



# Teachers' Notes

## Holocaust Unit

### Victims

#### Before the Lesson Begins

- Print out copies of Resource A

#### Resources Not Provided

- Pens
- Paper

#### Lesson Overview

The focus of this lesson is to allow students to experience and learn from Survivors' testimonies.

#### Discussion Guidance

Many people will have different connotations of the word Holocaust but the point that we make WWII, millions and millions of people were persecuted, and 11 million of those individuals were murdered as a result of the Nazi regime. The scale of this genocide is so vast that it's easy to forget that it was 11 million individuals who were murdered, each with a story and an emotional trauma. This lesson aims to allow students to appreciate the experience of the individual - something which we believe is a crucial element in understanding and empathising with both the instantaneous and long term effects of the Holocaust - and prejudice in general.

## Section 1: The Individual

**NB:** Learning from Survivors is a crucial part of Holocaust education. Resource A is a video made up of different survivor testimonies, with break points marked by discussion questions.

As you reach these break-points, pause the film and discuss the questions with the students. The point of these questions is to explore the feelings of the students and to build upon their ability to empathise. Some students will find this harder than others, and it is important to coax rather than push students to share their emotions with the class. If need be, you may allow the students to process these questions in silence, but do attempt a discussion for the most part.

# Section 2: Reaching Out

## Activity Guidance

The purpose of this activity is to allow the students to express their reactions in a productive and personal manner, by making contact with the individuals they watched. Please ensure you read the letters to ensure they are appropriate, and that you do send the letters to the survivors as they are aware of the usage of their testimonies and delighted at the prospect of receiving mail. Please also photocopy them, sending the original to the survivor and give the copy back to the students as a reminder of the lesson.

**NB:** Please do not share survivors' addresses with the class.

At the end of the lesson remind the students that the majority of the survivors they saw today were survivors of Auschwitz-Birkenau. It is worth noting that Auschwitz-Birkenau was not the Holocaust; it was only part of it. What we mean by that is that it was one camp out of over 40,000 institutions of death and to focus on just one death camp gives us a skewed view of the period. Millions of people who were murdered or victimised never even saw a camp and had a very different experience. Additionally it is important to remember that the victims of the Holocaust, although mainly Jewish, were from a variety of different backgrounds, such as disabled people, gay people and people of Gypsy descent. The experience of every victim is important.

