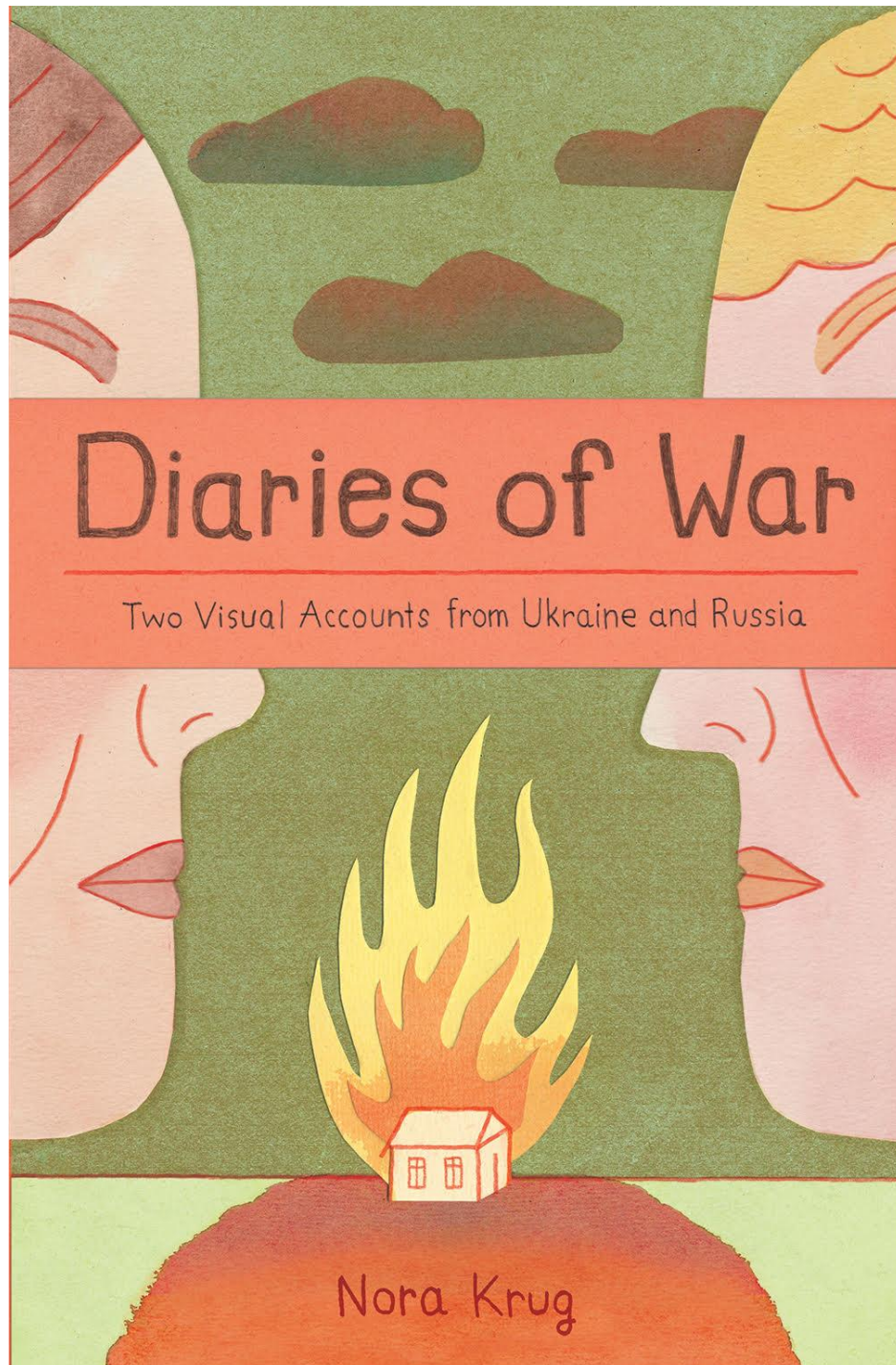


Yavapai College Riders Read Reading Guide - 2025-2026



To the students of Yavapai College—

Riders Read was created for you and is sustained by your curiosity, courage, and commitment to growth. May this program open new doors of perception, inspire thoughtful dialogue, and spark opportunities you've yet to imagine. Your voices are at the heart of this journey.

Witness

It's hard to be an engaged person in the world. When we hear about war, violence, or human rights abuses, it's easy to feel overwhelmed—or even helpless. What can one person do in the face of events so big, so distant, and so painful?

This year's Common Read, *Diaries of War* by Nora Krug, doesn't give us the answers, but it invites us to sit with that question—and to think differently about what it means to act.

In this graphic memoir, Krug shares the real voices of two individuals: a Ukrainian journalist and a Russian artist, each keeping a personal diary as their countries are pulled into war. These aren't official records or breaking news reports. They're quiet, honest, deeply human reflections. Through drawings, letters, and moments of everyday life, we see how ordinary people try to make sense of fear, loss, and responsibility when the world seems to be falling apart.

Diaries of War is a reminder that *witnessing is a form of action*. Turning away isn't an option for a caring individual. Paying attention matters. Storytelling is an act of resistance. Art, writing, protest, conversations, these are ways people make their voices heard, even when they feel like they are being drowned out by those in power. And that's what civic engagement is all about: showing up, speaking out, and doing what you can, where you are.

Part of a student's college experience is to think about their role in the world. How do we respond to injustice? How can we support others—near or far—who are living through a crisis? What does it mean to be informed, compassionate, and active citizens?

This book doesn't provide the answers. But it does challenge all of us to reflect, to ask better questions, and to consider how our voices—through art, dialogue, or action—can be part of something bigger. How we can, each of us, be that something bigger.

Welcome to the conversation.

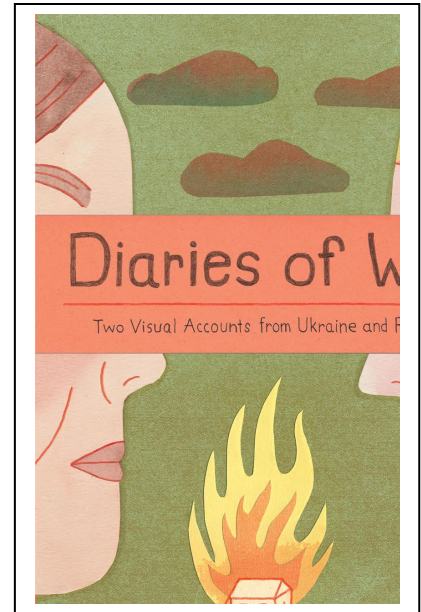
“I’m thinking about dead bodies. When I started reporting from the war in the Donbas region in 2014, one of my colleagues told me to ‘follow the bodies.’ I didn’t know what he meant.”

THE BOOK

Diaries of War: Two Visual Accounts from Ukraine and Russia
By Nora Krug

Powerful graphic journalism that highlights the contrasting realities of a Ukrainian journalist and a Russian artist grappling with their own individual experiences of Russia's war on Ukraine—collected, edited, and illustrated by award-winning author Nora Krug

Immediately after Russia began its unprovoked invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Nora Krug reached out to two anonymous subjects—"K.," a Ukrainian journalist, and "D.," a Russian artist—and began what would become a year of correspondence. Based on her weekly interviews with K. and D., Krug created this collection of illustrated accounts that chronicles two contrasting viewpoints from opposing sides of the first year in this ongoing war.



With millions displaced, injured, or killed as a result of the invasion, Krug presents a look at the devastating effects on an everyday, individual level. K.'s diary documents a year of emotional and existential distress. She experiences loss in every sense of the word: the death of those close to her, the disconnection from her family and friends, and the devastation of her country—but her account is also a story about bravery and survival in the face of dire uncertainty.

In juxtaposition, D.'s narrative details his disdain for his government's murderous actions and his attempts to emigrate his family abroad. He navigates his own struggle with cultural identity, guilt, and lack of action in the face of a tyrannical regime—a perspective that is necessary in challenging readers to confront the political actions of their own countries. Krug approaches *Diaries of War* with the immense skill and thoughtfulness required to document these two complicated experiences for the purpose of encouraging critical thinking.

Published as an Op-Comic series with the *Los Angeles Times*, with a portion of the entries unique to this book, *Diaries of War* is a harrowing real-time record of an international conflict that continues to devastate countless lives.

- Publisher description from Penguin Random House Publishers

THE AUTHOR

Nora Krug is a German American author and artist. Her books were published in 20 countries, and her illustrations have been recognized with gold and silver medals by the Society of Illustrators and the NY Art Directors Club. Krug is a recipient of fellowships from Fulbright, the **John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation**, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, the Maurice Sendak Foundation, and others. Her books are included in the Library of Congress and the *Rare Book and Manuscript Library* at Columbia University. Krug was named **Maira Gemmill Illustrator of the Year** and **2019 Book Illustration Prize Winner** by the Victoria and Albert Museum. Her visual memoir *Heimat / Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home*, about WWII and her own German family history, was chosen as a best book of the year by the **New York Times**, **The Guardian**, **NPR**, **Kirkus Review**, the **San Francisco Chronicle**, and the **Boston Globe**. It was the winner of the 2018 **National Book Critics Circle Award**, the **Lynd Ward Graphic Novel Prize**, and the **British Book Design and Production Award**, among others. Her collaboration with historian Timothy Snyder, a graphic edition of *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* was named a **Best Graphic Novel of 2021** by the **New York Times**, a **New York Times Editor's Choice**, and one of **Germany's Most Beautiful Books of 2022**. *Diaries of War*, her book of graphic journalism that chronicles the contrasting experiences of a Ukrainian journalist and a Russian artist, both grappling with the realities of Russia's renewed invasion of Ukraine in 2022, won the **Overseas Press Club's Best Cartoon Award** runner-up citation and was named one of **Germany's Most Beautiful Books of 2024**. Her visual biography, *Kamikaze*, about a surviving Japanese WWII pilot, was included in Houghton Mifflin's *Best American Comics* and *Best Non-Required Reading*, and her animations were shown at the Sundance Film Festival. Krug is Associate Professor of Illustration at the **Parsons School of Design** in New York City. Krug holds a B.A. Honours degree in *Performance Design* from the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, a Diplom in *Visual Communications* from the University of Arts Berlin, and an M.F.A. in *Illustration as a Visual Essay* from the School of Visual Arts in New York. Nora Krug is currently a fellow at **Yale University's Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies**, and beginning fall 2025, will be a fellow at the American Academy in Berlin.



Photo by Marty Umans

-From the author's website

Primary Voices

K

A Ukrainian writer, journalist, and artist based in Kyiv. Her diary entries document the early weeks of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, providing a firsthand account of a civilian's experience of war. Key themes in her story include:

- The surreal normalcy of daily life in a war zone
- Bearing witness to violence with clarity and courage
- The emotional toll of an assault on your culture
- Writing as resistance to injustice and aggression

D

A Russian artist living in Moscow at the time of the invasion. Their diary entries reflect a deep moral conflict, fear of repression, and a growing disillusionment with the Russian state. Key themes in their story include:

- The moral cost of silence
- The dangers of dissent in authoritarian states
- Isolation and helplessness in the face of state-sponsored aggression

Nora Krug

The book's editor, illustrator, and designer, Krug uses her artistic style to complement and amplify the voices of the diarists. She provides visual context, annotations, and occasional commentary, helping to connect personal experience with politics.

Book Summary

Diaries of War follows the lives of two writers affected by the 2022 Russian attacks on Ukraine, one in the line of fire in Kyiv and one watching horrified from afar in St. Petersburg and elsewhere in Europe. The “diaries” are text exchanges and interviews that Krug conducted and collected over the course of a full year, accompanied by Krug’s own drawings. The experiences and thoughts of the two correspondents are presented on mirrored pages of the book.

K’s story focuses on her disbelief and sadness as her world is torn apart by Russia’s invasion of her country. Her family is split as her children are sent to live in Denmark, away from the violence, and her husband is forbidden to visit them, as men between 18 and 60 are kept available to fight. She records the deaths of colleagues and friends, victims of Russian bombs. She mourns the loss of her culture in the face of an assault meant to wipe it out. And she recounts the physical and emotional toll of living in a war zone as air raids wail in her neighborhood.

D’s story is one of perceived helplessness in the face of injustice done by their government and in their name. Their sadness at no longer feeling at home in their native land is combined with the fear of speaking out for change in an increasingly authoritarian society. As D travels around Europe trying to find a safe place for his family to move to, they realize that they, too, mourn the loss of the life they have built with their family and the culture that they still love, despite their government’s actions.

Diaries of War explores the many mental, emotional, and physical ravages of war through the personal witness of two unwilling participants.

General Discussion Questions

Opening Questions

- **What does it mean to be a “witness” in times of conflict?**
Can someone be a witness without being physically present in a war zone?
- **How do fear and courage show up in everyday life, not just in war?**
Can you think of moments when people you know have shown quiet bravery?
- **What makes a story powerful enough to change someone’s perspective?**
Did anything in this book shift how you think about global conflicts or human resilience?
- **Why do personal stories sometimes have more impact than statistics or news reports?**
How does *Diaries of War* use emotion and detail to create a connection between reader and characters?
- **Do you think art can change hearts or minds in the face of violence or injustice?**
Can you think of other works of art, books, or media that have done this for you?
- **What does this book suggest about the role of hope during times of crisis?**
Where do the diarists find strength, and how do they hold on to it?

Civic Responsibility & Moral Choices

- **What kinds of risks do the two diarists face simply telling their stories?**
How do those risks reflect the political environments they live in?
- **How do these diaries show different ways of resisting injustice: publicly or privately, loudly or quietly?**
What do these varied forms of resistance reveal about the power of individual action?
- **What can we, as readers in a different country, learn from their courage and fears?**
How might their experiences inspire reflection on our own civic and moral responsibilities?
- **What responsibilities do ordinary citizens have during times of war, even when they are not directly involved in the conflict?**
How do the diarists in *Diaries of War* act on their sense of responsibility? How do they struggle with it?
- **How does *Diaries of War* challenge the idea that civic engagement only happens through official channels like voting or protesting?**
What other forms of civic participation or resistance appear in the book?
- **In what ways do the characters in the book serve as witnesses to history?**
What is the civic value of documenting one’s personal experiences in times of political crisis?

- **How does Krug’s visual storytelling invite readers to think differently about war, journalism, and citizenship?**
Does the illustrated format help us see civic responsibility in a new light?
- **What are the risks and consequences of speaking out in times of conflict, and what might the risks be of staying silent?**
How do the diarists weigh these decisions?
- **How do the individuals in the book navigate moral ambiguity?**
Are there clear “right” and “wrong” choices available to them, or are they often faced with only difficult options?
- **What role does empathy play in the moral choices that the diarists make?**
How do they maintain (or struggle to maintain) compassion for others amid violence and uncertainty?
- **Are there moments in the book where the diarists’ express guilt, shame, or moral conflict?**
What do these emotions tell us about the ethical weight of living through war?
- **What moral dilemmas arise from living under a regime or within a system that acts unjustly?**
How do individuals resist complicity in such systems?
- **What lessons about moral courage can we take from the experiences of the diarists?**
How might these lessons apply to your own life or to current global conflicts?

The Role of Art

- **How does Nora Krug’s illustration style affect your understanding or emotional response?**
What do her artistic choices communicate that words alone might not?
- **In what ways can art serve as protest, testimony, or healing?**
How are these roles reflected in *Diaries of War* and the stories it tells?
- **How does Nora Krug use illustration to convey emotional truths that might be harder to express through words alone?**
What does art make visible in the context of war and political repression?
- **In what ways does *Diaries of War* blur the line between journalism and art?**
Does this combination make the reporting more or less powerful or trustworthy?
- **How does the visual format of the book affect your understanding of the diarists’ experiences?**
Would these same stories have the same impact if told through traditional news articles?
- **What role can illustration and visual storytelling play in raising awareness about global conflicts?**
Can images provoke a different kind of political or emotional response than text alone?

- **How might creating or sharing art be a form of protest in authoritarian or war-torn societies?**
Do you see the act of documenting and illustrating personal experiences in this book as a form of resistance?
- **What ethical responsibilities do artists have when portraying real people's suffering or political struggles?**
How does Krug navigate this in her depiction of the two diarists?
- **Does the artistic presentation of the diaries make the stories feel more personal, more universal, or both?**
How does that dual effect shape the book's political and moral message?

Reflection & Application

- **Have you ever felt powerless in the face of a major event or injustice?**
How do the diarists' experiences help you think differently about what it means to take action or to bear witness?
- **What are some ways you might "speak out" in your own life, even when you don't feel powerful?**
How does *Diaries of War* challenge the idea that only certain voices matter in times of crisis?
- **How might this book influence the way you engage with civic life on campus or in your community?**
What small actions could you take that reflect the values explored in the diarists' stories?
- **What does civic responsibility mean to you as a student?**
In what ways can you stay informed, engaged, or supportive during global crises, even from a distance?
- **How do you respond when confronted with conflicting information or moral uncertainty?**
How might the diarists' reflections guide your own approach to difficult decisions?
- **What role does storytelling, whether through writing, art, or social media, play in your life?**
Could sharing your experiences or perspectives be a form of activism or connection?
- **How can empathy for people in other parts of the world shape your choices as a student and community member?**
What actions, big or small, might you take in response to the stories in *Diaries of War*?
- **What does this book teach you about the value of paying attention, even when a situation feels far away or beyond your control?**
How might that awareness affect your academic, civic, or personal life?

Discipline-Specific Activities

The War Diaries by Nora Krug is more than a memoir—it's a multidisciplinary exploration of identity, memory, responsibility, and the impact of historical events on ordinary lives. As part of the college's Common Read program, this graphic memoir invites students and faculty from every academic field to engage in meaningful conversations that connect the past to the present and the personal to the political.

In history and political science, the book offers insight into the legacy of World War II and the complexities of nationalism. In art and literature, it serves as a powerful example of visual storytelling and personal narrative. In psychology and sociology, it raises questions about inherited trauma and cultural memory. In science and ethics, the text sparks reflection on how scientific knowledge can be used—or misused—within systems of power. And in our professional fields, the book is an opportunity to explore the responsibilities we all have to use our knowledge and insight for the good of us all.

By reading *The War Diaries* together, our college community affirms that education is not confined to individual disciplines but enriched by their intersections. This shared experience encourages us to think critically, feel deeply, and consider what it means to be responsible citizens in an increasingly interconnected world.

Topics, activities, and discussion prompts have been created for the following disciplines.

- Business
- Education
- History and Political Science
- Humanities
 - Art History
 - Cultural Studies
 - Literature
 - Philosophy
 - Religious Studies
 - Spanish Language and Culture
- Math
- Nursing and Allied Health
- Science
- Social and Behavioral Sciences
- Visual and Performing Arts

BUSINESS

In business classes, *The War Diaries* by Nora Krug can be used to explore themes of **ethics, accountability, branding, leadership, economics, and the long-term impact of political systems on markets and business culture**. Though the book is a personal memoir, its exploration of history, responsibility, and identity makes it a rich text for examining how businesses operate within—and influence—social and political contexts.

Business Ethics and Corporate Responsibility

Topic: Business and Ethics Under Authoritarian Regimes

Activity: Analyze a case study of a company that operated during Nazi Germany or another authoritarian regime. In small groups, research who benefited, who resisted, and what choices were made. Prepare a summary of the ethical dilemmas the company faced and how they compare to modern examples.

Discussion Prompt: How should companies balance profit and ethics in politically unstable or oppressive environments? What responsibilities do they have to resist injustice, even at financial risk?

Branding, Reputation, and Legacy

Topic: Krug's grappling with her family name and legacy mirrors how companies must confront their histories (e.g., Volkswagen, IBM, Hugo Boss—all with ties to Nazi Germany).

Activity: Research a company with a controversial past and assess how it has addressed (or failed to address) its historical legacy.

Discussion Prompt: Can a brand rebuild trust after being associated with injustice or harm?

3. Leadership and Decision-Making Under Pressure

Topic: The book reflects on the choices individuals made during WWII—some stayed silent, others resisted. Use this to discuss leadership under moral pressure.

Activity: Analyze a business case where a leader had to make a difficult ethical choice (e.g., whistleblowing, supply chain decisions).

Prompt: What does ethical leadership look like in the face of fear or profit loss?

Economics of War and Reconstruction

Topic: Explore how postwar Germany rebuilt its economy and infrastructure and how that relates to modern models of recovery and investment.

Activity: Research the Marshall Plan and analyze how international business investments influenced the postwar economy.

Discussion Prompt: What role do businesses play in rebuilding economies after conflict?

Workplace Culture

Topic: Krug's exploration of personal identity and inherited guilt opens space to talk about inclusion, unconscious bias, and identity in professional environments.

Activity: Lead a discussion on how cultural history and identity shape leadership and team dynamics.

Discussion Prompt: How can businesses create a workplace culture that acknowledges history while fostering inclusivity?

EDUCATION

In education classes, *The War Diaries* by Nora Krug can serve as a powerful resource for exploring how history, identity, ethics, and critical thinking are taught and experienced in the classroom. The book offers rich opportunities to examine the role of educators in fostering historical understanding, civic responsibility, and inclusive pedagogy. It also invites future teachers to reflect on how difficult histories are addressed and sometimes avoided in educational systems.

Teaching Difficult Histories

Topic: How to address complex and painful historical topics—such as war, genocide, and complicity—in age-appropriate, thoughtful ways.

Activity: Use the book as a model for how personal storytelling can make abstract or overwhelming history more accessible and meaningful for students.

Discussion Prompt: How can educators help students engage with painful parts of history without shutting down emotionally or becoming defensive?

Historical Memory and Curriculum

Topic: Whose histories are included or excluded in school curricula?

Activity: Have students review and critique history standards or textbooks, considering what stories are centered and what voices are missing.

Discussion Prompt: How does Krug's personal investigation in *Diaries of War* compare to how historical events—like WWII or the Holocaust—are taught in textbooks around the world? What can this contrast tell us about national memory, education, and the politics of history?

Identity and the Role of the Teacher

Topic: How educators' personal and cultural backgrounds shape how they teach.

Application: Reflect on how D and K each see the events of the Ukraine invasion, what issues are of importance to each of them, and how their identities influence their view of the world.

Discussion Prompt: How do your background, values, and family history affect how you understand your role as an educator?

Culturally Responsive Education

Topic: Teaching with awareness of historical injustice and systemic inequality.

Activity: Ask students to design a lesson plan that uses a personal narrative (like Krug's) to teach about social justice, empathy, or historical responsibility.

Discussion Prompt: How do the themes in *Diaries of War* relate to anti-bias education, trauma-informed teaching, and inclusive classroom practices? In what ways can this book help educators create more empathetic, reflective, and supportive learning environments?

Visual Literacy and Multimodal Learning

Topic: Using graphic texts and visual storytelling in education.

Activity: Have students examine selected pages from graphic memoirs—including *Diaries of War*—and identify features (visual storytelling, layout, emotional impact, etc.) that support comprehension and engagement for diverse learners.

Discussion Prompt: How does the format of *Diaries of War*—as a graphic memoir—support literacy, comprehension, and engagement with complex historical content? In what ways might this format be especially effective for diverse or younger learners?

Critical Pedagogy and Civic Education

Topic: Preparing students to think critically about power, history, and their roles as citizens.

Activity: Have students identify a key theme from Krug's story, such as inherited responsibility, silence vs. speaking out, or confronting injustice. Then, challenge them to design an educational campaign, awareness project, or school-based initiative that encourages others to engage with that theme in a meaningful way.

Discussion Prompt: What does it mean to teach students to be both historically informed and socially responsible?

HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Nora Krug's The War Diaries offers a powerful interdisciplinary tool for both history and political science courses. As a deeply personal exploration of inherited guilt, national memory, and the consequences of political choices, the book helps students connect individual experience to larger social, political, and historical forces. It invites critical thinking about authoritarianism, civic responsibility, war, and the role of citizens in shaping—and responding to—history.

History Classes

1. Personal Narratives as Historical Sources

Use Krug's memoir to explore how everyday lives and family histories contribute to our understanding of large-scale events like WWII, the Holocaust, and postwar reconstruction.

2. World War II and the Holocaust

Frame the book alongside primary source documents to analyze civilian complicity, life under the Nazi regime, and the consequences of silence or resistance.

3. Postwar Guilt and Historical Reckoning

Investigate how Germany addressed collective guilt after WWII. Use Krug's reflections to examine denazification, the Nuremberg Trials, and Germany's evolving memorial culture.

4. Intergenerational Memory and Trauma

Discuss how the legacy of war affects second and third generations. Consider the psychological and historical implications of "inheriting" guilt.

5. Ethics of Historical Research

Use Krug's investigation into her own family's past as a case study for teaching how historians confront painful or morally complex histories.

Topic: Personal Narratives as Historical Sources

Topic: Explore how everyday lives and family histories contribute to our understanding of large-scale events

Activity: Read excerpts from *Diaries of War* that document the experiences of individuals living through the current Russia-Ukraine conflict. Pair these with recent news coverage or firsthand accounts to explore how war affects civilians in real time. Analyze how personal narratives differ from or enhance traditional journalism.

Discussion Prompt: How do the personal stories in *Diaries of War* help us better understand the human cost of the ongoing war in Ukraine? What role can empathy and awareness play in how we respond to current global crises?

Historical Roots of the Ukraine–Russia Conflict

Topic: Exploring the history that has been used to justify Russia’s invasion of Ukraine

Activity: Provide students with background materials on the historical relationship between Ukraine and Russia, including the Soviet era, Ukrainian independence, and events leading up to the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the 2022 invasion. Use excerpts from *Diaries of War* to explore how individuals experience the consequences of these long-standing tensions.

Discussion Prompt: How does understanding the historical context of the Ukraine–Russia conflict deepen our reading of *Diaries of War*? In what ways do personal narratives help illuminate the complex legacy of empire, identity, and resistance in the region?

The Impact of War on Children

Topic: Both K and D worry about the impact that the war will have on their children

Activity: Analyze passages from *Diaries of War* where the narrators reflect on the emotional, physical, and psychological toll of war on their children. Supplement with contemporary reports on children affected by the conflict in Ukraine or other war zones. Consider how parents navigate fear, protection, and hope during times of crisis.

Discussion Prompt: What unique challenges do children face during war, and how do the narrators in *Diaries of War* express their fears and hopes for their children? How might war reshape childhood—and parenthood—in ways that last for generations?

Ethics of Historical Research

Topic: How do historians confront painful or morally complex histories?

Activity: Examine how Nora Krug portrays the events of the Ukraine invasion and the emotional and ethical complexities she encounters. Use this as a case study to explore how historians and individuals confront morally troubling histories.

Discussion Prompt: What ethical responsibilities come with uncovering difficult truths about one's own family or nation? How does *Diaries of War* model an honest and reflective approach to researching and representing the past?

Political Science

Authoritarianism and Civic Compliance

Topic: How does authoritarianism grow and survive?

Activity: Analyze how authoritarian regimes gain public support or passive complicity using historical examples, including D's own examination of their action under Putin. Identify the social, political, and psychological factors that lead individuals to conform.

Discussion Prompt: How does *Diaries of War* reveal the dangers of civic inaction under authoritarian rule? What factors influence whether people resist, comply, or stay silent?

Nationalism and Identity Politics

Topic: Explore how national identity is constructed and used politically.

Activity: Explore how national identity is constructed, reinforced, or questioned through political narratives. Use D's conflicted relationship with their Russian identity as a case study for discussing the tension between pride, guilt, and belonging. Use K's determination to maintain and preserve her Ukrainian heritage in the face of an assault from without to explore how national identity is constructed.

Discussion Prompt: In what ways does *Diaries of War* challenge or complicate ideas of national pride and identity? How do personal and political identities overlap in times of crisis?

Transitional Justice and Political Responsibility

Topic: Study how societies attempt to reckon with systemic injustice, such as through tribunals, reparations, and truth commissions.

Activity: Study various transitional justice mechanisms, such as war crimes tribunals, reparations, and truth commissions. Use *Diaries of War* to examine how individuals and societies emotionally and ethically respond to a legacy of systemic violence.

Discussion Prompt: What does *Diaries of War* teach us about personal and collective responsibility in the aftermath of injustice? How do emotional reckoning and civic responsibility intersect?

4. Propaganda and Political Messaging

Topic: Explore modern examples of political messaging, disinformation, and media manipulation related to the conflict in Ukraine.

Activity: Investigate how media reports and politicians' statements have influenced citizens' beliefs and behavior about what is happening in Ukraine. Compare historical examples of propaganda with modern forms of disinformation, media manipulation, or political branding.

Discussion Prompt: How does *Diaries of War* help us recognize the subtle and overt ways propaganda shapes public opinion? What parallels can be drawn between past and present forms of political messaging?

Memory Politics and Comparative Systems

Topic: How do different political systems (authoritarian and democratic) manage historical memory?

Activity: Examine how different governments manage historical memory through monuments, education, censorship, or truth-telling. Examine how the events leading up to the invasion of Ukraine have been represented in Russia vs. Ukraine

Discussion Prompt: How should societies manage their collective remembrance and accountability? What lessons can be drawn about how societies should—or should not—confront their past?

HUMANITIES

The War Diaries by Nora Krug is a rich and versatile text that can be meaningfully incorporated into a wide range of humanities courses. Its exploration of **memory, identity, guilt, history, art, and personal responsibility** makes it ideal for sparking critical reflection, discussion, and creative work across disciplines.

Art and Art History

Topic: Visual storytelling, archival aesthetics, and memory

Activity: Assign students to create their own visual narratives using collage, sketch, or digital tools to tell a personal or family story.

Discussion Prompt: How do Krug's collage techniques, mixed media, and use of personal and historical images shape the way we understand her story? In what ways does the visual form enhance or deepen the themes she explores?

Cultural Studies

Topic: National identity, memory politics, and historical reckoning

Activity: Compare how postwar Germany and the United States have dealt with their histories of violence (e.g., Holocaust vs. slavery or Indigenous genocide).

Discussion Prompt: How do societies remember—or choose to forget—the darkest parts of their history? In what ways does this collective memory (or silence) influence national and cultural identity, as seen in *Diaries of War*?

Literature

Topic: Memoir, voice, and the graphic narrative form

Activity: Assign a literary analysis on narrative structure, tone, or the function of images in shaping reader empathy and meaning.

Discussion Prompt: How does Krug combine visual and written storytelling to convey memory, emotion, and history in *Diaries of War*? How does her approach compare to other memoirs or graphic novels like *Persepolis* or *Maus* in terms of impact and narrative style?

Philosophy

Topic: Ethics, guilt, and moral responsibility

Activity: Pair readings from philosophers like Hannah Arendt or Emmanuel Levinas with the book. Ask students to write a reflection or dialogue on whether we are responsible for the actions of our ancestors.

Discussion Prompt: What responsibilities do individuals or societies have when it comes to inherited guilt and historical complicity? How does *Diaries of War* encourage us to think about the ethics of remembrance and how we confront the past?

Religious Studies

Topic: Forgiveness, reconciliation, and moral reflection

Activity: Have students compare how different religious traditions might respond to the themes of personal and national guilt explored in the memoir.

Discussion Prompt: How do different religious or spiritual traditions approach the concepts of guilt, repentance, and healing? In what ways might these perspectives help us interpret the emotional and moral struggles depicted in *Diaries of War*?

Spanish Language and Culture

Topic: Language learning through personal narrative and cross-cultural reflection

Activities:

- **Reading and Translation:** Select a short, meaningful passage from the book and have students translate it into Spanish, then discuss the emotional tone and cultural nuances.

- **Comparative Reflection:** In Spanish, have students write or discuss:
¿Cómo se compara la manera en que Nora Krug enfrenta la historia de su país con la forma en que España recuerda su pasado?
("How does Nora Krug's approach to her country's history compare to how Spain remembers its past?")
- **Vocabulary and Expression:** Teach vocabulary related to memory (*memoria*), guilt (*culpa*), forgiveness (*perdón*), and family (*familia*), then have students use these words in written or spoken responses.

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Discussion Prompt: How do the themes of identity, memory, guilt, and reconciliation in *Diaries of War* resonate with Spain's own historical experiences, such as the Spanish Civil War or the Franco regime? How can reading and discussing translated excerpts deepen both language skills and cross-cultural understanding? *¿Qué responsabilidad tienen los ciudadanos de hoy de enfrentar los errores del pasado?*

("What responsibility do today's citizens have to confront the wrongs of the past?")

MATH

Incorporating *The War Diaries* by Nora Krug into a math class offers a creative way to demonstrate how mathematics intersects with history, ethics, and civic responsibility. While at first glance the book may seem far removed from mathematical content, it can serve as a springboard for meaningful applications in data literacy, statistical analysis, and the human impact behind the numbers. Here are a few thoughtful ways to bring it into a math classroom:

Statistics and Data Literacy

Topic: Analyze historical data related to World War II—such as civilian and military casualties, refugee displacement, or economic impacts.

Activity: Have students find credible sources for wartime data and create visual representations (graphs, charts, infographics). Then, reflect on how such numbers connect to the personal stories Krug tells.

Discussion Prompt: How can we make ethical choices when working with data that represents human suffering?

Mathematics of War and Recovery

Topic: Study the logistics of war—supply chains, rationing systems, or the cost of rebuilding cities post-war.

Activity: Assign a project that calculates the economic toll of war on infrastructure or models the rebuilding of a city using proportional reasoning or basic algebra.

Discussion Prompt: What role does quantitative reasoning play in national recovery efforts?

Probability and Decision-Making

Topic: Explore how probability might have influenced everyday decisions during wartime, such as the likelihood of surviving a bombing or being conscripted.

Activity: Present students with historical scenarios and ask them to model outcomes using probability.

Discussion Prompt: How do we weigh risk and uncertainty in times of crisis?

Ethics and Quantification

Topic: Discuss the dangers of reducing people to numbers—a practice often used in propaganda, eugenics, or genocide.

Activity: Use Krug’s reflections to frame a discussion about the ethical use of math, especially in contexts like standardized testing, incarceration statistics, or public policy.

Discussion Prompt: When is it appropriate to use numbers to represent people? What’s lost when we do?

Visualizing Narratives with Numbers

Topic: Krug’s memoir blends text, image, and archival materials—some of which include dates, maps, and lists.

Activity: Have students create a timeline of events from the book and quantify the intervals between generations, migrations, or historical markers. This can also be a lesson in sequencing, patterns, or historical modeling.

Discussion Prompt: How can mathematics help us tell more complete stories?

NURSING AND ALLIED HEALTH

In a nursing or allied health class, *The War Diaries* by Nora Krug can serve as a powerful interdisciplinary resource to explore themes of **trauma, memory, ethics, cultural competence, public health, and the role of caregivers during crisis**. While the book is a graphic memoir about personal and national history, its emotional depth and historical context make it highly relevant to future nurses learning to care for diverse populations with empathy, awareness, and accountability.

Understanding Intergenerational Trauma

Topic: Intergenerational trauma

Activity: Introduce research on how trauma from war, genocide, or displacement can affect physical and mental health across generations. Explore real-life case studies or patient scenarios where historical trauma influences current health outcomes.

Discussion Prompt: How can understanding the long-term effects of trauma shape the way nurses provide care to patients whose experiences may be rooted in events decades or even generations old?

3. The Impact of the Witness

Topic: Krug's book explores the physical and emotional toll of witnessing injustice and violence

Activity: Explore research on secondary trauma, moral injury, and burnout in nurses and other healthcare workers who witness suffering, systemic injustice, or ethical violations in their work. Use case studies or testimonials to illustrate real-world experiences.

Discussion: How does witnessing injustice—whether in a war zone, an under-resourced clinic, or a discriminatory healthcare system—affect nurses emotionally and ethically? What strategies can help health professionals maintain resilience, compassion, and a sense of purpose in such environments?

4. Public Health and War

Topic: The book addresses the disruption of vital services during the invasion of Ukraine.

Activity: Research a historical or current refugee crisis (e.g., Syria, Ukraine, South Sudan) and examine how war and authoritarian regimes impact access to healthcare, sanitation, mental health support, and disease prevention. Highlight the role nurses play in both emergency and long-term care.

Discussion: In what ways can nurses respond to the public health needs of communities affected by war, displacement, or political violence?

5. Narrative Medicine and Empathy

Topic: Krug's personal storytelling demonstrates the power of narrative addressing trauma and in healing from it.

Activity: Introduce the concept of narrative medicine by reading excerpts from *Diaries of War*. Have students write a reflective journal entry on how a patient's personal story—like Krug's—can inform compassionate, holistic nursing care.

Discussion: How can listening to and understanding a patient's life story lead to better care outcomes and deeper empathy in nursing practice?

SCIENCE

Incorporating *The War Diaries* by Nora Krug into a science class can be a powerful way to explore the intersection of science, ethics, and society, especially in courses focused on environmental science, the history and philosophy of science, biology, or even data science.

Science and Ethics in Wartime

Topic: The role of science and scientists during times of war.

Activity: Discuss how scientific research was used in WWII, including both its destructive applications (e.g., weapons, medical experiments) and its contributions to public health, engineering, and technology.

Discussion Prompt: How should scientists navigate ethical responsibilities when their research can be used for harm?

Climate Science and Civic Responsibility

Topic: Environmental science and personal responsibility.

Activity: Reflective journaling, what systems are we complicit in now, and what small actions can we take?

Discussion Prompt: Explore how individuals—like Krug's family members—either resisted or conformed to destructive systems. Connect this to environmental choices and climate change: What does it mean to take personal or civic responsibility for scientific knowledge today?

Data Science and Historical Memory

Topic: Visualizing data to understand the impact of war.

Activity: Have students create an infographic or visual narrative combining historical facts with scientific data.

Discussion Prompt: Use Krug’s illustrated format to show how visual storytelling can present complex data—such as timelines, casualty statistics, or displacement maps—in accessible ways.

Psychology, Neuroscience, and Memory

Topic: The science of memory, trauma, and intergenerational transmission.

Activity: In small groups, create a visual diagram or concept map connecting K and D’s reflections to scientific concepts such as memory encoding, trauma response, or epigenetic inheritance. Then, briefly share one insight about how storytelling may contribute to individual or collective healing.

Discussion Prompt: How does Krug’s exploration of the events in Ukraine help inform what we know about memory, guilt, and healing?

Science Communication

Topic: The role of storytelling in science.

Activity: Assign students to create a comic strip or short illustrated story explaining a scientific concept to a general audience.

Discussion Prompt: Highlight Krug’s use of art and narrative to make complex historical and ethical issues understandable. Discuss how scientists can (and should) communicate their work to the public.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

In **social and behavioral science classes**, *The War Diaries* by Nora Krug offers a compelling entry point for examining how historical trauma, identity, memory, and moral behavior are shaped by social and cultural forces. Through her illustrated memoir, Krug wrestles with inherited guilt, family history, and the psychological weight of collective responsibility—all of which intersect with key themes in sociology, psychology, anthropology, and related fields.

Intergenerational Trauma

Topic: How trauma and guilt are passed from one generation to the next.

Application: Use Krug's narrative to explore the concept of intergenerational trauma, especially in the context of war, genocide, and displacement.

Discussion Prompt: How do historical events affect the mental health and identity formation of people who didn't directly experience them?

Social Identity and Group Behavior

Topic How individuals form identity in relation to group membership, nationalism, and historical legacy.

Activity: Analyze D's relationship to their sense of self as a Russian and compare it to K's sense of herself as a Ukrainian using the lens of social identity theory and in-group/out-group dynamics.

Discussion Prompt: How do D's reflections on being Russian and K's reflections on being Ukrainian illustrate the impact of social identity, in-group/out-group dynamics, and national belonging? Using social identity theory, how can we better understand the ways both narrators struggle with their roles within their respective communities during a time of conflict?

Moral Psychology and Bystander Behavior

Topic: Why ordinary people conform to or resist immoral systems.

Activity: Using *Diaries of War* as a starting point, have students identify moments in the text where individuals either ignored injustice or chose to take action. In small groups, students will

analyze the psychological and social factors at play in each case, such as fear, conformity, moral courage, group pressure, or empathy.

Discussion Prompt: What psychological and social factors make people ignore injustice? What helps people choose to act instead?

Collective Memory and National Narratives

Topic: How societies remember or suppress the past, and how that memory shapes cultural norms.

Activity: Compare national memorials, truth commissions, or commemorative practices across cultures.

Discussion Prompt: How does *Diaries of War* reflect on how traumatic events are remembered? What psychological or social factors influence how societies remember, deny, or reconcile with the past?

Visual Narrative as Behavioral Insight

Topic: How visuals and storytelling shape emotional response and memory.

Activity: Ask students to analyze how specific visual elements, such as fragmented images, layering, color, or composition, reflect internal psychological states (e.g., guilt, anxiety, confusion) or external social pressures (e.g., nationalism, silence, conformity). Then, have each group create a short visual response piece (a collage, drawing, or digital image) that represents a psychological or social pressure they've experienced or observed.

Discussion Prompt: How does the visual format of *The War Diaries* enhance our understanding of trauma and memory?

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

In visual and performing arts classes, *The War Diaries* by Nora Krug is an exceptional resource for exploring how personal history, memory, and emotion can be conveyed through visual storytelling, mixed media, and performance. As a graphic memoir, the book offers rich material for students to analyze and emulate in their own creative work while reflecting on how art engages with historical trauma, identity, and social responsibility.

Visual Storytelling and Graphic Narrative

Topic: Analyzing and creating narrative through visual media.

Activity: Have students create a short visual memoir or comic that explores a moment of personal or family history.

Discussion Prompt: How do Krug's use of collage, hand-drawn illustrations, archival materials, and varied typography work together to create a nonlinear and emotionally resonant narrative in *Diaries of War*? In what ways do these visual choices shape your understanding of memory, identity, and trauma?

Memory and Mixed Media

Topic: Using found materials and layered media to explore memory and identity.

Activity: Assign a mixed-media project in which students incorporate family photographs, documents, or symbolic imagery to represent their own cultural background or inherited stories.

Discussion Prompt: How does Krug's use of mixed media in *Diaries of War* blur the line between personal memory and collective history? What impact does this blending have on how we interpret the past and understand individual responsibility within larger historical narratives?

Art as Historical Reckoning

Topic: How artists confront political trauma and national identity through their work.

Activity: Divide students into small groups and assign each group a different artist who addresses themes of war, genocide, or memory—such as Käthe Kollwitz, Anselm Kiefer, or Doris Salcedo. Each group will compare their assigned artist’s work to *Diaries of War*, focusing on how both use visual media to explore trauma, remembrance, and moral responsibility. Groups will present their findings through a brief visual presentation or gallery walk, highlighting common themes, emotional impact, and artistic strategies used to engage with difficult histories.

Discussion Prompt: How can visual art be a form of testimony, protest, or healing?

4. Performing Personal Histories

Topic: Adapting memoir or historical material for the stage.

Activity: Have students choose a section of the memoir to adapt into a monologue or short performance piece that explores emotional truth and moral complexity.

Discussion Prompt: How can *Diaries of War* inspire solo or ensemble performances based on personal or inherited stories? In what ways does turning memory and identity into performance help us explore themes like trauma, resilience, and historical responsibility?

Sound, Silence, and Storytelling

Topic: Using sound to evoke memory, emotion, and atmosphere.

Activity: Create a short audio performance, podcast episode, or musical composition inspired by the tone or themes of a chapter from the book.

Discussion Prompt: How can silence, ambient noise, or fragmented sound be used to represent trauma or loss in storytelling? If you were to design a soundscape for a scene in *Diaries of War*, what sounds—or absences of sound—would you include, and why?

Set, Costume, and Symbolic Design

Topic: Designing visual environments that reflect psychological or historical themes.

Activity: Task students with designing a conceptual set or costume inspired by the visual themes of *The War Diaries*.

Discussion Prompt: What do the recurring visual motifs in *Diaries of War*—such as uniforms, maps, and family photos—symbolize within the narrative? How might these elements be reimagined or transformed in a performance or installation to explore themes of memory, identity, and historical legacy?

EPILOGUE

We extend our sincere thanks to the faculty, staff, and administrators who have generously lent their time, energy, and resources to the Riders Read program. Your support helps bring meaningful, thought-provoking conversations to our campus and beyond.

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Finally, we thank the wider Yavapai County community for embracing this program and helping us create a truly shared reading experience. Your engagement reminds us of the power of stories to connect, challenge, and inspire.

— The Riders Read Committee

- Suzanne Waldenberger
- Tricia Berlowe
- Laura Cline
- Nate Cloyd
- Lynn Durkee
- Maria Grant
- Jimmy Hart
- Andrea Schaben
- Michael Sigler

Please contact Committee Chair Suzanne Waldenberger at suzanne.waldenberger@yc.edu for more information about the Riders Read program.