses and check that they are charged
- Cast the VR Glasses to a computer and the projector
- Research the story of Anne Frank and the historical framework

Who was Anne Frank? <https://www.annefrank.org/en/anne-frank/who-was-anne-frank/>

Shoah: <https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/>

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Holocaust>

- Have the trailer of Anne Frank House VR app available for screening
- Create the exercise sheet on the “Anne Frank House VR” app and print out a sufficient number of copies to hand out to the students.

#### Learning sessions:

- The educator introduces the VR glasses and explains what the Anne Frank House VR is (watch trailer)
- The educator presents a brief summary of the historical context surround the story of Anne Frank and the story of the Frank family itself. Following this, she/he distributes a relevant exercise sheet with the below questions:
  - 1) Analyze the historical and political circumstances that forced the Jewish community live in persecution and fear;
  - 2) Present the living conditions in the refuge;
  - 3) Describe your personal emotions and thoughts that emerged through the VR experience.



- The students get to know how the glasses and controllers work
- The students try the functions of the controllers in turns (Cast the VR to computers so the other students can watch).
- When the students have an idea about how the basic functions work, they can start exploring the house in turns. When one student experiences VR, the others take notes to answer the exercise sheet.
- After all students have walked through the house, the discussion groups assemble and discuss their impressions from the VR experience, by answering to the exercise sheet.
- The outcomes of this discussion are further analysed in plenum also through the debriefing questions by the teacher.
- Before concluding the class, the students give input on how they found the sessions based on VR.
- As an exercise for the next sessions, the students in their working groups will have to prepare a presentation in the format of video/ PowerPoint/ theatre play etc., where they will research and present different crimes against humanity that took place during WWII (ghettos, concentration camps, the use of poisonous gas, the introduction of weapons of mass destruction, mass killings among others) and the overall impact of WWII (in terms of human and material loss).

Depending on the number of students and groups, the presentations can range from 10 minutes (if 5+ groups) or 15 minutes (if 4 or less groups).

### **Debriefing:**

- How did you find the Anne Frank House VR app? What did you like the most and what did you like the least?
- Was the VR app easy to navigate or did you face any problems?
- Do you think that you could be in Anne's shoes for 2 years in the Annex?
- Can you mention one lesson that you have learnt through this experience?

## **Part three (2 lessons of 40-45 minutes):**

### **Lessons 6 & 7:**

#### **Preparations:**

- Make sure that there is Internet connection, a PC available and projector. In case any further equipment or props are required, the students should talk with the teacher in advance.

#### **Learning sessions:**

- The educator invites each working group to hold their presentation. Fellow students can ask follow-up questions.
- The educator, as well as the fellow students, evaluate each group's work and the presentations end with a debriefing in plenum.

#### **Debriefing:**

- How did you find the collaboration between your group?
- Do you observe any change in your initial understanding of WWII and the emotions related to it?
- If you could change one historical moment of WWII, which would that be and why?
- How do you find learning through VR and immersive experiences?
- Is there something that you would change from these sessions?