



**ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES IN HISTORY CLASSES:
METHODOLOGICAL GROUNDWORK AND PRACTICAL
EXPERIENCE**

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Abstract: *The article analyzes effective methods of using role-play activities in history classes. The theoretical foundations of this method are discussed and practical recommendations for its integration into the educational process are given.*

Keywords: *role-plays, critical thinking, interactive methods, creative approach, historical thinking, analytical abilities.*

The implementation of interactive methods in teaching and learning system has a significant scientific and practical value. Modern pedagogical research¹ confirms the efficiency of game-based approach to boost the students' involvement and deeper acquisition of information. In particular, the use of role-play activities in history classes allows students to gain a deeper understanding of historical processes and apply them in real life situations². This article discusses strategies for the effective use of role-play activities in history classes.

The value of role-play activities in history classes

Role-play activities represent an invaluable didactic tool in mastering historical knowledge. According to current studies³, learning through games enables students

¹ Vygotsky, L. S. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press. 1978.

² Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. Cooperative Learning and Social Interdependence Theory. In R. S. Gillies, A. F. Ashman, & J. Terwel (Eds.), *The Teacher's Role in Implementing Cooperative Learning in the Classroom* (pp. 9–37). Springer. (2009).

³ Gee, J. P. *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2003.



to apply knowledge in practice, solve problems and develop analytical thinking. Through role-playing, students have the opportunity to connect directly with historical events and understand the decision-making processes of historical figures.⁴

The key benefits of role-plays are:

- ***Deeper understanding of historical context*** – Students will be able to witness the development of events firsthand and analyze them based on a variety of sources.⁵
- ***Development of critical and creative thinking*** – Role-plays encourage students to solve problems, make strategic decisions, and explore alternative solutions.⁶
- ***Increasing motivation*** – Interactive methods, particularly role-plays, offer an effective way to engage students in the learning process.⁷
- ***Developing skills for teamwork*** – In the process of visualizing historical situations, students practice working together, finding compromises, and justifying their perspectives.⁸
- ***Shaping the historical mindset*** – Through the game, students understand different historical positions and evaluate their motivation and outcomes.

Classification of role-plays and their practice

Dramatic scenes

Bringing events to life using historical costumes and settings.⁹

For example, the consolidation lesson on “**Uzbekistan in the Second World War**” chapter can be conducted in such a vibrant and impressive way.

Problem -solving role-plays

- A student can play the role of an analytical historian.

⁴ Kolb, D. A. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Prentice Hall. 1984

⁵ Wineburg, S. *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*. Temple University Press. 2001.

⁶ Brookfield, S. D. *Teaching for Critical Thinking: Tools and Techniques to Help Students Question Their Assumptions*. Jossey-Bass. 2012

⁷ Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. *Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being*. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. 2000

⁸ Slavin, R. E. *Cooperative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Allyn & Bacon. 1995.

⁹ Taylor, S. *Using Historical Reenactments in Teaching Social Studies*. *Social Studies Review*, 39(2), 20-25. 2000.



- Contest-style games with elements of improvisation.

Debates with the participation of experts:¹⁰ When teaching the history of Uzbekistan, conducting the topic “Cultural Policy Conducted by the Soviet Government in Uzbekistan,” a section on “The Advancing Movement and Its Consequences” in the form of debates with students themselves as assessors, will also lead to a more lively lesson.

Group role-plays

Conference-style lessons: “International Relations after World War I: The Versailles-Washington System”.

Let's elaborate on this form of the lesson. The Versailles-Washington system is a set of agreements created to transform the international order after the World War I. When the lesson is organized in the form of a live conference, it can be divided into the following stages:

1. ***Preparatory stage:*** Students are divided into groups and given the roles of representatives of different states. Each group prepares to discuss the decisions of the conference in the interests of their state:

- United States President Woodrow Wilson and his 14-point program;
- British Prime Minister David Lloyd George;
- French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau;
- Delegation of Germany and its discontent;
- Italy's and Japan's demands as a result of the war;
- Establishment of the League of Nations and its role.

1. ***The process of the Conference:***

The teacher leads the conference as a moderator.

Each group makes its official statement.

¹⁰ Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. *Cooperative Learning and Social Interdependence Theory*. In R. S. Gillies, A. F. Ashman, & J. Terwel (Eds.), *The Teacher's Role in Implementing Cooperative Learning in the Classroom* (pp. 9–37). Springer. (2009).

Delegates negotiate to protect their interests. In the course of discussions, different positions are compared and ways to reach a compromise are discussed.

2. ***Making final decisions:*** Groups reach consensus and form a final statement on the main outcomes of the conference.

3. ***Analysis and discussion:***

At the end of the lesson, each group comments on their participation, the results of their discussions, and their overall conclusions.



The role and responsibilities of journalists: in addition to the role of Heads of State, students observe the conference as journalists. Their roles are as follows:

1. ***Research and preparation*** – Journalists study the basic data of the Versailles-Washington system in advance, analyze the interests and positions of the participating states.

2. ***Live streaming*** – During the negotiations, journalists observe and record the positions of the delegations of each country.

3. ***Interviews and questions*** – Asking questions from political leaders, clarifying their views, drawing attention to key points in negotiations.

4. *Writing analytical articles* – At the end of the conference, each journalist will write an article for the media and give their opinion.



The involvement of journalists allows them to independently analyze historical events, gather information and form inference skills.



This approach contributes to the development of students' written and oral language skills.¹¹

The following props can be used to further activate the atmosphere of the conference and to present historical processes more realistically in the classroom:

1. **Maps and diagrams** to illustrate the geographic influence of the Versailles-Washington system;
2. **Flags and signs** to distinguish states from one another;
3. Treaty of Versailles, Woodrow Wilson's 14-point program – **as historical documents**;
4. **Name cards** representing each participant (e.g., "Prime Minister of France" or "Journalist");
5. A negotiating area assigned to the representatives of each state – **tables for delegations**;
6. **Notebooks and hardcopy materials** for journalists to write newspaper articles or press releases;
7. **Recording and broadcasting facilities** for observing and reviewing debates or conferences.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of this lesson?

Advantages:

- **Develops historical mindset** – Role-plays enable students to analyze historical processes in detail.¹²
- **Develops communication and teamwork skills** – Learners improve their discussion and collective decision-making skills through diplomatic negotiations.
- **Increases participation and engagement** – Active student participation enhances consolidation of knowledge.

¹¹ Levstik, L. S., & Barton, K. C. Doing History: Investigating with Children in Elementary and Middle Schools (4th ed.). Routledge. 2011.

¹² Levstik, L. S., & Barton, K. C. Doing History: Investigating with Children in Elementary and Middle Schools (4th ed.). Routledge. 2011.



- **Builds critical thinking and an analytical approach** – Students delve deeper into the causes and effects of historical events.¹³

Disadvantages:

- **Requires more time** – Additional time is required to prepare and conduct role plays.¹⁴
- **Objective evaluation is not always possible.** It is important to clearly define the evaluation criteria.¹⁵
- **Not all learners can take an active part.** Less active students may remain passive observers.¹⁶

Conclusion

Role-plays as an innovative and interactive method in history education contribute to increasing students' involvement, shaping their historical reasoning and deep understanding of the topic under study. Studies show that with the help of the game approach the educational process becomes not only more effective, but also develops students' communication, problem-solving and critical thinking skills.¹⁷ In particular, modeling complex international processes, such as the Versailles-Washington system, through role-playing in history classes helps students understand the conflict of interests between states and get a feel for diplomatic negotiations. Through this method, students can directly analyze the decisions of historical figures and understand the causes and consequences of historical events.¹⁸

¹³ Gee, J. P. What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy. Palgrave Macmillan. 2003.

¹⁴ Dede, C. *Immersive Interfaces for Engagement and Learning*. Science, 323/5910/ 66. 2009.

¹⁵ Kolb, D. A. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Prentice Hall. 1984

¹⁶ Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. *Cooperative Learning and Social Interdependence Theory*. In R. S. Gillies, A. F. Ashman, & J. Terwel (Eds.), *The Teacher's Role in Implementing Cooperative Learning in the Classroom* (pp. 9–37). Springer. (2009).

¹⁷ Dede, C. *Immersive Interfaces for Engagement and Learning*. Science, 323/5910/ 66. 2009.

¹⁸ Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. *Cooperative Learning and Social Interdependence Theory*. In R. S. Gillies, A. F. Ashman, & J. Terwel (Eds.), *The Teacher's Role in Implementing Cooperative Learning in the Classroom* (pp. 9–37). Springer. (2009).



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