

Topic: Human rights and responsibilities

Lesson 2: The contemporary relevance of the Holocaust	KS or Year Group: KS3
Resources: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Resource 5 – news article on Holocaust survivors2. Resource 6 – United Nations factsheet3. SKY video	Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will learn key ideas about the Holocaust.• Students will be able to understand the repercussions and relevance of the Holocaust today.• Students will be more able to engage with the Holocaust experience in a compassionate and imaginative way.

National Curriculum

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

Lesson 2

This lesson is the second in a series of four lessons which look at links between the Holocaust and various facets of the world we live in today, including the global day of commemoration, 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 second lesson builds on the general introduction provided in the previous lesson by linking the Holocaust to the formation of the United Nations during the WWII-era, its core values and the work it undertakes today.

Starter

- Distribute copies of **Resource 5 - news article on Holocaust survivors**. Allow students to read it in their own time.
- Read out loud the passage in the report which quotes survivor Wladyslaw Bartoszewski and Israel's President.
- Apart from the Nazis themselves, ask the class to identify who is also being blamed by these two interviewees for not preventing the Holocaust? You will need to explain that the term 'Free World' refers to countries which were capitalist and democratic such as those in North America and Western Europe (in contrast to communist and totalitarian states like the Soviet Republic).
- Given that America and Britain amongst others were engaged in a war against the Nazis, ask the students to suggest reasons why some survivors might still blame these powers for failing to prevent the Holocaust. Some confusion may be in evidence at this point, but it is only necessary to start teasing out some of the complexities here.

Main activity

Activity 1

- Distribute copies of **Resource 6 - United Nations factsheet**.
- Divide the class into groups. Ask each group to imagine that they are survivors of the Holocaust. They should read the factsheet and decide upon the top three reasons why they might, as a survivor, think that the formation of the United Nations was a positive development.
- Each group should feedback their top three reasons to rest of the class. Hold a class discussion on the similarities and differences amongst their list of reasons.

Activity 2

- Before watching the video, explain briefly that United Nations forces were sent to the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2006 to help stop tribal, rebel and militia fighting in the northeast of the country. Now play the **SKY video**, entitled **Congo: disaster of Africa's forgotten war**.
- Ask the students to identify what actions the UN forces have been taking in the Congo to help prevent fighting. Put these up on the board.
- Now asks students to link these actions to the stated aims of the UN from the factsheet. Is the UN still trying to fulfil its original purpose? What might happen if the UN did not exist to intervene in crises like this around the world?
- Like the League of Nations, the UN is often criticised for being slow and ineffective. Using what the students have seen in the film, what strikes them about the situations that the UN get involved in?
- What should emerge is that global crises are unlikely to be as clear-cut as the Holocaust. Political situations, like that in the Congo, are often complicated and can be difficult to follow for an outsider.

Plenary

Ask students to summarise the key ways in which the United Nations is able to prevent atrocities like the Holocaust from occurring.

Aim high

Students should research the major conflicts around the world in which the UN has intervened in the last 10 - 15 years. Advise them that it might be best to start with the entry on the United Nations in Wikipedia, then branch out using the hyperlinks from there. Are they able to come to any conclusions about the success or failure of the UN's more recent missions?

Resource 3 – news article on Holocaust survivors

January 27, 2005

Survivors of Auschwitz have returned to the site of the death camp to mark the 60th anniversary of their liberation.

More than 1.5 million people - mostly Jews - were killed in the gas chambers at Auschwitz in Poland between 1940 and 1945 - the Nazi's most notorious concentration camp. They were among six million Jews who died during the Nazi regime's "Final Solution".

Survivors joined leaders and VIPs from countries around the world, braving temperatures of -9C. Former Soviet Red Army soldiers who liberated the camp on January 27, 1945, were also in attendance.

As well as remembering those who died, there was also reflection on the role of the rest of the world more than 60 years ago. Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, who was liberated from the camp, told of the "Free World's" failure to recognise the plight of the Jews during the Holocaust. Israel's President Moshe Katsav said: "The world knew about the destruction of the European Jewry, but remained silent." He warned that rising anti-Semitism could not be ignored and said that combating it "is in the hands of Europe's leaders."

The day of events and remembrances began with an international forum gathering young people, survivors and politicians. At the main memorial service, a message from Pope John Paul II was read out, while a number of foreign leaders spoke. The Pope's message said that "the attempt at the systematic destruction of an entire people falls like a shadow on the history of Europe and the whole world. "It is a crime which will forever darken the history of humanity."

Russian President Vladimir Putin said: "Auschwitz is a place of frightening crimes committed by fascists, a place of mass extermination of people, a symbol of the Holocaust."

All the leaders present lit candles at the end to remember those who had been killed. The sight was particularly poignant as the sun set and snow continued to fall.

Courtesy of SKY News

Resource 4 – United Nations factsheet

- The UN was formed in 1945 in order to provide a platform for dialogue between nations and so prevent another devastating global war.
- It replaced the League of Nations which was set up after the First World War. The League also had the goal of settling international disputes for the sake of peace and prosperity, but proved to be completely ineffective in the run up to the Second World War.
- There are a number of important reasons why the League was a weak and ineffective organisation:
- Firstly, as it was formed by the winners of the First World War, its supposed neutrality was often doubted (Germany was not even allowed to join at the start of the League).
- Secondly, it did not have its own independent army so relied on the major powers to enforce its decisions (they were mostly reluctant to do so).
- Thirdly, its internal structure was weak as it required an unanimous vote to take any action at all.
- Fourthly, not every country was included in the League as many nations could not see the advantages in joining or were excluded from joining or only joined for a short time if it was thought to be politically useful.
- Although even a stronger and more unified League may have been unable to stop a fascist dictator like Hitler, they might have been able to take some kind of collective military action against the concentration camps when information started to come to light from about 1942 onwards.
- Reflecting the universal horror at the destruction caused by the Second World War, the need for an strong global organisation to resolve disputes became extremely important and so the UN was formed.
- Key improvements on the League were a greater inclusivity (any 'peace-loving' nation could join), monitoring systems that could watch for political and social wrongdoing by governments around the world and an independent army that could intervene in global crises. All of which would lessen the risk of another Holocaust happening again.
- The terrible toll taken by the Holocaust in particular and the Second World War in general is recognised in the preamble to the UN Charter:
 - **WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED**
 - to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
 - to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small (...)
 - **AND FOR THESE ENDS**
 - to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and
 - to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,
 - **HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS.**