

A competition to mark the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia



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*Learning from genocide -
for a better future*

Secondary schools competition for Holocaust Memorial Day 2025

This is a presentation script aimed at 11-16-year-old learners that works alongside a PowerPoint presentation. This lesson gives the background information needed for students to be able to participate in the memorial competition to mark the 30th Anniversary of 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



Image credit: Julian Buijzen(CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

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 are held to remember the:

- 6 million Jewish people who were systematically persecuted and 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
- millions of men, women and children, who have been murdered in more recent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur, and in the Yazidi genocide.

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 HMD marks the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp, and the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia.

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

Slide 5: Definitions

Bosnia - a country in Europe

Ethnic group - a group of people who share the same cultural background

Bosnian Serbs - an ethnic group in Bosnia

Bosnian Muslims - 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: Genocide

Talk through the full legal definition of genocide and discuss it with your students. Key things to point out:

- *to convict someone of genocide you must prove intent; this can be difficult because evidence is normally destroyed*
- *examples of 'conditions of life' which would bring destruction would include starvation, denying access to medicine, poor living conditions*
- *sterilising people is an act of genocide due to forcibly stopping that group from having more children*
- *only the first bullet point includes the act of killing – meaning a genocide doesn't necessarily include mass murder*

Slide 7: What happened in Bosnia?

Bosnia is a country in Southeast Europe which borders Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia. In 1992, a war began where Bosnian Serbs intended to destroy the ethnic group of Bosnian Muslims and take control of the country.

This war divided ethnic groups and communities, causing more than 2 million people to flee as refugees. Bosnian Serb forces specifically targeted Bosnian Muslims for persecution. Ordinary people were forced out of their homes, held in concentration camps, threatened, beaten and killed.

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 Two.



Image credit: Hatidža at the graves of her sons at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial. Photograph from Remembering Srebrenica

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 that were murdered.

In 2025, it will be the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia. It is 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 11):

- 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 12):

- 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 do not 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 One or World War Two*
- *any local memorials to you*
- *the Covid memorial*

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 Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) is running a competition to create memorials for this momentous anniversary. 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 and green, hope for the future. This information could be used as part of your memorial designs.



The 'Srebrenica flower'

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

All memorial designs must be on paper, or you could submit a photograph if you would like to build your memorial! Please submit them to education@hmd.org.uk.

We will be awarding prizes to our top 10 memorial designs and will share them on our social media and at the HMD UK Ceremony in January 2025.

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 would 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 prisons and other settings, 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.

Take the 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.



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Discover resources for educators and other materials for
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