

 theday.co.uk/the-man-who-refused-to-take-putin-seriously-4



Unbowed: Alexei Navalny was not afraid to stand up to authorities in Russia.

Is laughter the deadliest weapon? Alexei Navalny, the most famous critic of Vladimir Putin, is dead. But some supporters think he will live on through laughter.

What's happening?

Just one day before his death, **Alexei Navalny** appeared in court on a livestream from jail in the Russian **Arctic**. He found the strength to make a final joke: "Conditions of **detention** are good, touch wood."

Alexei Navalny spent years sharing stories of **corruption** and campaigning against the rule of **Russia's** leader **Vladimir Putin**. On Friday, Russia announced that he had died in prison at the age of 47.

Find out more

Navalny faced danger many times in his life. In 2020, he was poisoned and needed to go to hospital in Germany for treatment to save his life.

Afterwards, he chose to go back to Russia. His decision shocked many people, who said he would be safer outside of Russia.

When he returned in 2021, he was **arrested** and **sentenced** to 19 years in prison.

It was not Navalny's political power that made him dangerous to Vladimir Putin. In fact, he did not have large numbers of followers in Russia.

Instead, it was his **humour**. He always smiled and joked, even when he was made to appear in court. It made the whole thing seem like a big joke.

Humour works by making powerful leaders look **ridiculous**. When people laugh at dangerous leaders, it shows that they do not fear them anymore.

Is laughter the deadliest weapon?

Some say

Yes! People admire those who can laugh even when they are in a terrible situation. Navalny's smile won him more support than any speech ever could.

Others think

No! In the end, Putin is still in power. And Navalny is dead and can no longer campaign for a different Russia. Laughter is not the deadliest weapon.

Some people say

"Like a welcome summer rain, humour may suddenly cleanse and cool the earth, the air and you."

**Langston Hughes (1901 – 1967),
American poet**

Empty heading

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - What do you feel when you see pictures of Navalny?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: What makes someone a hero?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain from this story and one thing we cannot know for sure.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - It is 2021. Navalny has told you he wants to go back to Russia. What would you say to him?

5. Express

What do others believe? - Do you think people have a duty to speak out against controlling leaders? Discuss as a class.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Write an article for a school newspaper about Navalny's life. What should everyone know about him?

Glossary

Alexei Navalny - A well-known opposition leader in Russia and critic of Vladimir Putin, who died in prison in 2024 at the age of 47.

Arctic - The area in and around the north pole.

Detention - Being kept in custody by the state, or a punishment in which children are made to stay at school after classes have ended.

Corruption - When someone abuses their power for personal gain. It often involves bribery.

Russia - The largest country in the world by area. It has a population of 144 million people.

Vladimir Putin - Russia's ruler since 2000. He is a strong opponent of the West.

Arrested - Stopped by the police and taken to a police station.

Sentenced - Declare the punishment for a person who has done something wrong.

Humour - The ability to find things funny, or the things you find funny.

Ridiculous - Silly or absurd.