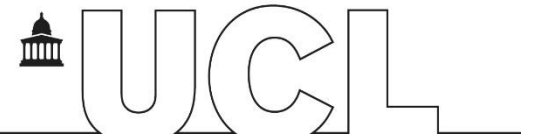


**Institute of Education**  
Centre for Holocaust Education



# Heroic actions during the of the Holocaust

## A study of cohesion

## Sessions learning objectives

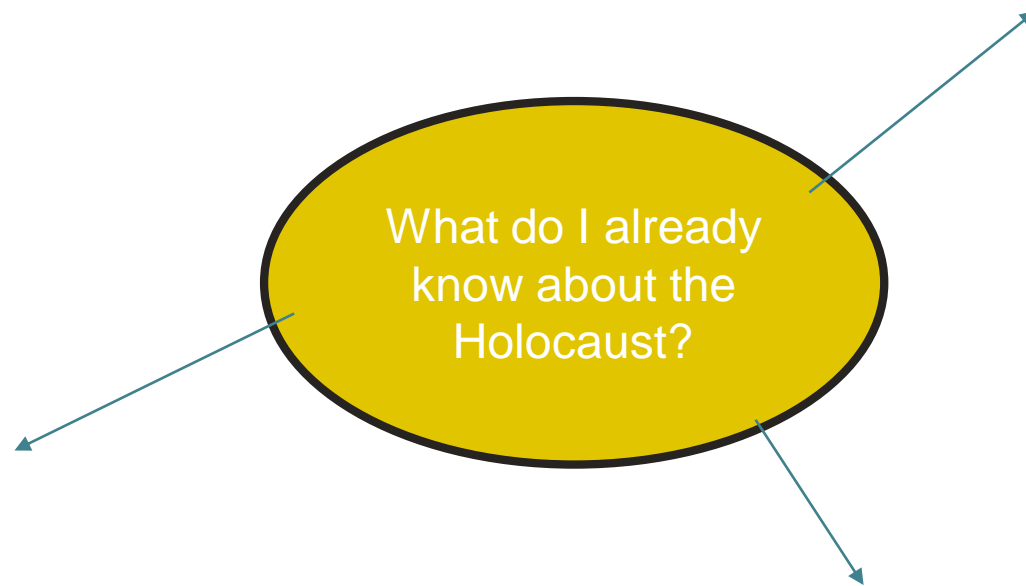
- To recognise what unites and divides communities.
- To explore the role of rescuers and resisters actions during the Holocaust.
- To understand the potential for all human beings to choose to act for the care of others, even what it poses personal risk.
- To appreciate the significance of the few acts of rescue during the Holocaust.

## Sessions learning outcomes

- To understand the qualities, values and motivations of rescuers and resisters during the Holocaust.
- To create a mantra for our time – a guiding principle to inspire individuals and groups to build compassionate communities.

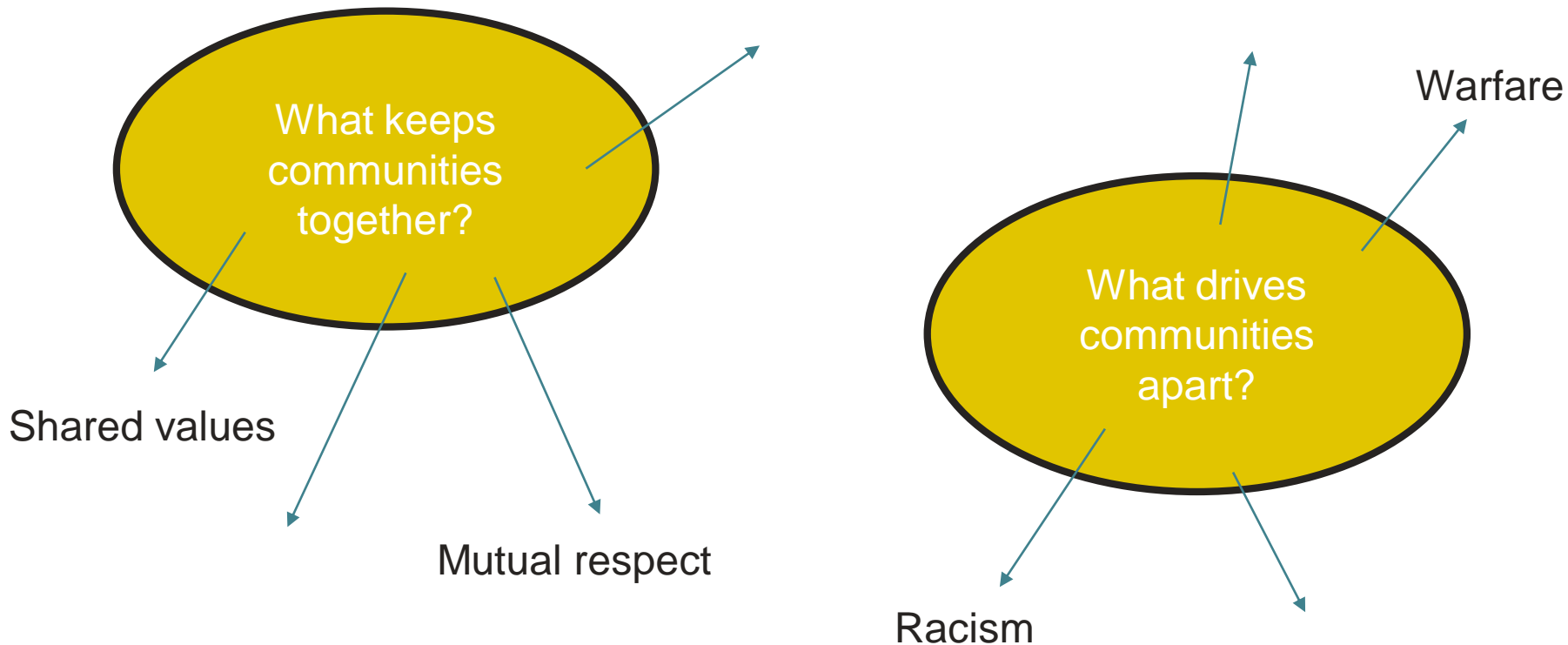
All of the case studies you are going to work with in this lessons took place during **The Holocaust**. The Holocaust was the deliberate plan to murder all of the Jews in Europe by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. Only a small number of European Jews managed to escape, be rescued or survive.

You may have already completed work on the Holocaust already. You may want to make a note of your existing knowledge in a mind map.



**Create two mind maps** reflecting on these two questions:

- 1) What keeps communities together?
- 2) What drives communities apart?



**Based on your mind maps, consider:**

- 1) Why did few people help Jewish victims during the Holocaust?
- 2) What can we then learn from the extraordinary few that did?

# Working with the Case Studies

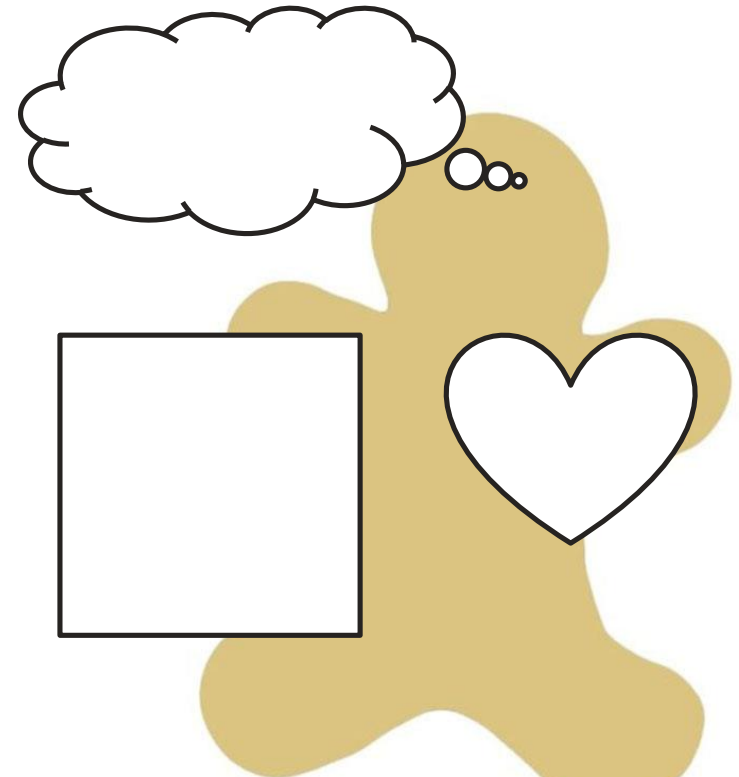
Read the case studies and answer the questions.

1. **Outline** what the individual knew/thought (head)
2. **Use empathy** to think about their feelings and emotions (heart)
3. **Explain**/bullet point their actions – what did they do? (arm and leg boxes)

**Why** do you think this individual/community did what they did, against odds of the prevailing time?

What was it that drove them to act when others didn't?

**What 3 words** you would use to describe the person/communities actions.



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#### Case Study 5: Nicholas Winton

Nicholas Winton was born to Jewish parents in 1909, although he adopted an English name and was baptised into the Church of England. He was a socialist with links to many Labour politicians and family contacts abroad, giving him an insight into the persecution of Europe's Jews by the Nazis.



In December 1938, Winton was a 29-year-old stockbroker. He had been planning to take a skiing holiday. Just before he left, he received a letter from his friend Martin Blake, who had anxiously travelled to Prague on behalf of the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia. It contained an invitation: 'I have a most interesting assignment and I need your help. Don't bother bringing your skis.' In Prague, Winton saw for himself the full scale of the problem facing Jews in the German-occupied Sudetenland. Refugee camps were filling with families forced from their homes. Occupants were struggling to survive the harsh European winter. Winton was struck by the appalling conditions and his greatest concern was for the children. As a British citizen with contacts, Winton was convinced he could arrange the evacuation of young refugees to England. Winton and his colleagues Martin Blake and Doreen Warrigoff set up a makeshift headquarters in a hotel in Prague and began taking the names of families who wished to send their children to safety.

Transporting hundreds of young refugees across Europe required careful planning. Winton returned to London and a mountain of paperwork. The British government was only willing to let vulnerable children enter the country if strict conditions were met. Winton had to arrange a foster family for every refugee who left Czechoslovakia. A few children had relatives waiting in Britain. But in most cases, Winton had to persuade complete strangers to take the children in. He placed ads in newspapers calling for volunteers. Fortunately, the British government had already begun plans to evacuate British children from city centres in the event of war so the British public were familiar with the idea of opening their homes to those in need. In 1939 those organised trains out of Prague 600 Jewish children were brought safe passage from Czechoslovakia to England at the dawn of World War II.

The evacuees, later known as "Winton's Children", knew little about their rescuer until the 1980s, when his work finally came to light. He was knighted in 2003 and died on July 1, 2015, at the age of 106.



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#### Case Study 4: Janusz Korczak

Janusz Korczak was born Henryk Goldszmit in 1878 in Poland. An acclaimed writer, broadcaster, doctor and teacher, Korczak was highly respected within Polish society for his dedication to children, particularly forward thinking regards children's rights.



Korczak ran an orphanage. Once former child, Itzhack Belfer, in the orphanage recalls his life there

*"Life was wonderful. It was full of drawing, sports and music – there was even a grand piano in the home- and we were always well fed and smartly dressed. It may be difficult to grasp, but life was the exact opposite of a typical orphanage. We experienced security, love and warmth."*

*Korczak even set up a children's court in the home, comprising of five child judges and an adult secretary (with no decision-making power) to discipline those who broke the rules. This even applied to Korczak himself, when he was caught sliding down the banister, he was in trouble!"*

In October 1940, the Jews of Warsaw were ordered to move into the newly created ghetto. In response, Korczak relocated his orphans to within the ghetto walls. Despite the terrible conditions of disease and starvation, and the constant fear of being sent to their deaths, Korczak managed keep the children safe. Moreover, he was able to maintain the educational principles that characterised the 'little republic'. The orphanage inside the ghetto did not relinquish its humanitarian principles.

Korczak was prepared to go to his death rather than betray his convictions. In 1942, when the Nazi authorities decided to purge the Warsaw ghetto, including all the orphanages, Korczak refused to accept offers from outside the ghetto to help him escape. Rather than abandon the orphans he chose to remain with them, and he died alongside them in Treblinka in 1942.

## Creating a Mantra.

In many religions and beliefs systems there is scripture or arguments that put forward the importance of saving a life. Read the examples below from various faiths.

<p>The Muslim holy book the Qur'an, says in Surah 5 verse 32: <b><i>"If anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind"</i></b></p>	<p>The Jewish Talmud says: <b><i>"To save one life is to save an entire nation"</i></b></p>
<p>In the Christian scriptures, the Biblical passage of John, Chapter 15 verse 13 (NLT): <b><i>"There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends."</i></b></p>	<p>Humanist, B Crick (2000) states: <b><i>"The crucial test of ethical values is whether they apply to strangers, and those afar, not just in our midst"</i></b></p>

Produce your own mantra based on the values and experiences of the case study to help people live a more tolerant life.