
Now we know about the Holocaust, so what?

Young people and meaning making

Now we know about the Holocaust, so what?

Making space for your students to reflect on their learning at the end of a Scheme of Learning on the Holocaust.

Introduction

How do we help young people grapple with all they have encountered in learning about the Holocaust? How do we support students to make sense of their new knowledge and in their efforts to make meaning?

This document offers guidance on an approach (with accompanying illustrative material) you might employ to support students embark on a reflective journey as they come to the end of a Scheme of Learning on the Holocaust.

With an appreciation of the needs of your students, the Scheme of Learning you have worked through and your professional context, this guidance is intended to help you draw out reflective and reflexive thinking from your students.

This guidance shares ideas on how you might support students assimilate their newfound knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust, and wrestle with some of the challenging questions we are left with. Such questions might stimulate discussion of a moral or ethical nature and explore ideas around what it means to be human. The materials included in this guidance illustrate ways to stimulate such conversations and offer an approach that encourages student reflection. This can support students as they continue a journey learning about the Holocaust and should be regarded as a process rather than an end point. Due to the nature of the conversations, it will be important to remind students of the need to respect each other and the historical evidence.

Key Information

- This approach is intended for Year 9 students and above.
- Prior study of the Holocaust is essential. This approach is to be taken at the end of a Scheme of Learning on the Holocaust.
- You may choose to use the following illustrative materials featured in the CPD session, or select your own materials related to your Scheme of Learning and the needs of your students.

Two approaches

1. What do I know and what might this mean for me?

This activity is about students connecting back to things they have learned through your Scheme of Learning and considering the impact the lessons have had on them and what questions remain. This section suggests an approach you can take using images from your own Scheme of Learning.

The aim of this activity is to create a space for your students to reflect on some of the things they have encountered during their lessons and consider what meaning, if any, can be made from anything they have studied.

1. In small groups, students are given a set of image cards, each showing an image related to one of the lessons in your Scheme of Learning. (We use images from our Core lessons, but you can replace these to reflect any materials you may have used)
2. Students choose any one image and share ideas about what this means within their group.
3. Students feedback ideas to the rest of the class

To help support some students, you may wish to use the following prompt questions.

1. What can you remember about this image?
2. Why is it important that people should know about the story it tells?
3. What might these stories mean for us today?

This approach is designed to create a space to do two things: firstly, to remind students of aspects of the Holocaust they have encountered during the Scheme of Learning, and secondly, to allow a space to consider what universal meanings might be made.

Students work in small groups to share responses and thoughts stimulated by images selected from previous lessons, and then subsequently share some of these with the rest of the class. That there is no pre-determined outcome is key to this approach: students are given the autonomy to express insights they are developing. This does not suggest that all meanings are valid or equally justifiable. Students must always have respect for the historical evidence.

2. Struggling to make meaning: Examples from survivors

After your students have reflected on their learning about the Holocaust, you can now start to explore some of the different responses of survivors who suffered under the Nazi regime.

You may use stimuli of your choice for this exercise with your students, but three are included here as 'illustrative materials' we have chosen to use with teachers in a CPD session. We consider the responses of Holocaust survivors Primo Levi and Samuel Bak, and of Charlotte Delbo, a non-Jewish survivor of Nazi persecution. These three were not chosen because they are 'correct' responses, but as stimuli that can prompt deep thinking.

It is recommended that you allow students to come to their own conclusions by asking open questions and asking them to reflect on the stimulus you have shared. Then, bring these ideas into conversation with each other in a group discussion. It is important that this has the tone of an open enquiry, where personal reflections are valued. An exploratory conversation like this will enable your students to examine a range of responses and develop their own meanings. This is the approach modelled in the "*Now we know about the Holocaust, so what? Young people and meaning making*" CPD session. There are also prompt questions in the 'illustrative materials' that can help you to guide discussion and promote student reflection.

As this exercise can be interdisciplinary, it is strongly recommended you engage with colleagues in your school to reflect on the learning that students have already undertaken. If a conversation about Primo Levi's poem *Shema*, for example, can discuss the authors' literary devices such as the use of enjambement* and repetition, it will result in a richer understanding of the poem's meaning and intent. Additionally, several of the illustrative materials reference elements of Judaism, so a developed understanding of Jewish religion will allow a deeper engagement with the material.

*Poetic term for the continuation from one line to the next.

The ongoing journey and search for meaning

At the end of the CPD session, *Now we know about the Holocaust, so what? Young people and meaning making*, we share Leon Greenman's message for future generations. This touches on some of the meanings Leon made having survived the Holocaust himself. He offers some heartfelt advice which one might call 'Leon's laws'. We use this in our CPD session to encourage consideration of the following:

- What is Leon trying to say?
- Does what he said in 1995 (when the interview took place) resonate with issues today?
- Do you agree with Leon that these principles are important?
- What challenges might there be in trying to live out these exhortations?
- What issues might still be unresolved?

Each of our previous Core CPD modules tells a part of Leon's story and to end our session reflecting on the meanings Leon made from the Holocaust is fitting. However, this again, is only an illustration of a way in which you might end a sequence of lessons. Perhaps your class has

followed the story of another survivor or the experiences of a group of people. Perhaps the Scheme of Learning you have taught doesn't include all the lesson material we have provided over the last few weeks.

We invite you to complete a Scheme of Learning on the Holocaust not with a neat ending or settled conclusions but by keeping opportunity for reflection open and encouraging students to grapple with questions with which the Holocaust leave us all. Some questions could be:

- Having learnt about the Holocaust and considered the struggle of others to find meaning, what meaning do you feel you can make from the Holocaust?
- What key things will you take away from having learnt about the Holocaust?
- What would be three things you would tell others are important principles to live by?

Acknowledgements

Core CPD session and Guidance Document developed by Ruth-Anne Lenga, Corey Soper, Tom Haward, Emma O'Brien 2023.

Illustrative Materials developed by Corey Soper 2023

With thanks to Sam Hunt, Jonathan Kennedy, Charlotte Lane, Andy Lawrence.

Please see Illustrative Materials for credits.

Images and other sources are attributed where possible and we are keen to ensure we have credited all copyright holders, but if there has been an oversight on our part, please contact us at holocaust@ucl.ac.uk

UCL Centre for Holocaust Education, IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society, University College London, Gower Street, London, WC1H 0AL

Tel: +44(0)20 7612 6437 **email:** holocaust@ucl.ac.uk **web:** www.ucl.ac.uk/holocaust-education

UCL's Centre for Holocaust Education is jointly funded by Pears Foundation and the Department for Education.

