

KEY VOCABULARY

- **CORRUPTION** = dishonest or illegal behaviour by people with power
- **THE KREMLIN** = the main building of the Russian government, and commonly used to refer to the government itself

NEWS CYCLE

WHAT'S HAPPENED SO FAR?

Is the Russian government guilty of attempted murder?



On August 20th 2020, a politician called Alexei Navalny fell ill on a flight from Tomsk to Moscow. On September 2nd, he was moved to a German hospital where doctors confirmed Mr Navalny had been poisoned with the nerve agent Novichok - a rare and highly toxic chemical weapon. Days later doctors cautiously brought him out of his coma.

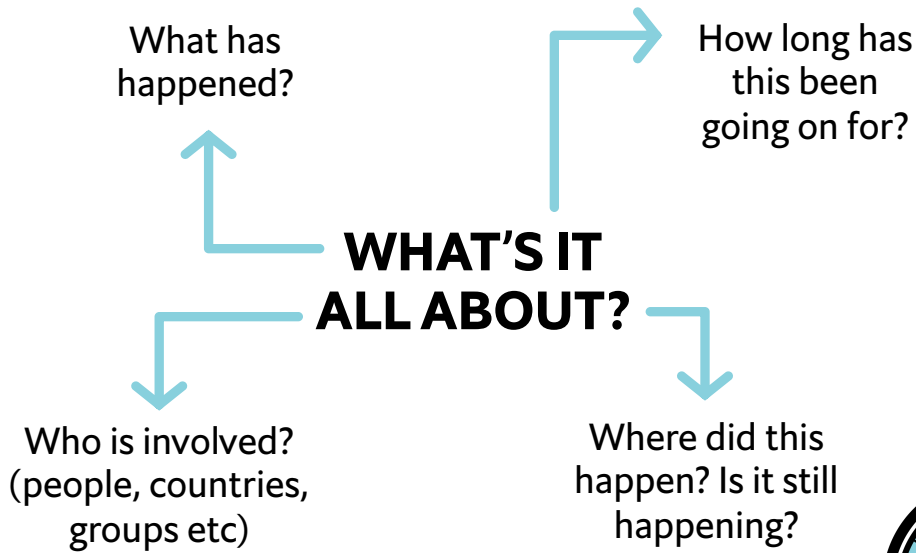
Mr Navalny is the biggest political rival of the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, and often criticises the Russian government. President Putin seems to want to remain in power as long as possible but Mr Navalny has spoken out against this, calling President Putin and his party “crooks and thieves”. He has also led nation-wide protests against corruption in the Russian government

In Russia, challenging the government can be dangerous. Several of President Putin’s critics have died in suspicious circumstances and it is common for protesters to be arrested. As a result, many people think that the Kremlin is responsible for Mr Navalny’s poisoning.

Russia has a supply of Novichok that only the most powerful people in the country can access. Angela Merkel, Germany’s chancellor, said that the presence of Novichok “raises very difficult questions that only the Russian government can answer, and has to answer.” One of Mr Navalny’s supporters made stronger accusations, saying that it was the same as President Putin “leaving an autograph at the scene of the crime”.

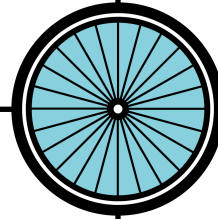
Other governments, including those of Britain and America, have promised to investigate. They say if the Russian government is involved, it will be held to account. In the face of strong suspicions against it, Russia is denying any involvement.

Want to know more about this? Look here! [bbc.co.uk/newsround/44922487](https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/44922487)



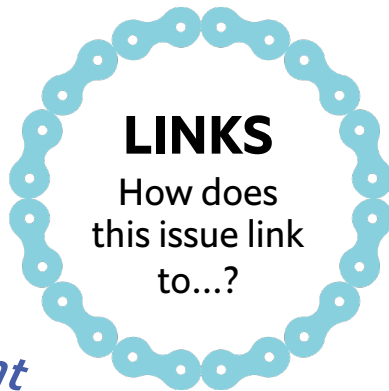
NEWS SCALE

Is this a big issue in your life?
Mark your opinion on the scale below with a X.
What about President Putin. Where would he place his X? What about a Russian citizen?



A school subject?

A different news story?

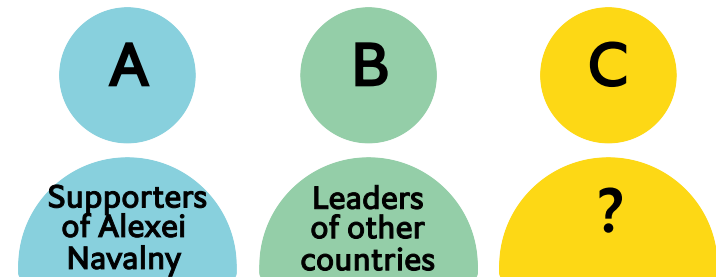


NEWS CONCEPT: power?

NEWS CONCEPT: democracy?

PERSPECTIVE FLIP

What would Group A think about this issue?
How are they affected by the issue? Now flip to B and think about the same questions.
Are there any perspectives missing?



CHALLENGE: how is this issue developing in the news?

First, limber up by thinking about everything you learnt last week:

- What was the key information about this issue? (Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?)
- Why was this issue news? (How big was this piece of news? How many people does it affect? Is it global or local news?)
- What did you think about it? Did everyone you talked to have the same opinion?
- What have you seen about this in the news? How is this issue developing?

Then, take a ride through this week's activities.

WHAT'S THE FULL STORY?



In 2019, **Alexei Navalny** was jailed for organising protests. Whilst in prison he became very ill and was diagnosed with a skin condition, but other doctors and Mr Navalny himself believe he was poisoned.



In Britain, a former Russian spy and his daughter were poisoned with Novichok but survived. A local woman died when she accidentally found the poison, which was in a perfume bottle. Two Russian agents have been charged for these crimes. Some believe they left some Novichok behind on purpose to harm others.



Novichok was developed as a chemical weapon in the former Soviet Union (now Russia). It is described as a weapon of mass destruction because of how dangerous it is.

In 2006, a former Russian spy, Alexander Litvinenko, was killed when a rare poison was put in his tea. A British inquiry concluded that President Putin “probably approved” his murder.

Before being transferred to a German hospital, Mr Navalny was treated in Russia, where doctors blamed his illness on low blood sugar. At first, they refused to let him be moved. Mr Navalny's wife said the doctors were trying to hide the truth.



TURN THE COGS

1. This issue is about more than an attempted murder. Can you explain the bigger picture?
2. What should the consequences be if the Russian government is found guilty?
3. Would it make a difference if the weapon used wasn't chemical?

Support your answers with a fact and explain why.

SHOW OFF YOUR SKILLS



Can you sum up this news story so far? Do you agree with what others think the main points are?



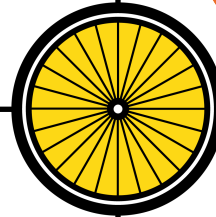
What do you still want to know? What questions would you ask an expert on this topic?



What do you think about how the Russian government is acting? Why?



What other perspectives might help you to think differently about this?



PUSH YOURSELF

President Putin has been in power for 20 years. In June 2020, he proposed a law that would mean he could be elected again and run for president until 2036. It went to a public vote and passed with 78% approval.

Before the votes had been counted, a book about the constitution including this new law was published.

- If the book was published before the votes were counted, what does this suggest?
- If a leader has already made a decision, why would they hold a vote?
- Do you think everyone is happy with this change to the law? Why haven't more people spoken out about it?

TYRE CHANGE

Brakes on! Let's change the scenario.



Russia develops a vaccine for the coronavirus before other countries?



It is proven that Russia had no involvement in the poisonings?



Evidence is found showing that the Russian government definitely poisoned Alexei Navalny?

Challenge: can you spot this issue in the news? How has the issue developed since last week?