

30th Anniversary of the Genocide in Bosnia: Lesson Plan and Activity Guidance



**HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY TRUST**

*Learning from genocide -
for a better future*

Secondary school lesson

This is a presentation script aimed at 11 to 16 year-old students that works alongside a PowerPoint presentation. This lesson gives the background information needed for students to be able to participate in an activity at the end of the lesson and create their own memorial commemorating the genocide in Bosnia.

Learning objectives:

- to learn about the events that led up to the genocide in Bosnia
- to understand the importance of memorials in remembering those who were murdered
- to plan and create your own memorial

You will need:

- pen and paper
- art materials



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Slide 2: Holocaust Memorial Day

Each year on 27 January, people across the UK mark Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) by putting on events, assemblies, workshops, performances and many other activities. These commemorations remember:

- The 6 million Jewish people who were systematically murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust
- Other victims of Nazi persecution, including Roma and Sinti people, disabled people, gay people, political opponents and many others

The millions of men, women and children, who have been murdered in more recent genocides in more recent UK Government recognised genocides (Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Yazidi) and the genocide in Darfur.

Slide 3: Why 27 January?

27 January 1945 is the day Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp, was liberated.



Image: Auschwitz-Birkenau

Slide 4: What is important about 2025?

This January, Holocaust Memorial Day marked the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp.

11 July 2025 will mark the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia.

In this lesson/assembly, we'll be learning about the genocide in Bosnia and how we can remember those who were murdered and those who survived, in a meaningful way.

Slide 5: Definitions

Bosnia - a country in Europe

Ethnic group - a social group or category of the population that, in a larger society, is set apart and bound together by common ties of race, language, nationality, or culture.

Bosnian Serbs - an ethnic group in Bosnia

Bosnian Muslims (also called Bosniaks) - an ethnic and religious group in Bosnia

Srebrenica - a town in Bosnia

Refugee - a person who has been forced to leave their country to escape war or persecution

United Nations (UN) - an international diplomatic organisation whose purpose includes maintaining peace

Slide 6: What happened in Yugoslavia?

Bosnia used to be part of Yugoslavia, which was created in 1929 after the unification of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia & Herzegovina.

After World War II, Communist dictator Josip Broz Tito became president of Yugoslavia – an appointment legitimised by his role in the defeat of the Nazis and their collaborators.

Tito held Yugoslavia together under the banner of 'brotherhood and unity' by emphasising Communist unity whilst violently suppressing opposition to his leadership. But ethnic tensions continued to exist under the surface. Similarly, religious tensions were pronounced among the Bosnian Serbs (Orthodox Christians), Bosnian Croats (Catholics), and Bosniaks (Muslims), whose differing religious identities deepened longstanding divisions.

Slide 7: What happened in Bosnia?

Tito's death in 1980 and the decline of Communism in Europe undermined Yugoslavia's stability. Serbian nationalism increased, led by Serbian politicians, and countries began to declare independence.

In 1992, Bosnia voted for independence, which was boycotted by Bosnian Serbs.

In 1992, a war began, during which **Bosnian Serbs** who were seeking to control the country and join a 'Greater Serbia', intended to destroy the ethnic group of **Bosnian Muslims**.

Communities were divided by their **ethnic group** and neighbours turned against each other. During the war, more than two million people fled as **refugees**.

Slide 8: Kemal Pervanić

"We were attacked because we were Muslims because it was the Serb's plan to claim this part of the country for themselves so in that sense what happened here was not personal. On the other hand, it was so personal when it came to the people who attacked us because I recognised many soldiers".

Slide 9: Srebrenica

In 1993, the UN sent peacekeeping forces into Bosnia and declared a town called Srebrenica (pronounced Sreb-ren-eet-za) a 'safe zone'. Tens of thousands of Bosnian Muslims went there because they were in danger and they thought it would be safe for them.

Over 8,000 Muslim men and boys were murdered in just three days. It was the worst massacre in Europe since World War II.



Slide 10 –12: The Mothers of Srebrenica

Although the war ended in 1995, reuniting the country has been difficult and many have struggled to achieve justice for their loved ones who were murdered.

In 2025, it will be the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia. It's important that we learn about this genocide to remember those who were persecuted and murdered.

The Mothers of Srebrenica is an activist group. They represent 6,000 women who lost family members in the genocide at Srebrenica.

This is what they aimed to achieve (Slide 12):

- bring a civil lawsuit against the UN for failing to protect people
- bring a civil lawsuit against the Dutch government for their troops' failure to protect people
- establish a memorial to the people murdered in Srebrenica
- identify the bodies and give them proper burials.

This was the outcome of those aims (Slide 13):

- the UN was ruled to be 'immune' to prosecution
- the Dutch government was found to be responsible for the deaths of 300 people
- a permanent memorial and cemetery have now been built
- thousands of the people murdered have been identified and have received a proper burial, but there are many more who may never be identified.

Bosnia today - there are still challenges in Bosnia following the genocide:

- justice has taken a long time to achieve, in some cases over 20 years
- the genocide is not acknowledged in some areas of Bosnia and there is a lot of denial
- many Bosnians fled to other countries at the time of the war, and as the community is still very divided, they still don't feel safe to return.

Slide 13 – Memorial

The Mothers of Srebrenica fought to have a permanent memorial built to remember those who were murdered in Srebrenica.

What is the purpose of a memorial? (This is a moment to discuss with the class).

A memorial is a physical place for individuals to reflect and remember those who are no

longer with us.

Where have you seen memorials before?

Class discussion, students may reference:

- *war memorials for soldiers in World War I or World War II*
- *any local memorials to you*
- *the Covid memorial*



The Srebrenica Flower

On 11 July 2025, it will be the 30th Anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, Bosnia. This HMD, we will be remembering those who were murdered and those who survived the genocide.

Can you design a memorial to mark the 30th Anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia?

The white and green flower, known as the 'Srebrenica flower' is a symbol of remembrance of those who were murdered in the genocide in Bosnia.

The 11 petals represent the [11 July, the date the genocide took place](#). The white represents the innocence of the victims; the green is hope for the future. *This information could be used as part of your memorial.*

Slide 14 – Memorial

Here are some memorials that have been created. Memorials can be big or small, painted, drawn or written.

You may wish to take this moment to discuss the examples on the board or any ideas that may come up in the class.

Slide 15 – Memorial

Your memorial could represent:

- what you have learnt today about the genocide in Bosnia
- a specific individual, see the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust website for [life stories](#) and [videos](#) that could inspire you
- the work of the Mothers of Srebrenica

If you would like further ideas or information, please contact education@hmd.org.uk.

Important note for teachers - after the lesson

Please let us know that you and your group have marked HMD. We'd love to hear about any follow-up activities. Please contact us at enquiries@hmd.org.uk. This helps us to know how resources are used in schools and your activities may be featured as a case study when we talk about the range of activities taking place across the UK for HMD.

AND – please post photos of your students' memorials on social media using the hashtags [#HolocaustMemorialDay](#) and [#HMD2026](#) so we can see them!

Take learning further:

- learn more about the Holocaust and more recent genocides at hmd.org.uk/holocaustandgenocides.
- explore more resources such as life stories, films and activities at hmd.org.uk/resources.



HMD.UK



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Find out more...

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust: hmd.org.uk

Discover resources for educators and other materials for your activities:
hmd.org.uk/resources

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