



Holocaust Memorial Day 2026: *Bridging Generations with Laura Varon*

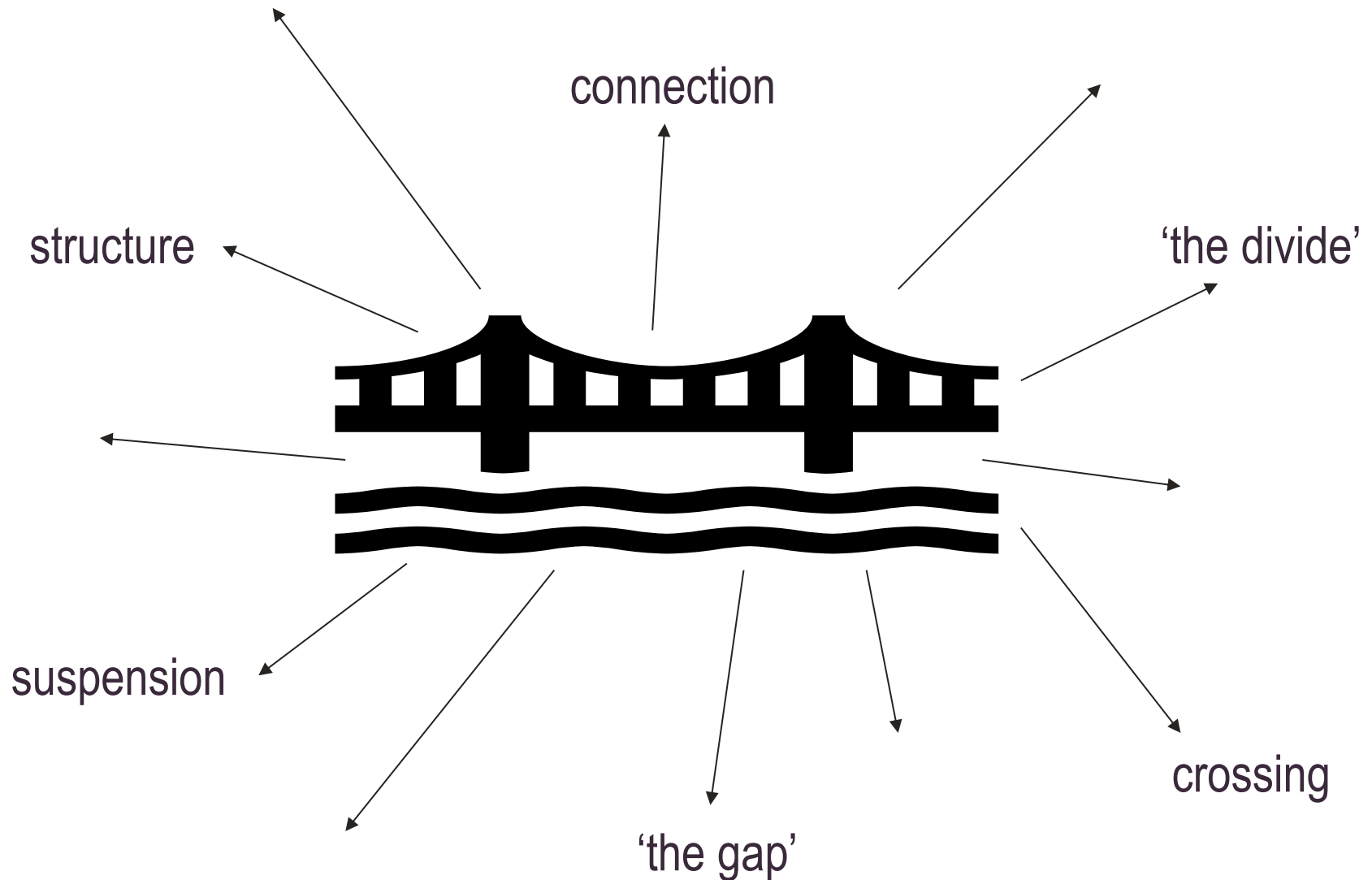
KS5 Tutor Time Stimuli & Suggestions

Holocaust Memorial Day 2026

- On 27th January, we mark the 81st anniversary of the day in 1945, that Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp, in occupied Poland, was liberated.
- More than 1 million Jewish men, women and children were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and more in other camps and locations, in a crime known as The Holocaust.
- 6 million Jewish people across Europe were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators, including 90% of all Europe's Jewish children (around 1.5 million).
- Millions of non-Jewish people were also targeted by the Nazis and their collaborators during this time.
- The 2026 theme for HMD is 'Bridging Generations'

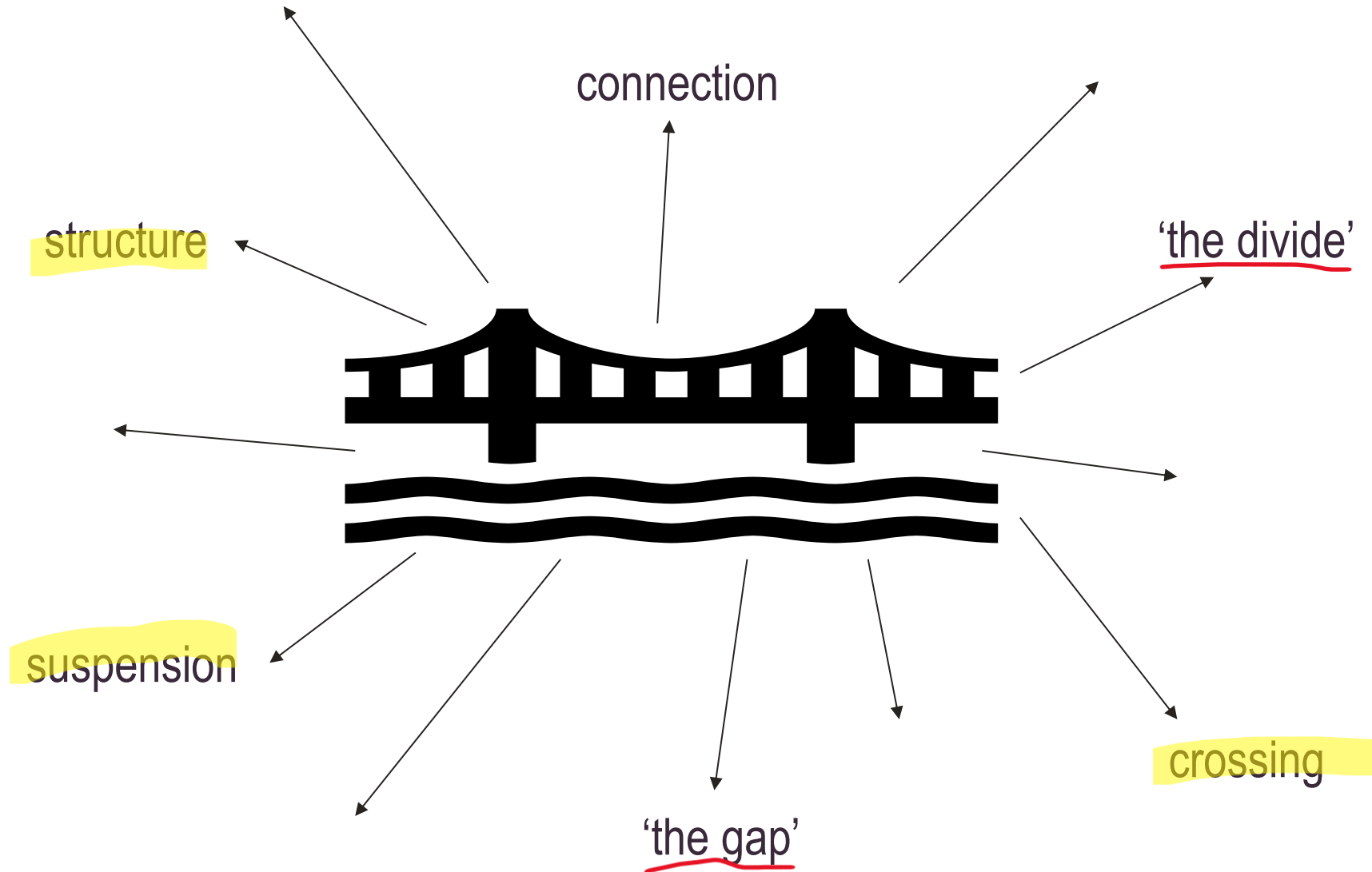
What is a bridge?

What words do you think of when a 'bridge' is mentioned?



What is a bridge?

Highlight or underline the **literal** words in one colour, the metaphorical in another

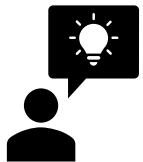


What is a bridge?



A bridge connects two places.

It can also connect two generations, or two moments in time, or two sets of values



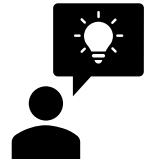
What might a bridge carry – or leave behind?

In these sessions we are going to consider one story as a bridge, and with it a question or perhaps a series of questions.

A bridge into the past often begins with a question or questions



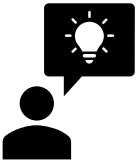
<https://rhodesjewishmuseum.org/history/holocaust/>



Look closely at this photo.

What do you see? What do you *think*? What do you *wonder*?

A metaphorical or symbolic bridge



<https://rhodesjewishmuseum.org/history/holocaust/>

This memorial doesn't look like a bridge, but it *acts* like one. It links the past to the present. It carries the names, languages, and stories of people who were taken from the Greek island of Rhodes in 1944, many of them children, families, neighbours. And it invites us, today, to remember them. That's what 'bridging generations' means: not just remembering facts, but carrying forward voices, values, and lessons

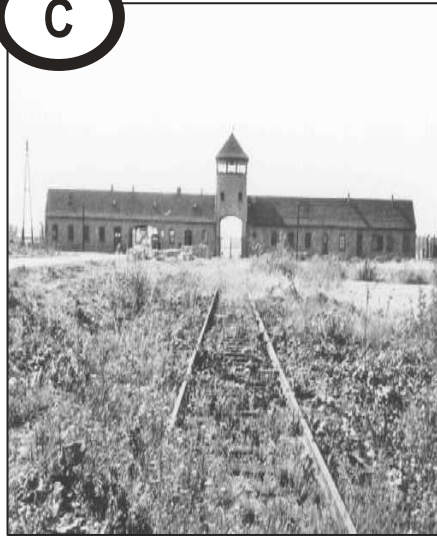
From somewhere to someone



A



C



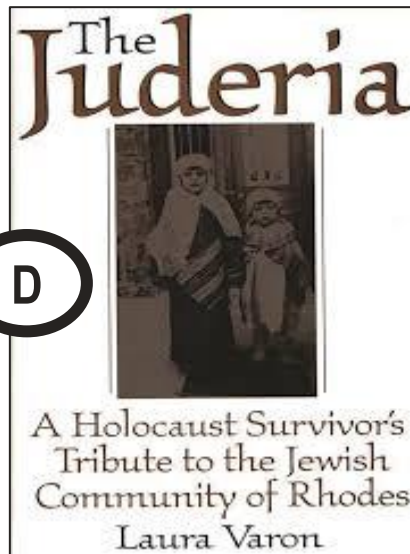
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'I didn't know it at the time, but Joseph, Asher, Stella and I were the only brothers and sisters from any family in Rhodes to have survived intact. The odds against us had probably been immense, but we had somehow won this lottery of chance. Mother and father, of course, had paid the price of our ticket'

B

Year	Family	Name
191	Turiel	Lea
192	Turiel	Lucia
193	Varon	Asher
194	Varon	Giuseppe
195	Varon	Laura
196	Varon	Stella

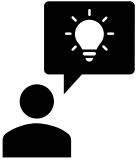
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One woman, many lives



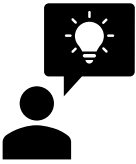
Laura's story is personal, but reflects a community overlooked/underrepresented. Most Holocaust education, history and representation focuses on *Ashkenazi* Jews, those from central and eastern Europe. Their experiences dominate textbooks, memorials, films and museum exhibits. But Laura's story, from Rhodes, challenges that pattern. It reminds us that genocide reached diverse Jewish communities, each with distinct cultural identities.

Including Sephardi voices like Laura's doesn't just broaden the historical record, it reshapes it. It asks:

- What do we miss when we only hear one kind of story?
- How does cultural specificity deepen our understanding of persecution, survival, and memory?
- What does it mean to carry forward a Ladino-speaking, story-loving legacy after Auschwitz?

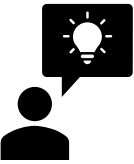
Microhistory helps us answer these questions. By zooming in on one life, we see the texture of a whole community, and the cost of its erasure.

What difference does it make to include voices like Laura's?



	Ashkenazi Jews	Sephardi Jews
Geographic Origin	Central and Eastern Europe (e.g. Poland, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania)	Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal), Southern Europe, North Africa, Ottoman lands (e.g. Greece, Turkey, Morocco)
Language	Yiddish	Ladino
Cultural Traditions	Shtetl life, rabbinic scholarship, Eastern European customs	Mediterranean customs, communal rituals, Judeo-Spanish heritage
Timing of Deportations	Began as early as 1941; peaked 1942-43	Often later, especially 1943-44
Deportation Routes	Often direct rail transport to camps like Auschwitz, or localised mass shooting in Holocaust by Bullets	Longer, multi-stage journeys (e.g. Rhodes to Piraeus to Auschwitz, over 24 days)
Representation in Holocaust History, Education and Culture	Dominant in museums, literature and curricula	Historically underrepresented; gaining visibility through survivor testimony and microhistory

Voice across time



'I was determined to survive, not only for myself but for my sister. I had promised our mother I would protect her. That promise became my anchor.'

'When we arrived at Auschwitz, we were stripped of everything - our names, our clothes, our dignity. I remember thinking: if I forget who I am, they win. So I held onto my name, my language, my memories.'

Varon. L., *The Juderia*, Praeger, 1999.

Read these short extracts from Laura's memoir, *The Juderia*.
Underline one emotion, one memory, one legacy.

Evidence ladder – what makes a strong claim?

A 'I was determined to survive, not only for myself but for my sister. I had promised our mother I would protect her. That promise became my anchor'

Laura Varon, *The Juderia*, Praeger, 1999



B

190	Turiel	19082
191	Turiel	Lea
192	Turiel	Lucia
193	Varon	Ascer
194	Varon	Giuseppe
195	Varon	Laura
196	Varon	Stella



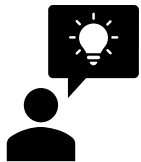
Bridging to the past – wider Greek voices



Lela Karagianni, pictured 1916,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lela_Karagianni



- This is Lela Karagianni, a married mother of seven and pharmacist who became a leading figure in Greek resistance during WWII
- She was a Greek Orthodox Christian who resisted to defend freedom, justice, and national dignity
- She helped British soldiers escape, provided medicine, and later joined the EDES resistance group with her family (EDES was one of several)
- She founded her own resistance cell, 'Bouboulina' named after her great-grandmother, a Greek war heroine
- She turned her Athens home into a secret hub, hiding weapons, aiding escapes, and passing messages
- She was arrested by the Gestapo in 1944 and sent to Haidari camp; where she continued resisting even in captivity, but was executed by firing squad weeks before Greece's liberation; now honoured as 'Greece's mother of the resistance'

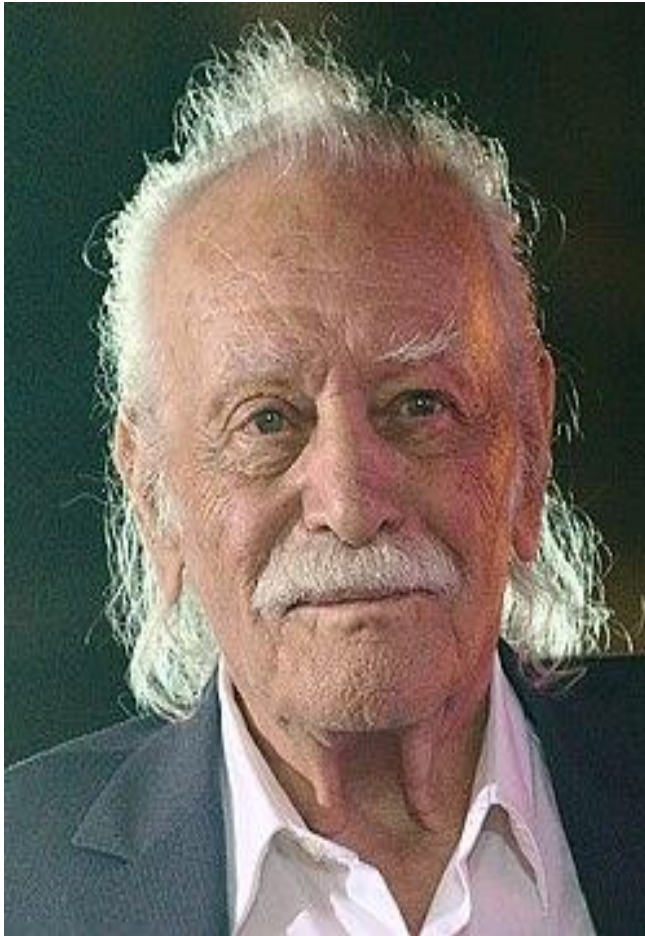


How does Lela's public resistance compare with Laura Varon's survival in silence - and what do their stories teach us about the different ways courage and memory can 'bridge generations'?

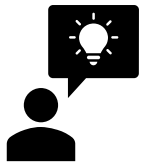
Bridging to the past – wider Greek voices



Manolis Glezos, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manolis_Glezos

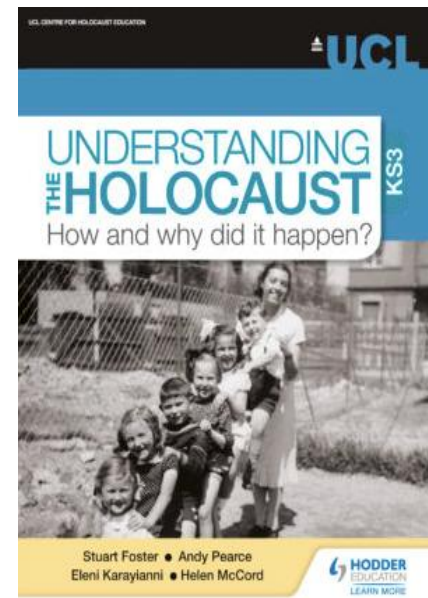


- This is Manolis Glezos, a Greek Orthodox teenager who resisted Nazi occupation out of patriotism and political conviction
- He was born in Naxos in 1922; moved to Athens and worked in a bookstore as a teen
- At age 18, he tore down the Nazi flag from the Acropolis with fellow student Apostolos Santas (May 1941)
- He was arrested and tortured by Nazi, Italian, and German authorities; endured solitary confinement and illness. He wasn't targeted for his identity, unlike Laura, rather for his actions.
- He continued political activism after the war; imprisoned by postwar Greek governments for his leftist views
- He became a journalist, MP, and the oldest elected member of the European Parliament at age 91
- He is remembered as a symbol of public resistance and moral courage in occupied Greece



How do Manolis's public defiance and Laura Varon's silent survival reveal different forms of courage, and what do their stories teach us about memory, identity, and bridging generations in the same landscape of persecution?

Bridges to victims of Nazi Persecution

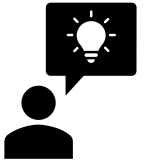


- Whilst this HMD2026 we have focused on the experience of Jews and the example of the Varon family, to encourage thinking and reflection about how ordinary Jewish people, families, businesses and communities were discriminated against, persecuted, and later murdered during the Holocaust, it is important to recognise that the Nazis targeted a variety of groups such as resisters and political opponents, like Lela or Manolis .
- This HMD2026 you may want to consider who the Nazis identified as 'enemies' and how they treated them. Why were Jehovah's Witnesses, political opponents, the disabled or those with learning disabilities or mental health issues, gay men, the Roma and Sinti, black people, ethnic Poles, Soviet civilians and prisoners of war (POWs) and others targeted, discriminated against and in some cases murdered?



Perhaps explore the stories of the Kusserow family, learn more about Helga Gross, Rudolf Bradza, Ludwig Neumann, Bayume Muhammed Husen, Karl Stojka and Anna Lehnkering using Unit 2 of 'Understanding the Holocaust: How and why did it happen?' textbook

Class survey 1 & 2

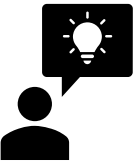


1. Which country did the largest number of Jewish people murdered during the Holocaust come from?

- a) Germany
- b) France
- c) Poland
- d) Hungary
- e) The Soviet Union
- f) The USA
- g) Israel

2. In which country did the largest number of killings of Jewish people actually take place?

- a) Germany
- b) France
- c) Poland
- d) Hungary
- e) The Soviet Union
- f) The USA
- g) Israel



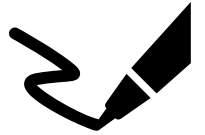
Intergenerational Bridges

Laura's children (second generation) and grandchildren (third generation) inherited her initial silence, later, her memoir and her school talks. As Laura's daughter said: 'My mother didn't speak for years. But when she did, it changed how I saw everything - her silence was part of the story.'

Lela's surviving descendants remind us that memory is not static, it's something we choose to carry, share and build upon.

- How can memory be passed on - and transformed?
- Consider, three ways memory travels: silence, story and education.
- Thinking about Laura's daughter's quote, what does it mean to inherit silence – and then choose to speak?

Outcome: Position Statement to the Future



Drawing on our HMD2026 learning, write a 300-word Position Statement to the Future

- **Open:** With one cited fact (from memoir, harbour photo, or deportation statistic).
- **Name:** Laura Varon; Rhodes harbour bridge.
- **Include:** Reflection on silence, trauma, or identity across generations.
- **Compare:** Brief mention of Lela or Manolis as another Greek victim/survivor.
- **End:** With an action verb ('preserve,' 'challenge,' 'explain,' 'remember').

In July 1944, 1,673 Jews from Rhodes and Kos were deported by the Nazis. Among them was 18-year-old Laura Varon, Laura didn't speak about Auschwitz for decades. Like many survivors, her silence was protective. But when she did share her story, it became a turning point for her children and grandchildren. They became bridges, carrying her memory forward, shaped by inherited trauma, resilience, and identity. Their role isn't just to retell history, but to live it forward.

Manolis Glezos, also 18, resisted publicly. He tore down the Nazi flag from the Acropolis, becoming a symbol of defiance. Laura and Manolis lived under the same occupation, but their fates were shaped by identity. One chose resistance. One was targeted for being Jewish. Both became voices for the future. As we mark HMD2026, we must remember that history is not just what happened, it's what we choose to carry. Laura's story reminds us that silence can be part of survival, and testimony can begin with a whisper. We must preserve these stories as bridges between generations.

Holocaust Memorial Day 2026

In these activities, we have explored the concept of ‘bridges’ and explored how remembering and learning about the Holocaust is about *‘Bridging Generations’*.

Through this session we have learned about Janusz, what the Holocaust did to one man, and his ‘children’, and how one physical bridge played a small part literal part in that story.

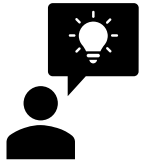
These activities also offered metaphorical or symbolic ways to understand what happened during the Holocaust – the state-sponsored killing of 6 million Jewish people by the Nazis and their collaborators, during the Second World War, and reflect on the experiences of individuals like Władysław, and groups the Nazis also persecuted, like those who resisted and were political opponents.

The 27th January each year is Holocaust Memorial Day. On this day we remember the millions of people who were murdered in the Holocaust, the victims of Nazi persecution, and in the genocides that followed, in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. We learn about the past so that we can take action to create a safer future.



The Holocaust is a reminder that genocide must still be resisted every day. Our world often feels fragile and vulnerable, and we cannot be complacent. Even in the UK, prejudice and the language of hatred must be challenged by us all.

Extending our thinking this HMD2026



- What bridges were broken during the Holocaust? What might it mean to rebuild them?
- If you could build a bridge to someone from another generation, what would it be made of, and who would walk across it?
- What does it mean to bridge silence in the aftermath of atrocity?"
- Can a bridge be built between lived experience and historical understanding?"
- How do we honour the past without being trapped by it - and what role does bridging play in that?
- What bridges do you walk across every day - seen or unseen?

 @uclholocaust.bsky.social #HMD2026

Acknowledgements

- These stimuli draw upon extracts from the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education's materials/resources, and KS3 textbook 'Understanding the Holocaust: How and Why Did it Happen?'
- 'Images and quotes, as credited within the slides.
- Laura Varon's testimony:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_rk8Vi8fzw



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