



# Teachers' Notes

## Holocaust Unit

### Commemoration

#### Before the Lesson Begins

- Create a list of acceptable events to commemorate (optional).
- Read through these notes and decide what format the end project will take

#### Resources not provided

- Pens and paper
- Sheets of sugar paper

#### Lesson Overview

The focus of this lesson is commemoration, why it is important and if it helps us learn from the past.

#### Introduction

#### Discussion Guidance

1. Commemoration is a primary way in which future generations appreciate & respect the importance of past events. Simply put, it is when we remember and think about an event from the past.
2. Some events in history change the way people act, think and/or the course of the future. These events can be positive or negative (or a mixture of both). In a world that moves so fast it is important to sometimes stop & look back on events that have had an impact on the world and show respect for our history. By being reminded of what has past, we learn anew the lessons of history.
3. Commemoration is particularly important when it comes to issues like the Holocaust, as remembering, understanding and respecting this atrocity will help create a respectful society. By remembering & learning we help to ensure such atrocities are not committed again.

**NB:** Other examples of events that we commemorate are: 9/11, WW1, VE Day, VJ Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Individuals also commemorate smaller events. more personal to them; e.g. fans of Marilyn Monroe or Kurt Cobain will commemorate the anniversary of their death.

# Section 1: Is Commemoration Enough?

## Discussion Guidance

1. Annual commemorative days are important; they ensure an event will never be forgotten. However, this 'routine' commemoration can also create a 'tick box' culture, where people commemorate because they feel they have to rather than because they feel inspired to. This can often result in a lack of appreciation of the importance of the day itself.
2. It's important to think on the past - and such thoughts are never meaningless - but they create a resonance within wider society if they inspire action too. Constant action creates long-term awareness and learning; actions speak louder than words.
3. It's difficult to achieve this state, as people get bored hearing repetitive messages – however, by being creative and innovative, we can make these messages relevant all year round and to people of all ages. We can also take new approaches to past events as society evolves - for example exploring the genocide of gay people during WWII - which allow a new angle to be explored.

## The Paperclips Project

The Paper Clips Project was the brainchild of teachers, David Smith and Sandra Roberts, & the 8th Grade students from at Whitwell Middle School. Whitwell, Tennessee. Spearheaded by Principal Linda Hooper, it started in 1998 as a simple commemoration project to educate about other cultures and evolved into one that gained worldwide attention. Inspired by Norwegians who wore paperclips on their lapels as a mark of resistance to Nazi Germany, Hooper & her students decided to collect paperclips. They aimed to simultaneously create a memorial and a visual reference to allow students to quantify the lives lost in the Holocaust. At last count, over 30 million paper clips had been received. Paper Clips, an Emmy nominated documentary film about the project, was released in 2004 by Miramax Films. A permanent memorial was established in a genuine cattle cart used to transport Jewish people to concentration camps. The school runs tours of their memorial for visiting schools as part of their ongoing mission to educate young people about the dangers of prejudice.

## One Clip at a Time

'One Clip at a Time is a nonprofit organization based in Chattanooga, Tennessee that has created an engaging and interactive service learning program and accompanying educator's kit designed to motivate and empower students in 5th Grade and above. The movement is an outgrowth of the "Paper Clips Project", which brought worldwide attention to Whitwell, Tennessee after it was captured in the award-winning film, Paper Clips. Throughout the course of the program, students learn the history of the tragedy of the Holocaust and develop an awareness of the impact it had on the world. Students then discover ways to make positive changes in their own classrooms and communities and are encouraged to continually make a difference.'

# Section 2: Our Action and Commemoration

## Activity Guidance

The timing, structure and length of this project must be decided by you, the teacher, according to all the variable factors of your own class.

Additionally, you must decide upon how the class will present their projects; in a school or year assembly for example. The overall format of the activity should be roughly as follows:

- Students choose a topic
- Clear topic with Teacher
- Decide & work on the commemoration procedure (they must think of something tangible to present AND a hypothetical way to continue the project on a longer scale)
- Presentation – Either in class/ in assembly/ to a younger year.
- Continuation of class/individual project on a longer time scale (if applicable)

Explain to class it is up to them, as the younger generation, to think of new and innovative ways to remember the past to prevent any lessons that could be learned from the event being lost by concentrating solely on ceremony – which can make us simply 'go through the motions' rather than engaging with the topic.

## Project Guidance

- The point of this project is to help the students grasp the importance of **on-going** commemoration. This state of 'on-going commemoration' can be hypothetical or something they put into practice, depending on your time constraints. Alternatively, the class could vote from all the proposals of the class to choose one student's project to implement as an on-going class project (ie. Over the course of a term or year, etc)
- They can commemorate in any method they think is suitable – the more creative the better (i.e. art, creative writing, rap, drama etc). Alternatively, you can set the medium and make a list of choices for the students to choose their events from.
- Their project must include **action** as well **commemoration**, in order to allow the students a sense of achievement and activism.