

# ONE WORLD IN SCHOOLS: *O BARIPEN – Pride*

Teaching materials  
for the documentary film

Vera Lacková / Slovakia /  
2023 / 52min. / Slovak /  
Slovak subtitles adapted for  
people with hearing  
impairments / 14+



This biographical film charts the fate of Roma author Elena Lacková in an intimate and personal way. Thanks to the writer's authentic voice recordings and preserved archival footage, we dive with her into memories of the Holocaust and communist dictatorship in the context of the play *Burning Gypsy Camp*. We discover the circumstances of her childhood and adolescence in a settlement, her first literary successes, and her efforts to combine her personal and professional life. We also learn about Elena Lacková's life story through her great-granddaughter, actress Alžbeta Ferencovová. The parallels between the life of the writer and her great-granddaughter, who also embarked on an artistic career and breaks stereotypes about the role of Roma women in society, create a topical and relatable story. The fundamental motif of this poetic film is the writer's emancipation, which was unprecedented at the time.

## **Themes of the film:**

gender equality, Roma women, life in a marginalized social group

# ACTIVITY 1 Our Ilonka

## Synopsis:

Through the documentary film *O Baripen – Hrdosí*, students learn about the fate of Roma writer Elena Lacková. They explore the meaning of the word *hrdosí* and record how the individual film characters experience it. They analyze Elena Lacková's life story and her legacy for future generations in a group discussion.

## Target group:

14

## Time:

90 minutes (including 52 minutes of film screening)

## Materials:

copies of Appendix 1 (one for each participant), writing materials, equipment for screening the film (computer, projector, speakers)

## Objectives:

- Students will learn about the story of the important Roma writer Elena Lacková;
- They will analyze the concept of pride in various contexts.
- They will discuss why it is important for society to know about important figures of Roma origin.

## Connection to the curriculum:

- **People and society:** World War II and the Slovak Republic, Identity and social development of people, Reflection on current social challenges, Traits of good character, Developing empathy in practice
- **Language and communication:** Spoken production, Communication interaction
- **Civic literacy**
- **Intercultural literacy**
- **Social and emotional literacy**

## Procedure:

### EVOKATION:

1. Write the sentence "This person is proud of himself" on the board. Ask the class what *pociťovať hrdosí* means. Write down their ideas on the board.
2. Explain that the Dictionary of Contemporary Slovak Language lists two meanings of the word *hrdosí*, namely:

### *pride*

- 1 a feeling of pride (usually justified) in something or someone  
. awareness of one's own value, importance, self-confidence

2

SOURCE: JULS Dictionary

3. Ask the class to guess what the film *Pride*, which you will watch in class, is about. Read or show the following quote:

*Can you imagine when people couldn't go shopping in the village? When you couldn't travel by train? When they kicked you out of the village? When you had to tear down the house where you were born, where you lived, and you had to stay outside in the winter? When I saw my mother there, whom I loved, whom I cared for, for whom I would have given my life, and my father, I simply saw the hunger, the cold, how those children were freezing."*

4. Ask who, where, when, and why these sentences could have been said. What will be the theme of the film?  
Specify that the documentary film *O Baripen – Hrdosí* is about the life of Roma writer Elena Lacková.

5

#### **·AWARENESS:**

6. Hand out the observation sheet from Appendix 1 to the students and let them familiarize themselves with it. During the screening of the film, they can write down their answers or notes on it. Explain that after watching the film, they will have time to complete the observation sheet.
7. Watch the film together and then give the students 3 to 5 minutes to complete the answers on the sheet.

#### **REFLECTION:**

8. Ask students to compare their answers in pairs for the next 2 to 3 minutes. They can share their observations with the whole class.
9. Continue with a group discussion using the following questions (if time is short, use the questions in bold):
  - *In what situations did Elena Lacková feel proud of herself? When were other people proud of her? In what other situations did someone feel pride?*
  - *What surprised you in the film? What was new to you?*
  - *What interested you about Elena Lacková's life? What made her exceptional?*
  - ***What message does Elena Lacková's life story convey? How can she be an inspiration to us all?***
  - ***Why is it important for society to know about important figures of Roma origin?***
  - ***Why should we know about figures who have been preserved as heroes in our history? How can we be inspired by their lives?***
  - ***Why is it important to know your self-worth and feel pride in yourself and others?***
  - *What did you learn from this lesson?*

#### **Methodological tip:**

If you want to explore the topic of self-esteem and pride in more detail, work with the song *Am I Good Enough*, which was also featured in the film. The song was written and performed by Elena Lacková's great-granddaughter, whose stage name is Zea. Ask your students to find the lyrics and translate them into Slovak. They can creatively express the message of the song through painting, collage, reflection, poetry, and the like.

	Who feels it?	In what situation?	Notes
Proud of themselves			
Proud of another person			



	Who feels it?	In what situation?	Notes
Proud of themselves			
Proud of another person			

## ACTIVITY 2 Heroism

### Abstract

Students explore what they consider to be heroism and heroic behavior. To begin with, they express their own opinions on heroic behavior using an opinion scale. During individual work with the worksheet, they analyze their positive and negative characteristics. Then they look for people in their surroundings whom they consider role models. They choose one of them and create a poster about them. The students present their individual works.

in smaller groups or in front of the whole class. During the final discussion, they analyze the characteristics of their role models and express their opinions on heroic behavior.

### Target group:

12

### Time:

90 minutes

### Materials:

copies of Appendix 2 (one for each participant), signs saying "I completely agree" and "I completely disagree," A3 drawings (one for each participant), writing and creative supplies (watercolors and brushes, crayons, colored pencils, markers, magazines for cutting out pictures, glue, scissors, etc.), adhesive putty or pins for attaching posters in the classroom

### Objectives:

- Students analyze the concept of heroism in various contexts;
- analyze their positive and negative characteristics;
- create a poster about a person they consider to be a role model;
- discuss their role models and their characteristic traits;
- jointly evaluate what heroic behavior is and how it manifests itself.

### Connection to the curriculum:

- **People and society:** Identity and social development of people, Traits of good character, Developing empathy in practice
- **Language and communication:** Spoken production, Communication interaction
- **Social and emotional literacy**

### Procedure:

#### EVOCATION:

- 1 Tell the students that together you will explore heroism and heroic figures in their community.
  - Set aside a space in the classroom where students can move freely, placing a sign saying "I completely agree" on one side and a sign saying "I completely disagree" on the opposite side. Explain that the imaginary line between the two poles represents a spectrum of opinions. Depending on the extent to which they agree with the following statements, they will position themselves on the scale and thus express their opinion. Read the statements one by one and after each one ask someone why they chose that particular position.
    - 2
- *Anyone can behave heroically.*
  - *Only a person who has a lot of courage and self-confidence behaves heroically.*
  - *A person's character is shaped most by life's challenges and obstacles.*

- *Heroes and heroines may have doubts, but that does not change their heroism.*
- *A person whose actions are considered heroic may doubt themselves. If I*
- *want to have self-confidence, I must accept both my good and bad qualities.*

### **Methodological tip:**

If students repeatedly take the same positions on the opinion scale, play devil's advocate—ask questions from the opposite side of the opinion spectrum. For example, if the majority of the group completely agrees with the statement "*Heroes and heroines can make mistakes, but that doesn't change their heroism,*" ask:

- Where would you stand if that person committed a crime? How would you react if*
- *they did so unintentionally?*
- *What if they are friends with people who have no moral principles and whose behavior hurts*
- *others?*

When different arguments are heard and someone changes their mind, offer them the option of moving along the scale.

### **AWARENESS:**

3. Give each student a worksheet (Appendix 2) and invite them to explore their qualities and character traits. Give them 5 to 10 minutes to work independently. If necessary, they can consult with their neighbors. Their first task will be to answer the following questions:
  - In what situation have you experienced a feeling of heroism? When have you managed to overcome a particular challenge or obstacle? What qualities, skills, and abilities helped you at that time?*
4. Ask the students to think about which person in their environment they perceive as inspiring and consider a role model. During the next half hour, they can express this person creatively through drawing, painting, collage, poster, etc.
5. Set up a space with creative supplies and hand out drawing paper to the students. Explain that they will briefly present their finished work to the rest of the class. You can extend the time allotted for creation as needed, but leave enough time for reflection.
6. Invite the students to talk about their work to the others for 20 to 60 seconds, explaining who it depicts and why. If this form of presentation is too difficult for your class, you can divide them into groups of four to five.
7. Place the students' work in a visible place in the classroom using sticky tape or pins. Ask the students what good qualities and character traits the people on the posters have. Write their observations on the board. Ask about bad qualities and write them down.

## REFLECTION:

8. Continue with a group discussion using these questions:

- *How are the characters in your works inspiring? What qualities, behaviors, or character traits make them role models?*
- *What qualities, skills, and abilities help you overcome obstacles and life challenges?*
- *How can you further develop them, for example at school, in friendships, in everyday life? What would you need to do that?*
- *What have you learned today?*

9. Write the incomplete statements on the board and ask the students to complete them independently in task 2 of the worksheet:

- *The people who inspire me in life are ... .*
- *Heroic behavior is characterized by ... .*
- *I can also be a role model for others because ... .*

# APPENDIX 2

## Task 1 **Answer the following questions individually.**

In what situation have you experienced a feeling of heroism? When did you manage to overcome a particular challenge or obstacle? What qualities, skills, and abilities helped you at that time?

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## Task 2 **Complete the following statements.**

The people who inspire me in life are .....

.....

.....

Heroic behavior is characterized by .....

.....

.....

I can also be a role model for others because .....

.....

.....



## Task 1 **Answer the following questions independently.**

In what situation have you experienced a feeling of heroism? When did you manage to overcome a particular challenge or obstacle? What qualities, skills, and abilities helped you at that time?

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## Task 2 **Complete the following statements.**

The people who inspire me in life are .....

.....

.....

Heroic behavior is characterized by .....

.....

.....

I can also be a role model for others because .....

.....

.....

# Additional information about the film's themes

## The first Roma writer, Elena Lacková



**Elena Lacková, née Doktorová (March 22, 1921, Veľký Š Doktorová (March 22, 1921, Veľký Šariš – January 1, 2003, Košice)** was the first Roma writer in Slovakia, author of children's and youth literature, founder of original Roma drama and original Roma literature written in the Roma language.

She founded the first Romani theater, with which she staged her own play about the Holocaust called *Horiaci cigánsky tábor (The Burning Gypsy Camp)* and traveled throughout Czechoslovakia. Later, she became involved in the Romani national movement and co-founded the first nationwide Union of Gypsies – Roma.

She was the first Roma woman from Slovakia and the Czech Republic to complete a university education. She wrote a book of original Roma fairy tales, *Roma Fairy Tales – Romane Paramisa*, which was published in two languages in a large print run. She was the first Roma author to become a member of the Slovak Writers' Association.

She was the first Roma personality to receive a high state award – the Order of Ľudovít Štúr, 3rd class. On the occasion of the first Memorial Day for Victims of Racial Violence and the Holocaust (2000), the president awarded her a commemorative medal for her lifelong efforts to bring the values of the Roma people closer to the majority society and for her artistic portrayal of the Roma Holocaust.

## Elena Lacková's work and activities:

**1948–1950:** Founded and dramaturgically directed the "first Gypsy theater," with which she rehearsed and performed 106 performances of the play *Burning Gypsy Camp* within Czechoslovakia.

**1950–1960:** Works as an educator for the Roma minority, writes plays, and rehearses them with amateur actors

**1961:** She moves to the Czech Republic, where she works with folk art ensembles.

**1964–1970:** studied remotely at the Faculty of Education and Journalism at Charles University in Prague, graduating with a degree

**1970–1980:** Works as a librarian and cultural worker in the village of Lemešany (Prešov district)

**1976–1986:** Collaborates with Czech linguist Milena Hübschmannová on her autobiographical work entitled *Narodila jsem se pod šťastnou hvězdou – Uliřom tel bachtaľi čercheň* (published in Slovak in 2023).

**1980:** Retires

**1990:** Becomes chair of the Cultural Association of the Roma Nationality in Slovakia, undertakes activities to revive Roma folk music groups

**1991:** Under her leadership, the Cultural Association of the Roma Nationality in Slovakia begins publishing the nationwide Roma periodical *Romano ľil – Rómsky list*

**1992:** publishes the first Slovak-Roma book, *Rómske rozprávky – Romane paramisa (Roma Fairy Tales)*

**1993:** She becomes a member of the Association of Slovak Writers.

**1995:** J. E. Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem awards Elena Lacková an honorary diploma for the development of Roma culture

**1996:** Collaborates with the independent cultural and social newspaper *Romano nevo ľil – Rómsky nový list*, contributing short stories, poetry, and commentary on current events

**1997–1999:** She appears at discussions and recites her own poetry as part of the *Spoznajme sa (Let's Get to Know Each Other)* project, which aims to promote Roma art and prevent racism

**2000:** as the first Roma woman, she is awarded the high state honor of the Order of Ľudovít Štúr, 3rd class, by the Slovak president on the occasion of the Day of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic (September 3)

**2000:** On the occasion of the first Memorial Day for Victims of Racial Violence and the Holocaust (September 9), the president awards her a commemorative medal for her lifelong efforts to bring the values of the Roma people closer to the majority society and for her artistic portrayal of the Roma Holocaust on the occasion of the Memorial Day for Victims of Racial Violence and the Holocaust.

### Theatrical work:

- **Burning Gypsy Camp** (1946): performed by the amateur Travelling Roma Theater, Veľký Šariš, directed by Elena Lacková
- **New Life** (1952): performed by the amateur Travelling Roma Theater, directed by Elena Lacková
- **Roma Heart** (1955): not yet staged as a theatrical production.
- **The Great Fiddler Baro** (1994): dramatization of the original fairy tale from the book *Romani Fairy Tales*, performed by the Romathan Theater, directed by Daniela Hivešová-Šilanová
- **Hrbatý Maren** (1999): dramatization of the original fairy tale from the manuscript, performed by the Romathan Theater, directed by Soňa Samková
- **Stratení ľudia – Nadaše Manuša** (2002): dramatization of the original fairy tale *Hrdzavá podkova* from the manuscript, performed by the Romathan Theater, directed by Ján Šilan

### Radio productions:

- **Žužika** (1989): presented by Czech Radio, awarded the Czech Radio Harvest and Prix Bohemia
- **Sparks and Ashes of Romani Love** (1992): not performed
- **Rómske srdce** (The Roma Heart) (1995): originally a play adapted for radio, broadcast by Slovak Radio as part of its national broadcasting in the Ukrainian language
- **Husle s tromi srdcami – E lavuta trine jilenca** (1998): original fairy tale from a manuscript, broadcast by Slovak Radio as part of its Roma national broadcasting

### Prose works:

- **Roma Fairy Tales – Romane paramisa** (1992)
- **The Dead Do Not Return – O mule na aven pale** (1994): a short story from World War II about the lives of Roma who are expelled from their village by guards
- **White Ravens – Parne garuda** (1996): a short story from World War II describing how guards burn down a village, killing all its inhabitants except for a boy named Julo
- **I Was Born Under a Lucky Star – Uľi'om tel bachtali čercheň** (1997): the autobiography of Elena Lacková, edited and translated from Romani into Czech by Milena Hübschmannová
- **Life in the Wind** (2005): a short story about the fate of two Roma children raised by a non-Roma mother who, despite her love for them, cannot protect them from the malice of the fascists

Sources: [Romani Encyclopedia](#), [Romane Jile](#), [Wikipedia](#)

A detailed biography of Elena Lacková can be found **on the Romane Jile website**, as well as an excerpt from her poem The Roma Planet in Slovak and Romani.

We also recommend reading the book **Narodila som sa pod šťastnou hviezdou** (I Was Born Under a Lucky Star), published in Slovak by Vydavateľstvo Brak in 2023. Elena Lacková was one of the first to speak about the Roma Holocaust and the suffering of the Roma population during World War II, immediately after the end of the war. As early as 1949, she wrote and rehearsed a play with her loved ones

in the settlement of Veľký Šariš, she wrote and rehearsed the play *Horiaci cigánsky tábor* (The Burning Gypsy Camp), with which they traveled throughout Czechoslovakia and performed over a hundred times. Elena Lacková began to devote herself to this topic several decades before it began to be discussed publicly in Europe.

## The Roma Holocaust – Porajmos

The Roma Holocaust refers to Nazi Germany's attempt to exterminate the Roma ethnic group in Europe during World War II. Persecution affected many enclaves of the Roma population in those parts of Europe where Germany and its allies had established their expansion.

The final number of victims of the Roma Holocaust is still unknown, but it is estimated that up to 500,000 children, women, and men were murdered. In the Roma language, the term *porajmos* is used to refer to the Holocaust, which translates as "devouring." The extermination of the Roma population was part of the racial solution, which, according to Hitler's ideas, was to follow the so-called final solution to the Jewish question. More information can be found in the [brochure on the Roma Holocaust](#) published by the Institute for the Memory of the Nation on its website.

Source: [Institute for the Memory of the Nation](#)

## Inspirational sources of information

- On the occasion of Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Ministry of Justice, together with ethnographer Zuzana Kumanová, prepared **an educational video about the liquidation of the so-called Gypsy camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau**.
- A report on the Roma Holocaust was broadcast by Slovak Gipsy Television. Entitled **International Holocaust Remembrance Day / Roma Holocaust** (2016), it can be viewed on their YouTube channel.
- For more information and stories about how the Roma population actively participated in the SNP, see the interview with filmmaker Vera Lacková: **Roma partisans were no exception, says the great-granddaughter of a forgotten hero whose family was murdered by the Gestapo** in the online Denník N.
- You can read about the SNP on the Roma.sme.sk portal in the text **Uprising and Roma Heroes**, or in the daily newspaper Pravda: **The Uprising Had Its Roma Heroes**, or on the Attelier portal: **The Nazis Made the Roma Their Victims, but Their Courage and Determination Made Them Heroes of the SNP**.
- The **Holocaust Handbook** from the Milan Šimečka Foundation offers a selection of the best teaching activities developed as part of the Holocaust as a Tool for Attitude Education project. It is intended for elementary and secondary schools.
- The handbook **Roma: Myths and Facts** from the organization People in Need is intended for anyone who wants to understand the situation of the Roma minority in Slovakia, learn more about the issue of social exclusion, and find answers to various questions. The publication encourages readers to work on their own attitudes and those of students and young people.

- The e-book **Successful Roma** by the Eduma organization presents fifteen successful young people of Roma origin. They have managed to succeed despite many obstacles and today inspire others – they work in education, the media, and the arts.
- **Condemned to Failure** is a podcast miniseries by the daily newspaper SME about the marginalized Roma population. In seven episodes, it explores specific topics such as housing, education, generational poverty, work, stereotypes and hoaxes, health and the coronavirus pandemic, justice, and police repression.
- A short online **course on poverty**, created by the World Between the Lines initiative, will help you understand poverty as a complex social phenomenon. You will learn more about not only the economic but also the social and psychological impacts of poverty. The course is free and open to the general public.
- In the podcast of the World Between the Lines initiative entitled **Roma in Settlements Act Rationally, If We Were in Their Place, We Would Act the Same**, cultural anthropologist Alexander Mušinka explains the most common stereotypes about the Roma population and misconceptions about excluded social groups.
- The editors of the Romano Forum portal asked teachers from various cities what they would need when working with children from marginalized backgrounds. You can find the answers in the article **Understanding Roma culture and generational poverty. Teachers of excluded children talk about what would help them in their work.**
- The text "**They got a chance for a better life in England**" talks about Roma men and women who succeeded by moving abroad. **The documentary "Leaving" holds up a mirror to our society** on the Romano Forum portal. You can watch the documentary for free as part of the **One World in Communities** program.
- Read the interview **Lacková's biography gave me answers to many stereotypes of mainstream society, says linguist Júlia Choleva Vrābl'ová** about the book *I Was Born Under a Lucky Star*, which was published in Slovak twenty-six years after the release of the Czech original. It was published by the Romano Forum portal.

## Support for the Roma minority and mutual understanding in society

- Our non-profit organization **People in Need** has long been striving to find and implement new ways to solve problems related to generational poverty and social exclusion of part of the Roma population in Slovakia. Our activities focus on support in the areas of education, financial literacy, employment counseling, and housing.
- **The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities** operates within the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic as an advisory body to the government. It addresses issues related to the Roma minority in Slovakia and deals with matters concerning them. It creates more effective policies and implements systemic measures to improve the status of the Roma population in Slovakia. It also works to prevent social exclusion and support their integration into society.
- The mission of the **Cesta von** association is to help people trapped in poverty get back on their feet, find work, and live with dignity. It fulfills this mission by developing the potential, knowledge, skills, and attitudes of socially disadvantaged people from early childhood to old age so that they can enhance their personal, social, spiritual, and material resources. The association's activities include counseling, education, social and publishing activities, international cooperation, and event organization.
- The **Healthy Regions** organization is a state-funded organization of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic, whose mission is to implement and develop temporary compensatory measures in the field of health. Its activities and operations focus on the social determinants of health, which include health-related behavior, material conditions, psychosocial factors, barriers to accessing healthcare, health literacy, and structural limitations. These include discrimination, racism, low levels of education, related legislation, and so on.

- The mission **of ETP Slovakia** is to educate and develop people, organizations, and communities towards a civil society and to spread the ideas of sustainable development. It accompanies people in need from cradle to career, connects communities, and educates on the topic of generational poverty. It participates in creating comprehensive solutions that help individuals and families take steps out from poverty towards self-sufficiency.
- **The Association of Young Roma** is one of the oldest organizations in Slovakia working with socially excluded groups, with an emphasis on the Roma community and people with disabilities. It promotes change in the areas of human rights protection, education, and employment, focusing on informal education, social economy, and community work.
- The main objective of the **eduRoma** civic association is to promote and implement access to quality education for all members of national minorities, ethnic and social groups with the aim of creating, supporting, implementing, and spreading the idea of an inclusive society in Slovakia. Through its activities, it applies proven and innovative knowledge and approaches from the social sciences and humanities, while actively linking them with civic engagement.
- Through its scholarship program, the civic association **Divé maky** shapes the future of Roma children, improves their social status, and helps create positive role models in their communities. Through its activities and the presentation of Roma talent and culture, it strives to support the development of a successful generation of Roma children and youth.
- **The DOM.ov Project** helps people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds to build their own legal and safe family homes. The mission of the DOM.ov Project is to create conditions suitable for the legal construction of homes in villages with marginalized populations, thereby transforming settlements into good places to live.
- **CVEK** is an independent non-governmental organization that strives to contribute to the creation of a more just and cohesive society through its research, analytical, and educational activities. CVEK's activities focus primarily on ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities. It focuses on the inclusion of marginalized groups, whether Roma, migrants, or other minorities. Thematically, it focuses primarily on the areas of education, housing, social situation, interethnic relations, and political participation.
- **Roma Spirit** is a public platform that has been creating a community and space for the development of intercultural dialogue, the presentation of real stories, and activities aimed at promoting social inclusion since 2009. Roma Spirit recognizes and brings to the attention of the general public the activities of individuals and organizations that are committed to spreading understanding and building respect. Their nomination is a recognition of their active efforts and motivation to continue. The public presentation also serves as inspiration, proof of existing functional approaches, and the meaningfulness of solutions to complex challenges in our society.

## USED AND RECOMMENDED LITERATURE:

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## Methodological materials for the documentary film O Baripen – Pride

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