LESSON PLAN: THE HOLOCAUST

This lesson plan is designed to be cross-curricular and suitable for all age groups from key stage 2 upwards - primary, secondary and post-16 (students aged 7-18).

This lesson aims to inform students about the Holocaust so that they will, regardless of age or ability, learn something about the history of the Holocaust through engaging with specific life stories.

Before you teach this lesson, it is recommended that you read through the entire lesson plan. There is deliberately too much here to include for one lesson, so you can identify which elements and options are more appropriate for your students, or choose to split this plan over two lessons. There is an accompanying PowerPoint presentation; not all of the slides will be relevant, depending on which elements you choose, so you may wish to edit the presentation.

This resource is designed to be an inspiration or a starting point for you that can open the door for further learning and that can link into the wider curriculum; suggestions are given at the end of this plan.

This lesson plan is for any teacher who wishes to teach their students about the Holocaust and to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) through the theme of Journeys. Please feel free to develop the activities presented here to match the age, aptitude, ability and interests of your students.

Through the theme Journeys, students will be able to take a step to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day, to remember the millions of people killed in the Holocaust and Nazi Persecution, honour the survivors and challenge themselves to use the lessons of their experience to inform their lives today.

What you will need:

- means of displaying the accompanying PowerPoint presentation, such as a computer/laptop, projector and screen. It is recommended that you download this in advance
- a whiteboard or flipchart and pens
- these notes
- the students will need writing equipment, paper, pens and so on
- access to the internet
- luggage tags (optional – these could be purchased from a stationary shop, you could print these out from the PowerPoint presentation, or your students could create them themselves)
# Contents

Preparation and background  
*Explain  
**Definition of the Holocaust in more depth**  

Explore the concept of Journeys  
*Journey diagram  
Journey logo  
10 minutes and a suitcase  
Alternative: 10 items and a suitcase  
Persecution of the Jews  

Explain: the *Kindertransport*  
*A summary  
The Kindertransport in more depth  
Bob Kirk’s life story  
Ann Kuhn’s life story  

Survivor video testimony  
*Write/draw/sing Margaret's story  

Freddie Knoller’s story  
*Questions about Freddie’s story  

Journey logo  
*Journey poem  

Take a step  

Closing stages  

Where next: teachers  
*Suggestions for assemblies  
Suggestions for next lesson  
Suggestions for further reading  

Where next: students  
*Read this  
Watch this
Preparation and background

**Explain**
(use Slide 2 and 3)

Every year on 27 January we mark Holocaust Memorial Day by remembering the millions of people killed in the Holocaust, Nazi Persecution and in subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur. We honour the survivors of these regimes and challenge ourselves to use the lessons of their experience to inform our lives today.

On Holocaust Memorial Day you will be joining thousands of others who come together at activities all over the UK to remember the past and consider the part they can play in challenging hatred and creating a safer, better future.

This year, the theme for Holocaust Memorial Day is **Journeys**. The theme reminds us that the experience of those affected by the Holocaust and subsequent genocides is characterised by forced Journeys. For Holocaust Memorial Day 2014, we will learn of the multitude of Journeys that people were forced to undertake, in fear of what would be found at the end. We will do so at events that bring us together with our neighbours, that strengthen bonds of respect, and that enable us to take a step to create a safer, better future.

**Definition of the Holocaust in more depth:**

Between 1941 and 1945, the Nazis attempted to annihilate all of Europe’s Jews. This systematic and planned attempt to murder European Jewry is known as the Holocaust.

From the time they assumed power in 1933, the Nazis used propaganda, persecution, and legislation to deny human and civil rights to Jews. They used centuries of antisemitism as their foundation. By the end of the Holocaust, six million Jewish men, women and children had perished in ghettos, mass-shootings, in concentration camps and extermination camps.

For even more depth, please go to the HMD website where we have two podcasts by the renowned Historian, Professor David Cesarani, on the Holocaust:

hmd.org.uk/holocaust
Explore the concept of Journeys

**Journey Diagram**

Write ‘Journeys’ in the centre of a board or flip-chart. Ask students to think about different journeys they have taken eg journey to school that morning, journey to go on holiday, journey to visit family, and explore the different options, creating a visual spider-diagram (example below). Discuss the differences between an everyday journey, and a life-changing journey. Have any of the students been on a life-changing journey – for example have any of your students emigrated/come to the UK as refugees?

A blank version of this image has been included on slide 4 if you wish to use it with an interactive whiteboard.

**Journey Logo**

The journeys that people took during the Holocaust and subsequent genocides were forced; people were taken on journeys that they weren’t prepared for, taken to unfamiliar places, not knowing what awaited them. Show students the logo for the HMD 2014 theme Journeys (slide 5 of the PowerPoint presentation). Ask them what it signifies or represents to them. Discuss the logo in depth, eg what are the two lines? Who is the person in the middle? What sort of journey are they going on? Where are they going?

**10 minutes and a suitcase**

Discuss the preparation for any journey. How long do students take to pack their bag each morning before school? What do they pack? Is it part of a routine? What about when students go on holiday? Explore these questions for a while.

Give each student a few minutes on their own to write a list or draw what they would pack in their suitcase if they knew they had only 10 minutes to pack and they didn’t know where they were going or when they would come back.
**Alternative: 10 items and a suitcase**

Instead of (or as well as) giving your students a time limit, you could give them a limit to the number of items they can choose. You could prepare a table with items on for your students to choose from – or use slide 6 which has images of items. This might work better for younger students.

After a few minutes, the students discuss in pairs or small groups what they would pack, and compare their items. Why have they chosen those particular items? Why have they left certain items behind?

**Persecution of the Jews**

Once the Nazis came to power they introduced legislation intended to deny Jews freedom and restrict their rights. Boycotts of Jewish doctors, lawyers and shops began in 1933 and by 1935 Jews were not allowed to join the civil service or the army. The introduction of the Nuremberg laws in September 1935 further increased Jewish marginalisation. Jews were banned from marrying non-Jews and their citizenship was removed, including their right to vote. As time progressed, more restrictions were brought in – Jews were barred from all professional occupations and Jewish children were prohibited from attending state schools. In 1938, further laws decreed that men must take the middle name 'Israel' and women 'Sarah'. All German Jews would have their passports marked with a ‘J’.

As Jews had more and more of their rights taken away from them, some of them packed their suitcases and tried to leave the country. Some parents decided to send their children away to safety, through a programme known as the Kindertransport.
Explain: the Kindertransport

Using the stories of Bob and Ann Kirk, explain the Kindertransport to your students. Here are both a summary of the Kindertransport and a summary of Bob and Ann’s life stories. For their full life stories, please see the HMD website: hmd.org.uk/lifestories

There are also slides in the PowerPoint presentation with images relating to their story. Please note that the story of the Kindertransport may be suitable for some younger children, but you may wish to select certain elements of the story appropriate for your students. Slide 7 is an image of Kristallnacht and slides 8 and 9 are of the Kindertransport movement.

A summary:

The Kindertransport was a unique programme which ran between November 1938 and September 1939. Approximately 10,000 children, the majority of whom were Jewish, were sent from their homes and families in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia to Great Britain to escape from Nazi Germany. Strict conditions were placed upon the entry of the children and every child had to have a guarantee of £50 to finance his or her eventual re-emigration. Many of the children did not see their families again.

The Kindertransport in more depth:

Immediately after the Nazis came to power in 1933 the persecution of Jews began – this reached a pre-war peak with Kristallnacht (the Night of the Broken Glass) on 9/10 November 1938. 267 synagogues were destroyed, 100 people were killed, all remaining Jewish stores under Nazi rule were destroyed and almost 30,000 people were taken to concentration camps.

Sir Samuel Hoare, the British Home Secretary, agreed to speed up the immigration process by issuing travel documents on the basis of group lists rather than individual applications. Jewish and non-Jewish agencies promised to fund the operation and to ensure that none of the refugees would become a financial burden on the public.

The Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, later known as the Refugee Children’s Movement (RCM), sent representatives to Germany and Austria to establish the systems for choosing, organising, and transporting the children. On 25 November, after discussion in the House of Commons, British citizens heard an appeal for foster homes on the BBC Home Service. Soon there were 500 offers, and RCM volunteers started visiting these possible foster homes and reporting on conditions. They did not insist that prospective homes for Jewish children should be Jewish homes.

The first Kindertransport from Berlin departed on 1 December, and the first from Vienna on 10 December. In March 1939, after the German army entered Czechoslovakia, transports from Prague were hastily organised. Trains of expelled German Jewish children in Poland were also arranged in February and August 1939.
The last group of children from Germany departed on 1 September 1939, the day the German army invaded Poland and provoked Great Britain, France, and other countries to declare war. The last known Kindertransport from the Netherlands left on 14 May 1940, the day the Dutch army surrendered to Germany.

After the war ended many of the children stayed in Britain or emigrated to the newly formed state of Israel, America, Canada or Australia. Most of the children had been orphaned since leaving their homes, losing their families in the ghettos or camps they had escaped.

**Bob Kirk’s life story (a summary):**

Bob was born in Hanover, in Germany, in 1925 and had a comfortable childhood until the Nazis came to power in 1933. When he started secondary school, Bob had to sit at the back of the classroom and was not allowed to participate in the lesson because he was Jewish. Bob’s father thought it would be safe to stay in Germany as he had fought in the First World War. In November 1938, the Nazis attacked hundreds of synagogues, homes and buildings and arrested 30,000 Jews. This attack was known as *Kristallnacht* – Night of the Broken Glass (see slide 5 for an image of this). Bob’s father decided it was time to leave Germany and he made many applications to leave but all were refused.

Eventually, Bob was able to get a place on one of the Kindertransports in May 1939 and he travelled to England via Holland (see slides 8 and 9) for images of the Kindertransport). The first stop inside the Dutch border was wonderful; the children were given food and drink and smiles. He arrived at Liverpool Street station and sat on his little suitcase, with a name label around his neck, waiting to be called. Bob was collected by a Mr Smith and after a week or so, he was moved on to the Morris family, who sent Bob to school where he was able to learn English.

Bob moved around some more, spending time in several different hostels, and he was then evacuated to Whipsnade where he ended up teaching some of the younger evacuees! When he was 16, Bob worked in a factory making instruments for the Navy and RAF and in 1944 he joined the Army, and he became an interpreter dealing with German prisoners of war.

Bob never saw his parents again; they had been murdered in a concentration camp in Latvia.

**Ann Kuhn’s life story (a summary):**

Ann was born in Berlin in 1928. When she was just six years old she noticed newspaper hoardings saying unpleasant things about Jews. While she was at primary school, Jews were not allowed to sit on park benches, go to swimming pools or the theatre or cinema. Ann’s father decided to retrain as a chiropodist as he thought it would be easier for them to emigrate if he had a profession. On the morning after Kristallnacht, Ann and her parents left where they were living and as they went out into the street, Ann saw glass everywhere, and synagogues in flames
(see slide 7 for an image from Kristallnacht). Ann and her family spent that day constantly on the move, walking, taking buses and the train, and they saw many policemen and Nazis jeering while Jews were forced to sweep up the glass.

After a while Ann’s parents were able to enrol her on a Kindertransport list and in April 1939, she boarded a train. Many other parents and children were in tears at the station (see slides 8 and 9 for images of the Kindertransport). Ann and her parents pretended she was going on a marvellous adventure. They frantically waved goodbye to Ann.

Ann boarded a ship at Hamburg which arrived in Southampton. From there, she took a train to London Waterloo where she had to wait, with a small suitcase and a label around her neck, for her name to be called out. Ann was taken in by two sisters, who looked after her and sent her to school. She was able to write to her parents but once the war started Ann was only allowed to send one message of 25 words each month. Ann received her last message from her parents in January 1943 and she never heard from them again.

Slides 10 and 11 contain images of Bob and Ann Kirk when they were children and photos of them today.

**Discussion about Bob and Ann’s stories**

This activity is designed to help your students realise that even within one journey, individual experiences were different. Split your students into groups; half the groups should consider Bob’s story, and half should examine Ann’s story. Ask all students the same questions, and then bring the groups back together. Ask someone from each group to report back. Bob and Ann went on similar journeys, but are the answers to the questions different?

Suggested questions:

- how did Kristallnacht – the Night of the Broken Glass – affect Bob / Ann?
- how do you think Bob/ Ann felt when they made their journeys? Did they enjoy them?
- were they prepared for their journey?
- what do you think they wished they could have packed in their suitcase?
Survivor video testimony
Please note that this is not appropriate for students under the age of 14.

Show slide 12 of the PowerPoint presentation, which is a six minute video of Margaret's life story. Margaret is a Holocaust survivor. Click on the photograph of Margaret to play the video.

Think about the different journeys that Margaret took, first with her mother to Amsterdam and then alone to Sheffield. Margaret hardly mentions the journeys themselves. Why do you think this is?

Write/draw/sing Margaret’s story

Divide the class into three groups. Each group will think about the journeys that Margaret went on. Ask the students to think about

- what Margaret packed for her journeys
- what items might she have regretted leaving behind
- how did she travel? By boat/ plane/ train?
- why did she leave her mother behind?

Ask the first group to create a cartoon strip to illustrate the journeys that Margaret went on. Ask the second group to make a collage or a portrait of Margaret showing the items that she packed and unpacked. The third group should write a poem, rap or song to describe her journey.

Alternatively:
Allow the students to choose one of the three activities above and allow them to individually, creatively explore Margaret’s story.
Freddie Knoller’s story
Please note Freddie’s story is not appropriate for students under the age of 14.

There were many different journeys which were undertaken as part of the Holocaust, and Holocaust survivor Freddie Knoller himself experienced many different journeys. This lesson plan will focus on two journeys which Freddie, and many other people, were forced to undertake.

If you want to know more about Freddie’s story, you can read his full life story here: hmd.org.uk/freddieknoller

Freddie was in Drancy concentration camp in France. Ask a student to read the following (also on slide 13 and 14 in the PowerPoint presentation).

‘At the beginning of October 1943, my name came up for deportation to the east. We were taken to the railway station and 100 people were squeezed into each cattle wagon. There was not enough room for everyone to sit on the floor. We youngsters made room for the old people, women with their babies and the infirm. In the wagon there was one bucket with drinking water and one empty sanitary bucket. We travelled for three days and three nights to our destination. I will never forget the stench, the arguments, the screaming of the babies and the moans of those who were dying.

‘When we arrived we saw a sign ‘Osviecim’ on the railway platform... The platform was full of SS with dogs and we saw some young people in striped prisoners’ clothes. The SS selected the younger people who were to walk to the camp, but the older men and women with their children were taken away by trucks... I realised that there were two choices: you could either give up and within two to three days you would be dead, or you could fight to live and try to adjust yourself to the situation ‘by hook or by crook’. I chose the latter... I had one mission only, to survive, in order to tell the world about the barbarism of the cultured people of Germany.’

Ask another student to read this paragraph, about a different journey that Freddie went on (on slide 15):

‘When the Russians approached Auschwitz, the whole camp was evacuated. The date was 18 January 1945. We were lined up in rows of five and were told that we would have to walk, and that anybody trying to escape would be shot... We went westward, walking in our wooden shoes on icy, snow-covered roads. We were still in our striped, thin clothes. Many collapsed and were immediately shot on the spot. We had to take the corpses and throw them into the ditch next to the road... After walking for the whole day and part of the night, we reached a brick factory where we were allowed to rest and sleep under cover. Only half of us were still alive when we arrived at the factory... Finally, we were taken to a railway station and squeezed into an open cattle wagon, standing room only. We thus travelled through Austria and Germany, seven days and seven nights... Nine people in our wagon died during the journey.’
Questions about Freddie’s story

In small groups, discuss how the two journeys were similar and how they were different.
Things to think about:

- Freddie’s feelings on the two different journeys
- would he have been aware that there were differences?

These journeys, one crammed into a cattle car, of the other a death march, are often the first journeys people think of when they think of the Holocaust. Ask your students why they think that is – what do these journeys tell us about the Holocaust?

Things to think about:

- who went on each journey?
- who organised each journey?
- why were there so many journeys – what was the purpose of them?

These questions will give your students the chance to think about the connections between the Holocaust and journeys, and about the perpetrators and the victims.
Journeys logo

Now that students are familiar with the journeys that people went through during the Holocaust, ask them their opinion of the logo (slide 16). Does the logo convey all the different journeys? After a discussion, ask students to design their own logo or motif for the theme. This is an opportunity for subject-specific work (for example, creating a piece of music or artwork if relevant), and also an opportunity for creative group work – one group is tasked with creating a drawing, a second with producing a piece of music, the third with writing a poem (for example).

Journey poem

This would be most appropriate for (but is not limited to) an English, drama or music class.

Ask one student to slowly read the poem on slide 17. Ask another student to read the poem at a faster pace. What do they think the title of this poem is? Ask students to suggest the title, and then reveal it in slide 17. Does this change their opinion of the poem? Is it what they were expecting?

Discuss why this poem is so effective. Can they hear the train through the rhythm? What exactly does the poem represent?

Ask your students to write a poem of their own that focuses on the journeys that were undertaken during the Holocaust.

Take a step

Explain that we have been learning about just some of the multitude of journeys that people were forced to undertake, in fear of what would be found at the end. What can your students do to take a step on their own journey to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day?

Options:

- ask them what they would like to do!
- they could (under your supervision) light a candle
- if they have created a poem/ dance/ map/ song/ piece of artwork in one of the above activities, perhaps they would like to share these with the rest of their class/ year group/ school
- if you did not do any of the creative activities above, now is an opportunity to be creative to take a step – and as in the above activities, you can tailor it to be subject specific, or let your students choose to write/draw/sing depending on their preference
• whatever action they choose to take, they can share their action with everyone else who has taken a step for Holocaust Memorial Day through a special website: journeys.hmd.org.uk

• The logo for ‘taking a step’ is a luggage label. You could purchase luggage labels from a stationary shop, or use the last slide in the PowerPoint presentation to print a luggage tag for each student. Ask each of your students to write the step they will take on a luggage label. These can then be displayed in your classroom, as a reminder to everyone to take their step, or can be made into a display for an assembly (for example). If you choose this option, please remember to take a photo of your display and send it to HMDT; this can be the step you take: hmd.org.uk/letusknow and journeys.hmd.org.uk

Closing Stages

Leave time at the end of your lesson for your students to ask any questions, or to reflect on what they have learnt.

Remind them that the purpose of Holocaust Memorial Day is to remember the past to create a safer, better future. By taking a step, however big or small, on their own journey, we will be able to create that future.

Below are suggestions as to where you can go next. There is a section for you and a section for your students, which you can print off to give them, if they are particularly interested, or you can display electronically in the classroom.

Where next: Teachers

Suggestions for assemblies

If your students have created a poem/ dance/ piece of artwork etc associated with the theme of Journeys, encourage or enable them to share these with their peers through an HMD assembly.

Suggestions for next lesson

• the play Kindertransport by Diane Samuels is a set text for GSCE Drama and English Literature. You could read and/or perform this play with your students

• if you did not have time to do all the activities above, you could continue some of these into the next lesson.

• if you only read a summary of Bob and Ann Kirk’s life stories, or of Freddie Knoller’s life story, you could choose to devote some time to reading and studying their stories in more depth.
• using maps, trace the journeys that the Holocaust survivors underwent. You can make this an interactive activity, asking students to plot their journeys on the maps, particularly if you read their full life stories, as they all underwent multiple journeys (this may be more suitable for a geography lesson)

• The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust has produced other lesson plans and assemblies to enable you to teach and commemorate the Holocaust and subsequent genocides. You can access them here: hmd.org.uk/education

Suggestions for further reading

• Living with the Enemy: My Secret Life on the Run from the Nazis, by Freddie Knoller (Metro Books, 2005)
• Desperate Journey: Vienna-Paris-Auschwitz, by Freddie Knoller (Metro Books, 2002)
• Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport, by Mark Jonathan Harris, Deborah Oppenheimer, David Cesarani (Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2000)

Where next: Students

Read this:

• Living with the Enemy: My Secret Life on the Run from the Nazis, by Freddie Knoller (Metro Books, 2005) (please note this is not suitable for younger students)
• Desperate Journey: Vienna-Paris-Auschwitz, by Freddie Knoller (Metro Books, 2002) (please note that this is not suitable for younger students)

Watch this:

• Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport
• http://www.truetube.co.uk/film/kindertransport