
Classroom Teaching

Lessons

BELSEN

80

About Classroom Teaching Lessons

Here you will find a suite of lessons that can be used in a number of ways and in a variety of subject areas. The lessons can be taught as 'stand-alone' lessons or combined and they can be used in a range of subject contexts (e.g. Religious Studies, Citizenship or History). The lessons use personal accounts and authentic materials to help students explore the complexity of Bergen-Belsen. They maintain high expectations of student knowledge and understanding and aim to build their capacity to respond to complex ethical and moral circumstances. Each lesson includes a lesson plan, PowerPoint and lesson materials for you to download and use. Guidance on progression and routes through the material are also provided.

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1. What Are The Lessons About?

In summary, the content of the lessons is as follows:

1. **How did Bergen-Belsen become the world of a nightmare?**

In this lesson, students use maps and personal accounts to investigate how Bergen-Belsen changed over time. This is a good starting point as it enables students to understand the context of liberation and British responses to it.

2. **Encountering Bergen-Belsen**

In this lesson, students will explore the experiences of soldiers, medical staff and photographers in the month following liberation. Through engaging with personal accounts, artwork and images students will learn of the huge challenges faced by British relief workers trying to help survivors. Students will reflect upon the traumatic impact these experiences had upon both the survivors and the liberators.

3. **How did the British deal with the perpetrators at Bergen-Belsen?**

In this lesson, students focus on the perpetrators and how they were treated in the immediate aftermath of liberation and in the Bergen-Belsen Trial. Students will develop understanding of how individual perpetrators were treated and make judgements about how far justice was achieved in the lead up to and during the Bergen-Belsen Trial. The lesson materials will allow students to more broadly question the nature of justice.

4. **Antisemitism Then and Now**

In this lesson, through the personal accounts of three Jewish survivors, students will understand the consequences of antisemitism and how it was that Jews from across Europe were sent to Bergen-Belsen. Accounts from the same survivors will enable students to explore contemporary antisemitism and the challenges we still face in a post-Holocaust world.

We chose these content foci in to align with the objectives of *Belsen 80* and, in particular, to ensure that we focus pupils' attention on the experiences of both victims and liberators focus and on the question of justice in the aftermath of genocide. We also aimed not to duplicate what is already available but to provide a fresh focus on the camp and its liberation through our lesson content and task design.

2. Classroom Teaching: Lessons

2.1 Overview: What are they?

The following section contains four lessons which have been especially designed for these School Resources. Each lesson has the following components:

- A Lesson Plan
- A PowerPoint for classroom use
- Accompanying classroom resources

2.2 Who are they for?

These lessons have been written for teachers working in formal education, though it is possible for them to be used in certain informal and extracurricular settings.

Apart from Encountering Bergen-Belsen – which is designed for KS4 and KS5 students – these lessons are generally suitable for use with Key Stage 3 students and above. Teachers must, nevertheless, take into consideration issues related to age appropriateness before using this material with their students. By virtue of its subject matter, these lessons necessarily deal with emotionally traumatic history. Furthermore, some of these lessons – in particular, ‘Encountering Bergen-Belsen’ – contain descriptions of scenes which are especially disturbing.

It is ultimately for the individual teacher to decide whether a given lesson is suitable for a particular age group.

2.3 How do they work?

Each lesson has its own Lesson Plan. All Lesson Plans follow the same format:

- An overview of the lesson’s rationale, aims, and objectives
- A guided walkthrough of the lesson and its activities
- An Additional Information section, containing bespoke pedagogical guidance and essential historical information

Prior to teaching a lesson for the first time, it is recommended that the teacher reads the Lesson Plan in its entirety. This includes the guided walkthrough, and the Additional Information section. This is in order for teachers to familiarise themselves with the lesson’s sequence, have a sense of its underlying pedagogy, and check their own subject knowledge. It is also advised that teachers consult other elements of these Schools Resources – particularly the documents ‘Pedagogical approaches to teaching about Bergen-Belsen’ (Chapter 3 in these resources) and ‘Bergen-Belsen: A Short History for Teachers’ (Chapter 2 in these resources).

Teachers are, of course, free to decide for themselves whether or not they explore the pedagogical thinking and historical context of each lesson. In practice, when delivering any of the lessons, the guided walkthroughs will be the key reference point.

The materials required for each lesson are outlined at the start of the Lesson Plan. All classroom resources are provided in these School Resources, together with a PowerPoint for each lesson.

2.4 Where in the curriculum can they be taught?

It is possible for each lesson to be taught discretely, in a stand-alone fashion, or as a cluster of lessons. It must be emphasised however that none of these lessons can, or should, be used as a substitute for a more extensive programme of study on the Holocaust. Indeed, all of the lessons presume that students will – at some point – have spent some time studying the Holocaust. Moreover, some of these lessons require students to have a degree of existing knowledge and understanding of Bergen-Belsen in order for them to be able to fully engage with the objectives of the lesson. This applies particularly to the lesson ‘Encountering Bergen-Belsen’.

Teachers should therefore give thought to where these lessons will appear in their students’ school experience and how they map onto their broader curriculum. To provide flexibility, all lessons can be

used in various subject settings, though of course different subjects can (and should) bring different disciplinary perspectives to the material.

2.5 When should they be delivered?

These lessons have been created under the rubric of the Belsen 80 project, and as such provide a way for teachers to build on commemoration of this event and broach some of the issues related to Bergen-Belsen in their classrooms. Equally, these lessons can also be used by teachers within a broader scheme of work on the Holocaust and/or Britain's responses to it.

Each lesson has been designed to be delivered within a one hour time slot. Since some teachers will have shorter or longer lessons, the timings in the guided walkthroughs are suggestions only. As a general principle, teachers are recommended to give as much time as is possible for these lessons, in order to fully explore the multiple issues they raise and to allow students to grapple with the challenges they pose.

3. Progression and Routes through the Lessons

3.1 How will I know that my students have made progress?

Teaching and learning about the Holocaust are complex, often transformative, endeavours. This is – at least in part – a reflection of the history being engaged with: a dark, traumatic history of man-made atrocity and horror, through which we confront fundamental questions about the human condition. But the contexts in which students approach the Holocaust also exert a significant influence on the learning process.

It is therefore imperative that teachers and educators give due thought and consideration to matters such as the ages of their students, their cultural and social background, and issues that exist in the local community beyond the school before introducing the Holocaust in the classroom. It is equally important that teachers and educators are clear about what educational encounters their students may have already have with the Holocaust, and are aware of the levels of knowledge and understanding students are likely to possess. Without appreciation of this particular context, one cannot establish the progression in learning students have made.

This has particular significance for the Belsen 80 project, given its conjoining to a specific commemorative moment and its extracurricular dimensions. To be clear, marking Belsen 80 should not stand in for a more focused and extensive educational encounter with the Holocaust. On the contrary, if the educational potential of the Belsen 80 project is to be fully realised, it has to supplement a more comprehensive and sustained formal engagement with the Holocaust. This is absolutely critical for students to be able to progress in their knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust in general, and Bergen-Belsen in particular.

To allow for as much flexibility as possible, these School Resources contain a range of different materials that may be used in multiple settings. However, anyone intending to use these materials **should** do so with due consideration of how participation in Belsen 80 relates to the educational experiences that their students have had and will come to have. For teachers in secondary schools this could mean undertaking a curriculum audit, so as to establish where, when, and how students have learnt or will be learning about the Holocaust. This exercise will, in turn, allow for participation in

Belsen 80 to be duly mapped onto the school curricula – thereby helping to establish what knowledge and understanding students are likely to have prior to the programme, which materials in the School Resources are most suitable to use, and what follow-up work will be needed to consolidate the learning that students undergo through the Belsen 80 project. For those working in tertiary education, it is recommended that they are cognisant of the position of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum and endeavour to establish what types of experiences their students have had. It may also prove fruitful for educators to consider what presence – if any – the Holocaust has in the syllabi of their post-16 students; both for their own subject specialism, and those of other subjects. Teachers and educators alike are also likely to find considerable benefit from familiarising themselves with the findings of recent educational research in this area, particularly those related to [students' knowledge and understanding published in 2016](#) by the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education. Being research-informed in this way can enable teachers and educators suitably to plan for challenges and opportunities that will arise from the Belsen 80 project.

Those who are able to give curriculum time over to the commemorative programme will find the four lessons contained in this Chapter 4 of the School Resources especially useful. This collection of lessons have been designed to address key questions, issues and themes relating to Bergen-Belsen and arising from its history. Since they all presume that students will have some existing knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust, they are not to be used as shortcuts to giving students a general awareness of this history. To allow for flexible use, these lessons can be delivered discretely, as stand-alone units. If so, in selecting which lesson or lessons to deliver, teachers and educators should be mindful of the importance of students' contexts (as noted above) and also be aware that some lessons require students to have an existing level of knowledge of Bergen-Belsen.

Teachers wanting students to secure knowledge foundations will find that the lesson 'How did Bergen-Belsen become the "world of a nightmare"?' of particular use. Indeed, this lesson can provide a good starting point for teachers who are able to give more curriculum time to the project, with the three other lessons – individually, or in combination – flowing from this. For further suggestions, please see the guidance on 'Learning routes' below.

Each of the lessons can also be deployed to reinforce learning which takes place at a whole school or institutional level – either preparing students for assemblies or tutor time activities, or following such exercises. Similarly, progression through encounters with either the four lessons or the extracurricular material can also be gauged through students' chosen Legacy Project.

In light of the multiple dimensions of the Belsen 80 project and the various educational settings in which it can be delivered, these resources do not advance a specific progression model. However, through an appreciation of students' contexts, an awareness of pre-existing levels of knowledge and understanding, an identification of how Belsen 80 sits within students' broader educational experience, and the Legacy Project (See the Commemoration section of the Resources Hub), teachers and educators will be able to identify advances that students make in what they know and understand about the Holocaust and Bergen-Belsen.

3.2 Learning routes for Teachers Able to Devote Two Lessons to Bergen-Belsen

Please note, as indicated above and in the Pedagogic Guidance, the ‘Encountering Bergen-Belsen’ lesson is intended for Key Stage 4 and above. This impacts the progression routes available for Key Stage 3 students.

3.2.1 Option 1: ‘How did Bergen-Belsen become the “world of a nightmare”?’ + ‘Encountering Bergen-Belsen’

The experience of liberating Bergen-Belsen was one which left an indelible mark on those who endured it. In this configuration, students begin by establishing knowledge and understanding of the camp: of how, in effect, it became such an infamous site of atrocity and suffering. From here, students deepen their learning by moving to examine the impact that the sights, sounds, and smells of “liberation” had upon the liberators. In so doing, they become able to better assess and evaluate how the distinctive history of the camp came to so effect the soldiers and relief workers in the immediate weeks after 15 April.

3.2.2 Option 2: ‘How did Bergen-Belsen become the “world of a nightmare”?’ + ‘Antisemitism then and now’

At the time of liberation, some 60,000 people found themselves in Bergen-Belsen. Many were afflicted with serious illness and malnutrition, and thousands would die in the days and weeks ahead. The atrocious conditions of Bergen-Belsen in April 1945 were the result of multiple causes – which, in this calibration, students learn about in the first lesson. Yet beyond these pragmatic reasons is the matter of why, and how, these people had come to be victims in the first place. To understand that, students progress to explore the experiences of three individuals in the years leading up to 1945. Through these people, students are confronted with different forms of antisemitism. In the process, they deepen their awareness of antisemitism as a phenomenon and come to appreciate its complex, multifaceted, nature. Armed with these insights, students are better placed to consider the ways in which past and present prejudice connects and disconnects.

3.3 Learning routes for Teachers Able to Devote Three Lessons to Bergen-Belsen

Please note, as indicated above and in the Pedagogic Guidance, the ‘Encountering Bergen-Belsen’ lesson is intended for Key Stage 4 and above. This impacts the progression routes available for Key Stage 3 students.

3.3.1 Option 3: ‘How did Bergen-Belsen become the “world of a nightmare”?’ + ‘Encountering Bergen-Belsen’ + ‘How did the British deal with the perpetrators at Bergen-Belsen?’

In December 1942, the British government – together with its wartime allies – issued a joint declaration on news of atrocities being committed by the Nazis against Jewish people in occupied Europe. As well as condemning the crimes, this declaration promised retribution at the conclusion of the war. This pledge was made with full awareness that the policies enacted against the Jews were murderous and barbaric. Yet while there is no reason to doubt that the Allies had knowledge of these horrors – in some cases, as early as the summer of 1941 – it was not necessarily the case that this knowledge translated into understanding of the sheer scale and scope of what we now call ‘the Holocaust’. Those aspects only started to emerge in the final months of the Second World War when camps like Bergen-Belsen and others were liberated. Faced with these emerging realities, how did the British react? In this sequence of lessons, students establish knowledge of the state of Bergen-Belsen

in 1945, and move to layering that knowledge with an appreciation of its human impact in ‘encountering’ the camp. With this three-dimensional understanding in place, students are then securely placed to learn about the ways in which the British treated the Nazis who came under their jurisdiction with the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, and evaluate the approaches that the British took. Out of this process, students are able to contemplate challenging issues around crime, punishment, and justice.

3.3.2 Option 4: ‘How did Bergen-Belsen become the “world of a nightmare”?’ + ‘Antisemitism then and now’ + ‘How did the British deal with the perpetrators at Bergen-Belsen?’

How should we respond to man-made atrocities like the Holocaust? Why have we as a species chosen to punish such crimes through judicial means and legal measures? In the face of persecution, suffering, and murder, is it possible to ever “do” justice to (and for) the victims? Such questions are profoundly challenging, but no less valuable for that. To begin to consider them, students require an appreciation of what crimes have been committed, the human impact of these actions, and the ways in which people have tried to respond to these occurrences. In this combination of lessons, students develop their knowledge and understanding of what happened at Bergen-Belsen in conjunction with an appreciation of the human experience of antisemitism, and awareness of the process of retribution. In this way, students are guided not so much towards assessing how British actions were shaped by the ‘encounter’ with Bergen-Belsen at liberation, but instead towards the larger matters of how anyone can (and should) respond to the sorts of crimes conducted during the Holocaust.

5. Assessment

In the lesson materials in Chapter 4 of the School Resources we have not provided explicit guidance for how to assess students. This is due to the fact that schools have a large variety of assessment policies which make use of different criteria and grades, and our resources need to be applicable to all UK schools. As we could not produce assessment guidance that would suit all these contexts, we have chosen to leave space for schools to determine their own means of assessment in line with their policies and school culture.



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