FACING HISTORY & OURSELVES

Considering Scenario-based Learning Activities for Increased Interaction

Can scenario-based learning support Facing History's content and course learning outcomes?

What is scenario-based learning?

Scenario-based learning is an instructional design strategy where learners engage with interactive scenarios that simulate real-world situations to develop skills in decision-making, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

It is most commonly used in workplace skills training, corporate training, healthcare training, military training, and more.

What is a scenario?

Simple Scenarios

- Brief stories related to the performance goals
- May or may not require an interaction

Complex Scenarios

The learner takes on a specific role, responds to a problem or challenge, and faces the consequences of their decisions.

1 Replace a list of objectives

Motivate learners at the start of a lesson or course.

2 Evoke curiosity

Entice learners so they want to find out more.

3 Encourage critical thinking

Reframe multiple choice questions into decision-making scenarios.

4 Make content compelling

Use scenarios to bring dry content to life.

5 Role play

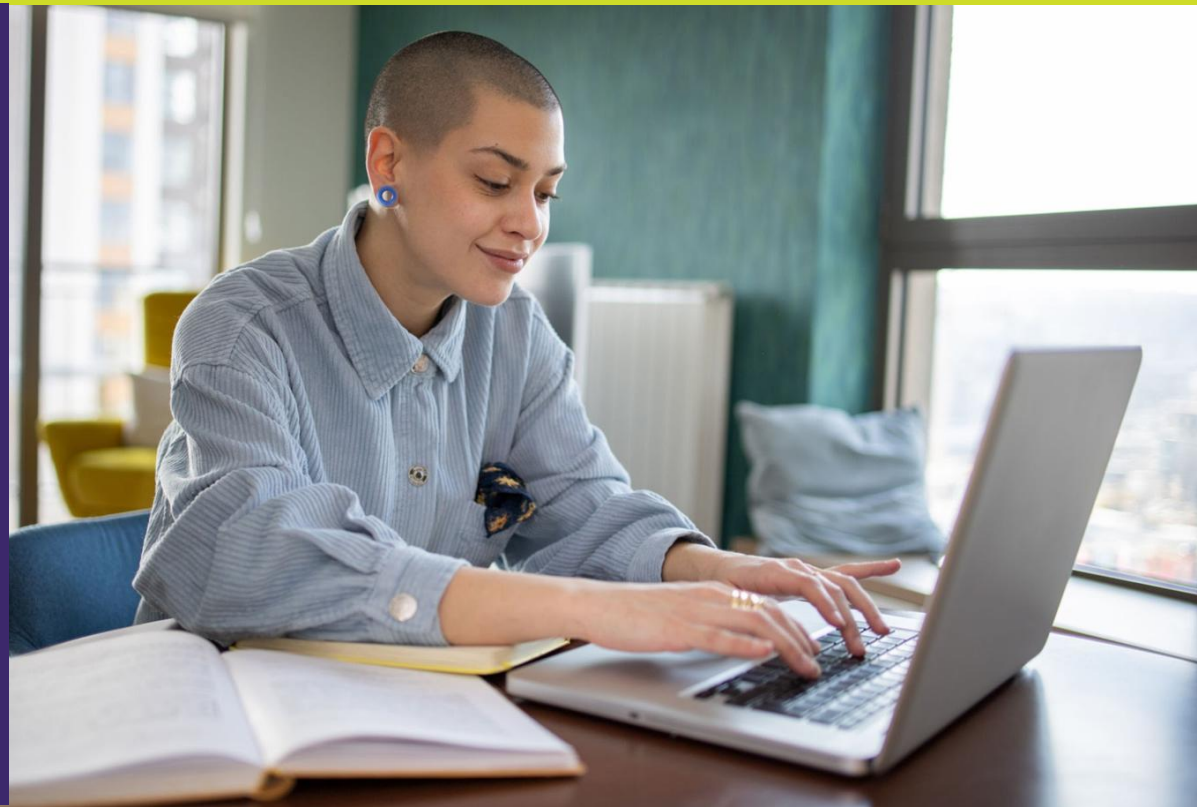
See situations through different perspectives.

6 Identify errors in a process

Show a series of decisions and find the errors.

Meaningful interactions support the natural learning process

- Purpose-driven
- Tied to learning outcomes
- Emphasize instructional message
- Encourage cognitive engagement
- Provide opportunities for application



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Simple Scenario Example

Course: **Teaching with Current Events**

Module 3: Applying Teaching Strategies
Learning Outcome: Explore teaching strategies for organizing classroom discussion around divisive or emotionally challenging current events.
Format: Journal reflection

Some students in your school have begun wearing clothing, pins, or symbols to show their support for a global issue. Other students feel excluded or upset by these symbols and express that they do not belong in school. Teachers and staff are divided on how to respond. Classroom conversations and interactions are becoming more tense.

Meanwhile, news about the global issue is dominating headlines and social media. Each day, students bring their opinions to the classroom as they grow in intensity. In class discussions, some students become emotional, while others shut down, worried about saying the wrong thing. 8

Share one or two teaching strategies we've covered in this module that you could you draw on to help create a structured and safe environment where students can explore multiple perspectives.

Share details on how you would implement these strategies.

Complex Scenario Example

Course: **Holocaust and Human Behavior**

Module 3: The Nazis in Power: Choices in the 1930s
Guiding Question: What choices do individuals and institutions have in the face of an emerging dictatorship to enable, resist, or willingly participate in it?
Format: Fillable PDF Activity

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Scenario Activity

Educator Dilemma

As you have learned in this module, during the Nazi's rule in Germany, some intellectuals and educators faced pressures to comply with policies that gradually undermined rights and equity. In the present day, we may ask, "*How did some people make the decisions they made and/or not take more action?*"

This scenario activity helps to develop a greater understanding of the decisions people made and encourages reflection on how similar pressures may appear today.

Directions: In the following scenarios, you will imagine yourself as a teacher or administrator facing swift changes from your school district. Answer each question, considering your reasoning for each decision.

1. A recent safety incident prompts the district to implement weekly student behavior reports. Some students are disproportionately flagged. The policy is meant to improve student safety, but it may create inequities.

What do you do?

- ○ **A.** Speak up to leadership about equity concerns.
- ○ **B.** Comply but make small adjustments to protect affected students quietly.
- ○ **C.** Fully comply without comment.

2. The district now enforces monitoring students and student groups who voice certain views and limits participation in extracurriculars for some, citing safety concerns. You must decide how to respond while considering prior decisions.

What do you do?

- ○ **A.** Raise concerns publicly with leadership.
- ○ **B.** Advocate quietly for affected students.
- ○ **C.** Comply fully with the policies.

3. The district requires staff to publicly endorse policies that restrict student freedoms and disproportionately affect certain groups. Refusal may lead to job loss or other forms of retribution.

What do you do?

- ○ **A.** Speak up publicly, risking professional retaliation.
- ○ **B**. Advocate privately while signing the pledge.
- ○ **C.** Comply fully to maintain position.
- ○ **D**. Step back from responsibilities.

4. How did your previous decisions affect your final choice? How do small, early decisions compound into larger consequences? How does this scenario connect to historical choices made by educators and others in 1930s Germany?

Takeaways

- The combination of FH content and scenario-based learning has it's limitations in terms of storytelling.
- With this being a totally new experience, look, and especially feel, we would need to be exceptionally careful in terms of the stories we create.
- Our learners are certainly not used to radio button input, with the exception of surveys. Could this quiz-like functionality throw them off?

While I can't say with confidence that scenario-based learning is a fit for Facing History's content and learning outcomes, I do believe thinking of ways to stretch our learning strategies and activities will only provide positive outcomes, for us and for the learner.