

## Empowering Students through The Holocaust – VALA Conference June 2018

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### Overview

- Why study the Holocaust
- The JHC Education Program
- Curriculum Links
- Suggested Resources
- Running a Remembrance Ceremony
- VCAL Outcomes Met
- VCAL Curriculum
- Suggested classroom activities

## Why study the Holocaust?

### Relevance - Connections

- The only difference between people from the Holocaust and people from today is time. These are stories about real people.
- The murder of innocents is always wrong.
- We can link feelings of moral clarity with recent events

### Memory

- Preserving the memory of all innocent victims of racial crimes
- Does not allow hatred to win
- Demonstrates the strength of the human spirit – hope, hardship, there is no shame in being you.

### Elements of the Holocaust Still Exist Today

- Antisemitism – the longest hatred. Jewish establishments in Australia today must have security. Why?
- Racism – prejudging, assuming – the dangers associated – leads to stereotypes, misunderstanding people
- Free speech vs hate speech – a confusing thing. Section 18C in the Racial Discrimination Act - offences are hard to substantiate. The difference between vulgarity and poor taste.
- Propaganda – is everywhere! And was used very effectively leading up to and during the war
- Other genocides – Sadly the Holocaust was not the first and has not been the last.

### Truth

**The Holocaust is the best documented genocide in history** – Evidence was created by the Nazi's themselves. The Jewish Holocaust Centre has many artefacts: reports/documents/diaries/letters/photos/posters displayed in the museum.

### Australia is a multicultural Country – understanding what diversity really means – the opposite of Nazi Germany

- We understand diversity here in Australia because it is all around us. Freedom of religious expression is a cultural norm. According to the 2016 Census – 34.4% of people have both parents born overseas
- Exploring: What is diversity? What is race? What is Racism? How many races are there? What is a stereotype? What is Jewish?

### The implication of words – Relates quite powerfully to bullying

- Exploring: Language - The Holocaust in some ways began with words - name calling. Jewish pigs, cancers, bacteria, rats, mice, vermin.
- Later, specific words were chosen to mask truth – Einsatzgruppen, Sonderkommando, the Final Solution.

## Refugees - Australia's response

- Being a refugee after the war – living in DP camps. No education, no home, no money, no family, no trade, no language, culturally so different, trauma from the war....
- How did Holocaust survivors come to Australia? What was it like being a new comer?
- They were looking for somewhere permanent as far away from Europe as possible. Most became loyal, grateful permanent citizens.

## Melbourne Jewish Community - Resilience

- There are only 100,000 Jewish people Australia wide
- Jewish people make up 0.2% of the world population but are thriving just like before the war. Significant contributions in science, medicine, technology, arts, music and literature just to name a few.
- This helps us understand the spirit of these survivors – many got married in DP camps. Ready to start life as quickly as possible. Survivor Willy Lerner started a hairdressing business in Dachau for the American soldiers. Ambition...move on...resilience...
- The Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) was established in 1984 – a spiritual memorial and a physical memorial. Also, a learning centre – where, I'm proud to say 21,000 students visit every year.

## The JHC Education Program

Pedagogy – An age appropriate multi-disciplinary approach with the Yad Vashem philosophy of safely in and safely out: film, interactive discussion, museum tour, testimony, encouraged to ask questions, reflection and candle lighting.

**Goals – The JHC mission statement:** *We consider the finest memorial to all victims of racist policies to be an educational program which aims to combat anti-Semitism, racism and prejudice in the community and foster understanding between people.* The same mission statement since 1984.

**Key Messages – here are just a few examples:**

### Core Messages

- Remember the past, change the future.
- We are all members of the human race.

### Universal Messages

- Individuals can make a difference
- Being a bystander is not being neutral
- Democracy must never be taken for granted
- Antisemitism is an irrational form of prejudice

### Holocaust Lessons

- Before the war there was a vibrant Jewish community in Europe contributing to all facets of European life
- In Nazi ideology some people were not considered worthy of life
- The murder of the Jews happened in a variety of ways
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide were established in response to the events in the Holocaust. Nonetheless, genocide and human rights abuses continue to this day.

## Curriculum Links

- The values that are important to a democratic and multicultural society
- The dangers of prejudice, intolerance and racism
- Social and personal responsibility
- Resilience and hope
- Literacy skills: Literature, Film, Art, Music
- Historical skills
  - Chronology, Terms and Concepts
  - Analysis and use of sources
  - Perspectives and interpretations

## Suggested Resources

- JHC Library – Public
- Links – ABC splash - digibooks
- Yad Vashem website: Video toolbox, online exhibitions
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website
- JHC Website and YouTube
- JHC StoryPod App

## Application in VCAL

### Literacy

#### Texts:

- Night by Elie Wiesel
- Alexander Altmann by Suzy Zail
- Maus by Art Spiegelman
- Sarah's Key by Tatiana de Rosnay
- The Zookeeper's Wife by Diane Ackerman
- The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank
- The Boy in the Wooden Box by Leon Leyson
- I Am Sasha by Anita Selzer
- The Tattooist of Auschwitz by Heather Morris

#### Films as Text:

- Sarah's Key
- The Round Up
- Schindler's List
- The Pianist
- Defiance
- The Book Thief
- Escape from Sobibor

#### PDS

- Unit on Leadership using the examples of the Righteous Among the Nations such as Oskar Schindler or Raoul Wallenberg
- Organising a Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony
- Organising Tolerance activities with younger students
- Creating a memorial
- Overcoming Obstacles
- Communication and organisational skills

#### WRS

- Harassment
- Discrimination, particularly in the workplace

## Why a Ceremony?

- Students are used to ceremonies and can relate to them.
- To honour the memory of the 6 million Jewish people who perished in the period of the Holocaust by creating a remembrance event.
- Students will remember a ceremony that they have been actively involved in long after they have left school.
- After the ceremony, students feel empowered and want to take action.
- The special guests from the Jewish Community and local MPs or the Mayor add to the importance of the event for students.
- To make the ceremony a part of the school culture with the expectation that it is run by the VCAL students every year.
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## Invite important Guests

- One of the important tips I learnt from a VCAL Conference years ago was to ask everyone and eventually someone will say 'yes'. Contact your local Members of Parliament and invite them to your ceremony or the Mayor.
- Contact the Jewish Holocaust Centre and Courage to Care Victoria. Both of their contact details are available from their websites. There will be volunteers at these associations who will attend your ceremony and speak, if requested and given notice.
- Contact a Jewish School such as Mount Scopus Memorial College.

## Format of a Ceremony

A wide range of suggestions for ceremonies is available at:

- <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/ceremonies/index.asp> and <http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor/organize>

### Introduction:

- Firstly, there would be an **introduction** explaining the importance of this ceremony and the significance of the date chosen. The students would also arrange for a guest speaker to address the audience.

### Body:

- The body of ceremony can take any format. Include poems, speeches from special guests and last year, one of our Year 12 VCAL students wrote and recited the poem herself.
- At Alkira Secondary College there is the candle lighting part of the ceremony. The flame is passed from candle to candle and each student reads out the name of someone who perished or lived through the Holocaust. The candle's flame in Jewish Tradition symbolises the human soul.
- Most of the six million Jews who were murdered during the Holocaust have not yet been identified. One important teaching from Yad Vashem was the importance of giving these victims of the Holocaust a name and therefore an identity. Each student involved in the ceremony should be responsible for investigating a victim and mentioning their name during this part of the ceremony.
- A list of names is available at:

<http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor/years/2013/namesreading/namesreading.pdf> or a name or place can be searched using <http://db.yadvashem.org/names/search.html?language=en>

- One minute of silence is observed. After the silence, the audience is prompted to say, "we will remember them".

## Conclusion

A student will read the final reflection.

Suggested reflections are:

- *Holocaust* by Barbara Sonek
- *We are the Children* by Rudi Raab
- *Exodus* by Benjamin Fondane
- Excerpt from *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank
- *Don't They Know The World Stopped Breathing* Anonymous
- *We Do Not Understand* by Rabbi Jill Hausman

Special guests at the end of the ceremony are invited to sign the guest book, used every year.

## Student Speech - Ethan

*When asked the question – “How did taking part in this ceremony effect you?” my answer is this. It has given me the chance to take all the opportunities that have opened up before me, cherish everything I have in life, no matter how big or small. It has made me realise, the problems we face today are miniscule in comparison to those faced by Jews seventy years ago and that I should never take anything for granted...*

*We have to avoid becoming bystanders and stand up for injustice, no matter how distant these conflicts are from us.*

Link to the 2015 Ceremony - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHI2B533iXo> (6:28 candle lighting) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CTGNscq3A8> (26:31)

## Student Feedback

- “I promise not to allow our people to be murdered again and I will always fight for what is right for our human race.” – Kate
- “Every single one of those 6 million people had the right to live, but they never got the opportunity to do so. We need to love everyone for who they are.” Alysha
- “Never let something bad happen without doing something about it. One voice is all it takes.” - Kyle

## Units of VCAL Work



Tolerance Activity  
North Primary School



PDS Leadership



Holocaust  
Ceremony for VCA

## Hands on/Applied Activities

1. AIM: To present the students with some **moral dilemmas**, to ascertain their own reactions and why.

- Using the information from the lesson on the following website - <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/lul/Lesson%2013/lesson13.html>. Make predictions about the outcomes of the scenarios presented. Find out the actual outcomes.
- Thinking About Prejudice worksheet available from: <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/holocaust/printable/38995.html>

2. AIM: To use **visual material** to generate discussion about the holocaust. Use photographs, U-Tube footage, propaganda and art.

- “A Childhood Ensnared in Tears” from [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson\\_plans/chava\\_wolf.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson_plans/chava_wolf.asp)
- Photographs from <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/gallery.php?ModuleId=10006237&MediaType=ph>
- Propaganda from <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/gallery.php?ModuleId=10005202&MediaType=ph> and [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/nazi\\_propaganda\\_gallery.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/nazi_propaganda_gallery.shtml) – including persuasive techniques, indoctrination, fake facts and conspiracy theories. These all have important lessons for students on how to filter information to find the truth.

3. AIM: To **demonstrate why** people believed Adolf Hitler, the messages of the Nazi Party and the power of suggestion because they were given by people of authority.

- This activity is available from: <http://teacherlessonplanwarehouse.com/products/book-6-world-war-ii/> and is called the Nazi Telephone Game.
- Basically it works like Chinese Whispers. The students are advised that they will all receive a reward if the message gets from one end of the line to the other correctly. Make certain that the messages used are complex sentences of about 10 words and are Nazi propaganda.

## Sources

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, for educators – United Kingdom

<http://www.hmd.org.uk/content/for-educators>

- Classroom activities
- Holocaust Memorial Day
- Postcard Project
- Lessons on Discrimination
- School Assemblies
- Testimonies
- Art

## For information on Study Grants:

**The Study Grants – held in Dec/January each year**

Please contact:

Nicole Brittain,

Grant Manager,

Gandel Philanthropy

8564 1282

[nicole\\_brittain@gandelphilanthropy.org.au](mailto:nicole_brittain@gandelphilanthropy.org.au)

Closing Date for 2018/19 is Friday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, 2018.