

## Topic: Human rights and responsibilities

<b>Lesson 1: The contemporary relevance of the Holocaust</b>	<b>KS or Year Group: KS3</b>
<b>Resources:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Film clip(s) – selected by teacher prior to lesson</li><li>2. Resources 1, 2 &amp; 3 – Holocaust factsheets</li><li>3. Resource 4 – article on Holocaust Memorial Day</li></ol>	<b>Outcomes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will learn key ideas about the Holocaust.</li><li>• Students will be able to understand the repercussions and relevance of the Holocaust today.</li><li>• Students will be more able to engage with the Holocaust experience in a compassionate and imaginative way.</li></ul>

### National Curriculum

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Key Concepts: 1.1b, 1.2b  
Key Processes: 2.1a, 2.1b, 2.1c  
Range and Content: 3a  
Curriculum Opportunities: 4g

### Lesson 1

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This lesson is the first in a series of four lessons which look at links between the Holocaust and various facets of the world we live in today, such as the responsibilities of the United Nations, the implementation of human rights and our understanding of genocide (particularly in relation to Darfur). The aim of the series is to demonstrate how the repercussions of the Holocaust have been profound and continue to affect key areas of society and politics today.

This introductory lesson provides a broad general overview of the Holocaust through key facts and figures, but also encourages students to imaginatively connect to the experience through film. Using this enhanced comprehension, students will be able to grasp more readily the importance of Holocaust Memorial Day, the day of global commemoration which takes place on the 27<sup>th</sup> January every year.

## Starter

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**NOTE:** The selection of film material here is at the teacher's discretion, but the display equipment obviously needs to be set up in advance of the lesson.

- Begin the lesson by showing the students clips from films about the Holocaust. The aim of this exercise is to give the students a more vivid understanding of what the Holocaust might have been like to experience.
- Before the lesson, the teacher should have selected one or two film clips. They can either use the list below as a guide or substitute with other films more readily available. Needless to say, the teacher should use their own discretion in terms of the violence of the material shown (although full engagement with these lessons will likely be disturbing for some children).
- Show a sizeable five to ten minute clip from one or two of the following:
  - *Schindler's List* (1993), feature film directed by Steven Spielberg (substantial excerpts of this movie also available on youtube.com).
  - *The Pianist* (2002), feature film directed by Roman Polanski (excerpts also available on youtube.com).
  - *Life Is Beautiful* (1997), feature film directed by Roberto Benigni.
  - *Sophie Scholl* (2005), a German film directed by Marc Rothemund.
  - *Arek* – free copies of this documentary are available from Unison (go to [unison.org.uk](http://unison.org.uk) for their contact details).
- When the clip is finished, get the students to share their immediate responses. Emphasise that these lessons will not be just about history, but will draw upon issues that are relevant to today's world and their own lives. Ask the students to guess what these issues might be and why they might be considered important. Put their best suggestions on the board.

## Main activity

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### Activity 1

- Divide the class into three groups. Give each group a separate factsheet from **Resources 1 – 3**. Ask each group to read, absorb and, as far as possible, memorise the facts in their factsheet (reassure the class that the facts have been deliberately 'mixed up'). The students should help each other memorise the facts.
- The teacher should explain the 'rules' of the activity:  
One group should start the activity by reciting one fact at random from their list. The two other groups should then decide if their list contains any facts which are linked to the previous fact. They must be able to explain how the second fact is linked to the first fact, but can use any kind of reasoning (whether historical, political, ethical, emotional, etc). The other two groups then try to link a third fact to the second fact and so on.
- Needless to say, the teacher is called upon to be very proactive here in terms of clarifying facts to the class, helping the groups to draw links between facts and prompting the different kinds of reasoning that can link different facts.
- For example, the fact 'the "final solution" was a death sentence of all Jewish people' can be linked the fact 'euthanasia of sick and disabled people was allowed in Germany' by an emotional reasoning (e.g. the Nazis were extremely cruel and intolerant towards vulnerable members of society) or historical/political reasoning (e.g. the Nazis were intent on producing a "master-race" of fit Aryans).

## The contemporary relevance of the Holocaust

- A 'web of meaning' should emerge through this activity in which students not only learn key facts about the Holocaust, but are also able to appreciate the various levels on which they are connected because they have drawn these links themselves!

### Activity 2

- Distribute copies of **Resource 4 – article on Holocaust Memorial Day**. Allow students time to read through the article.
- Ask students to identify the key reasons why the people interviewed in this article thought that remembering the Holocaust is important. Put these on the board.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury said that cruelty was a "failure in imagination". What does this mean? Ask the students to try and apply this idea to the actions of the Nazis during the Holocaust.

### Plenary

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Ask students to write a personal statement about how the Holocaust might be relevant to their own lives.

### Aim high

Students could research whether there have been any local or regional events for Holocaust Memorial Day in this year or any previous years. What happened? Who participated and why?

## Resource 2 – Holocaust factsheet A

- In addition to Jews, gypsies, gays, communists, Soviet prisoners of war, Poles, Jehovah's Witnesses and underground resistance fighters were also killed in the Holocaust.
- The "Final Solution" (used as shorthand for Himmler's plan for "the final solution of the Jewish question") was a Nazi death sentence on all Jews.
- The six Polish concentration camps were at Chelmno, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzac, Majdanek and Auschwitz.
- Euthanasia of sick and disabled people was allowed in Germany.
- In Poland, the Jewish death toll exceeded three million - 90% of Polish Jews.
- Not one social group, nor one religious community, nor one scholarly institution or professional association in Germany or throughout Europe declared its solidarity with the Jews.
- The non-German people living on land that Hitler wanted for Germans were also sent to concentration camps
- The Nazis wiped out two-thirds of all European Jews.
- Many more Jews were wiped out in pogroms - organised massacres - particularly in occupied Baltic states.
- In 1921, Adolf Hitler became leader of the Nazi party. The Nazis were racists and believed that their Aryan race was superior to others. To them, an Aryan was anyone who was European and not Jewish, Romany or Slavic.

### Resource 3 – Holocaust factsheet B

- Three-quarters of Hitler's victims died during an 11-month period between March 1942 and February 1943.
- Before the war, senior SS leader Adolf Eichmann proposed the deportation of all European Jews to the island of Madagascar, off the coast of east Africa.
- More than 9,000 people were killed each day at the height of exterminations at the Auschwitz Concentration Camp.
- The Germans told the Jews that they were being deported to work camps — euphemistically calling it "resettlement in the East" — and maintained this illusion through elaborate deceptions all the way to the gas chamber doors to avoid uprisings.
- SS murder squads followed the German army's advance and slaughtered more than one million Jews in seized territories.
- The term holocaust originally derived from the Greek word holókauston, meaning a "completely (holos) burnt (kaustos)" sacrificial offering to a god. The word "holocaust" has been used since the 18th century to refer to the violent deaths of a large number of people. Since the 1950s, its use has been increasingly restricted and it is now mainly used to describe the Nazi Holocaust, spelled with a capital H.
- Six death camps were built in occupied Poland to systematically kill Jews who were gassed and their bodies burned in crematoria.
- The 1935 Nuremberg Race Laws against Jews outlawed mixed marriages in pursuit of a pure Aryan race.
- The Nazis thought Germany was a more important country than its neighbours. Hitler also wanted to make Germany bigger, so he invaded neighbouring countries. One of Hitler's ambitions at the start of the war was to exterminate, expel, or enslave most or all Slavs so as to make living space for German settlers.

## Resource 4 – Holocaust factsheet C

- Beggars, the homeless, alcoholics and the unemployed were also sent to concentration camps.
- Jews were herded into ghettos, infamously at Warsaw, Krakow and Lodz in Poland.
- There are many examples of Jewish resistance, most notably the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of January 1943, when thousands of poorly armed Jewish fighters held the SS at bay for four weeks, and killed several hundred Germans before being crushed by overwhelmingly superior forces.
- The SS also murdered Jews in mobile gas vans.
- Medical experiments, including sterilisation and castration, were carried out in camps.
- When British troops entered the concentration camp at Belsen they found 60,000 starving survivors and 27,000 unburied bodies.
- Six million people perished in the Holocaust.
- Between December 1941 and the end of 1944, more than four million people, mainly Jews, were murdered in the six Polish camps alone.
- The first concentration camp was built at Dachau, near Munich, in March 1933, to imprison German communists, socialists, trade unionists and others opposed to the Nazis.
- By mid 1944, the Final Solution had largely run its course. Those Jewish communities within easy reach of the Nazi regime had been largely exterminated, in proportions ranging from more than 90 percent in Poland to about 25 percent in France. In May, Himmler claimed in a speech that "The Jewish question in Germany and the occupied countries has been solved

## Resource 4 – Holocaust Memorial Day

January 27<sup>th</sup> 2008

More than 1,600 people, including genocide survivors, are attending a special service at Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. The event, in the new European Capital of Culture, falls on the anniversary of the 1945 liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

Earlier, Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks told Sky News why it was important the next generation understood the horrors of the holocaust. "There is still ethnic and religious violence throughout the world and they understand you can not merely be a bystander wherever you can make a difference, you must.

"So we're really enlisting this young generation to continue to fight prejudice ... against whoever, any religion, any colour, just for who we are or what we believe, or the colour of our skin," he said.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, said cruelty was the result of a "failure in imagination". Speaking on Sky News he said: "It's the same digging of a great ditch between different kinds of people ... wherever you have the world divided into two groups that can't communicate, can't imagine what it's like to be the other then you have the potential for disaster and horror."

Dr Williams and Sir Jonathan will sign the Pledge Against Genocide in the form of a large mural artwork outside the Philharmonic Hall following the service.

Also present at the memorial are the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Hazel Blears, former BBC war correspondent and independent MP Martin Bell and Liverpoolian actor Jason Isaacs, who plays Lucius Malfoy in the Harry Potter films. The programme includes personal testimony from survivors and relatives, as well as poetry, music and speeches.

Some 11 million people, six million of them Jews, were systematically murdered in Europe by Nazi Germany during the 1940s.

Courtesy of SKY News