

How to Talk to Children About Ukraine

Use this guide to facilitate activities and discussion related to the Russia-Ukraine crisis.



Timeline

1. Invite students to share what they already know about the history of the relationship between Russia and Ukraine. List responses.
2. Organize students into groups of 3-4 and distribute the Timeline of Events cards. Tell students that timelines can help us examine current events in relation to the historic events that led up to this moment in time. This provides a broader understanding of an issue.
3. Before they begin, display or define two keywords that will help them piece together the timeline.
NATO: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was established after World War II. It's an intergovernmental military alliance among 28 European countries and 2 North American countries. Only European states are eligible for new membership. Russia and Ukraine are not part of NATO.
EU: The European Union is a political and economic union of 27 member states that are located primarily in Europe. Russia and Ukraine are not part of the EU.
Then, ask groups to sort their cards in order of events.
4. Reveal the correct timeline of events and ask students to use their timeline to respond to the following discussion questions.
What happened from 2005 to 2014 that complicated Putin taking Ukraine as part of Russia?
Why does Putin not want Ukraine to join NATO?
What do you now know about the political alliances in Europe and the US?

Choice Board

Use the following choice board to allow students to explore topics related to the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

Leadership

President [Vladimir Putin](#) of Russia and President [Volodymyr Zelensky](#) of Ukraine are the two leaders of the Russia-Ukraine crisis. Compare their early lives, jobs they held, structures of their country's political systems, leadership styles, and communication styles. What surprised you about each leader?

Political Cartoons

Observe different political cartoons related to the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

[Political Cartoonists React to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine](#)
[The invasion of Ukraine in press cartoons](#)

What are the objects or people in the cartoon? What are they doing? What is the cartoonist's point of view? How do you know? What techniques does the cartoonist use to persuade or explain? Which image best represents your point of view?

International News

Coverage of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine can look very different depending on the origin of the media source. Read some headlines and use the [How to Spot Fake News](#) guide to evaluate each source.

International
[BBC: Ukraine](#)
[Times of India](#)
[Asia Times](#)

Russian Sources
[The Moscow Times](#)

Ukrainian Sources
[Kyiv Post](#)

US Sources
[USA Today: Ukraine](#)
[Vox: Ukraine](#)

Which resource(s) would you recommend to a family member, and why?

Global Response

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is complex, and countries have different connections to the crisis. Imagine yourself in the perspective of each country/ union:

Russia
Ukraine
United States
European Union
China

Use the sentence-starters to explore multiple perspectives.
I am thinking of the Russia-Ukraine crisis from the viewpoint of _____.
I think ... *describe the topic from your viewpoint.*

A question I have from this viewpoint is_____.

Refugees	Geography
Refugees are people forced to flee their country because of persecution, war, or violence. View photos of refugees from Ukraine and respond to the questions using your head, heart, and conscience. Head: What information do you know about this event? Heart: Are there images that stand out to you? What emotions are you feeling? Conscience: How are people impacted by this event? Are there people that should be held accountable?	Ukraine and Russia have a shared heritage that goes back more than a thousand years. Ukraine was most recently part of the Soviet Union until its independence in 1991. View the following maps to learn more about Ukraine's relationship with Russia. Soviet Union Key Facts About Ukraine What strategic importance does Ukraine have?

Take Action

People around the world are helping those in need and taking action to end the conflict. Encourage students to select an outlet for them to express their feelings.

Find ways to ["Show your support for peace."](#)

Download a [poster template](#) to complete.

Use the sunflower symbol to inspire a project. Share the following options for students, 1) they can create an art project featuring a sunflower or sunflower field 2) they can plant a sunflower and nurture its growth 3) use Van Gogh's style to create a still portrait of sunflowers in a case or 4) use sunflower seeds to create a mosaic.

Timeline of Events

Directions: Make copies and cut into cards for students to sort events in order.

NATO promises Ukraine it will one day be able to join.	Satellite images show Russian forces near Ukraine with estimates around 100,000 troops.	Zelenskiy, the president of Ukraine, wants Ukraine to join NATO.
Putin authorizes “special military operations” in Ukraine. Russian forces begin missile and artillery attacks in Ukraine.	Yushchenko becomes president of Ukraine and promises to distance Ukraine from Russia and towards NATO and the EU.	Russia demands NATO pull back troops and weapons from eastern Europe and bars Ukraine from ever joining.
Volodymyr Zelenskiy is elected president of Ukraine.	The US responds to Russia’s demands, repeating a commitment to NATO’s “open-door” policy but also offers to investigate Moscow’s concerns of Ukraine joining NATO. Russia later says its demands were not addressed.	NATO reinforces eastern Europe with more ships and fighter jets.
Under Yanukovich, the Ukrainian government pauses trade and association talks with the EU and starts building back relationships with Moscow. Many Ukrainian citizens protest this change.	Parliament votes to remove Yanukovich. Moscow later takes command of the Ukrainian region of Crimea.	An association agreement between Ukraine and the EU opens markets for free trade of goods and services.

Answer Key:

2005: Yushchenko becomes president of Ukraine and promises to distance Ukraine from Russia and towards NATO and the EU.

2008: NATO promises Ukraine it will one day be able to join.

2013: Under Yanukovich, the Ukrainian government pauses trade and association talks with the EU and starts building back relationships with Moscow. Many Ukrainian citizens protest this change.

February 2014: Parliament votes to remove Yanukovich. Moscow later takes command of the Ukrainian region of Crimea.

2017: An association agreement between Ukraine and the EU opens markets for free trade of goods and services.

2019: Volodymyr Zelenskiy is elected president.

Jan. 2021: Zelenskiy, the president of Ukraine, wants Ukraine to join NATO.

Nov. 2021: Satellite images show Russian forces near Ukraine with estimates around 100,000 troops.

Dec. 17, 2021: Russia demands NATO pull back troops and weapons from eastern Europe and to tell Ukraine they can never join NATO.

Jan. 24, 2022: NATO reinforces eastern Europe with more ships and fighter jets.

Jan. 26, 2022: The US responds to Russia's demands, repeating a commitment to NATO's "open-door" policy but also offers to look into Moscow's concerns of Ukraine joining NATO. Russia later says its demands were not addressed.

Feb. 24, 2022: Putin authorizes "special military operations" in Ukraine. Russian forces begin missile and artillery attacks in Ukraine.