

Teachers' Notes

Activity 10: Resistance and Remembrance



TOPIC

Resistance to the Holocaust
Holocaust Memorials and Remembrance

AGE GROUP

Primarily aimed at Years 7-11 (ages 12-16)
Progression Steps 4 and 5

Teachers may also consider adapting the material for Years 4-6 (ages 9-11)
Progression Step 3

LENGTH

1-2 hours

AREAS OF LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE

Expressive Arts
Health and Well-being
Humanities
Languages, Literacy and Communication

DESCRIPTION

This activity provides an opportunity for students to deepen their knowledge of the Holocaust through an exploration of different acts of Jewish resistance. Students will learn that resistance during the Holocaust took many forms, including both physical and spiritual resistance. By examining different historical resources and personal stories, students will gain a more nuanced view of resistance during the Holocaust and consider the scope for individuals to stand up in defence of fundamental human rights and human dignity. This in turn aims to encourage students to reflect on their own obligations in contemporary society.

Students will also consider how societies can meaningfully remember and honour those individuals, families and communities affected by the devastation of the Holocaust. The activity includes an analysis of a memorial in Wales and encourages students to design their own Holocaust memorial or other act of remembrance, with a focus on the historical connections to the people and places of Wales.

This activity forms a natural conclusion to the series of JHASW/CHIDC Holocaust resources. In particular, it is recommended that this Activity be completed after students have first studied Activities 5-9* (which cover the history of the evolution of the Holocaust, Britain's role, the legacy of loss and issues of responsibility). These earlier Activities provide essential context and combine with this Activity to emphasise the complexities of the moral choices which ordinary people faced during the Holocaust.

Teachers may also consider using some of the material in this activity for teaching a younger age group, as an extension to their study of Activity 4, relating to Jewish Life in Europe Pre-War.

The activity can be split easily into two sessions where necessary – Tasks 1-3 can be covered in the first session and Tasks 4 and 5 can be completed in a second session.

* A full list of activities can be found at the end of this document.



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LEARNING AIMS

As a result of completing this activity, students will:

- Reflect on the concept of resistance during the Holocaust.
- Learn about some of the various forms of Jewish resistance undertaken in different contexts during the Holocaust.
- Broaden their understanding of how 'ordinary' people reacted and responded to the extraordinary circumstances in which they found themselves and extend student awareness of Jewish agency during the Holocaust.
- Reflect on the human impact of the Holocaust and learn about the connection to Wales through the video testimony of a Kindertransport refugee and other historical sources
- Be introduced to the issue of how and why society remembers the Holocaust and consider how to develop a new memorial or form of Holocaust remembrance for Wales.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Whiteboard/markers, projector, computer to listen to testimony.

Consider

Inform students that they are going to consider and discuss the idea of 'resistance' in the context of the Holocaust and World War 2.

On the board, draw a mind map and ask the class for words that automatically come to mind when thinking about the general concept of resistance. You may want to ask the students questions such as:

- What does the word mean?
- What is the goal or purpose of resistance?

The Cambridge Dictionary online defines 'resistance' as:

the act of fighting against something that is attacking you, or refusing to accept something:

- *Resistance to disease*
- *Government troops offered no resistance (to the rebels).*



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Consider continued

- *There's a lot of resistance (= opposition) to the idea of a united Europe.*¹

On the student worksheet, ask the students to write down examples of 'resistance' from their own experience, books, films, or history (**Task 1**).

Students might mention physical resistance, civil disobedience, or political or activist resistance. If necessary, remind the class that although we often think of resistance as a physical struggle (and while there were many examples of armed resistance by Jews during the Holocaust), the act of resistance can take many forms.

Collect

Tell students that they will now look at three examples of resistance to the Holocaust.

Ask the students to read the biography for Inge Hack and watch a short video, where Inge describes how two Jewish women (amongst others) helped her escape Nazi Germany on a Kindertransport.

Then, working in groups/pairs, ask the students to answer the questions on the student worksheet (**Task 2**).

Students may need to refer to **Handout 1**, which provides a glossary of key terms, to help with the tasks on the worksheet.

Encourage the students to reflect on the following:

- The practical arrangements relating to the organisation of the Kindertransport, or the care of the refugee children were not managed by the British government. The Kindertransport depended on the initiative of a wide range of organisations and individuals, almost all of whom were volunteers – such as Edith Gordon.
- The UK government's policy at the time was that Kindertransport children needed a 'sponsor' in the UK before they were permitted entry (to guarantee that their stay would be temporary and that the children would not, therefore, become a supposed burden on the state).

¹ Collins Online Dictionary, *resistance*, n. (2022) <<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/resistance>> [accessed 25 October 2022].

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Collect continued

- There may well have been some obstacles to Edith Gordon's agreeing to be a sponsor for Inge (e.g., Edith's age relative to Inge's age, the cost of caring for a child, the uncertainty of how long the arrangement would last, etc.). However, the photographic and video evidence provided suggests that warmth and kindness were at the heart of Edith Gordon's decision to care for Inge.
- The actions of Erica's mother and Edith Gordon do not necessarily conform to conventional ideas of 'resistance'. However, had they not acted in the way they did, Inge Hack may not have survived the Holocaust. Their actions highlight the importance of the choices made by individuals in response to humanitarian crises.

Next, ask students to read **Handout 2**, which tells the story of Irma Lauscher and her actions while imprisoned in the Theresienstadt Ghetto.

Then, working in pairs, ask the students to answer the questions on the student worksheet (**Task 3**).

Encourage students to understand:

- Irma's actions were an example of spiritual resistance. This term refers to attempts by individuals to maintain humanity and dignity in the face of efforts to destroy them.
- During the Holocaust, countless Jews—whether in ghettos, concentration camps, or in hiding—engaged in resistance by refusing to allow their spirit to be broken even in profoundly dehumanizing conditions. Cultural and educational activities, secret archives, and clandestine religious observances all reaffirmed a Jewish sense of community, history, and civilization in the face of physical and spiritual annihilation. The Terezín tree is a powerful example of such resistance – and the potential for spiritual resistance to sustain morale and hope.
- Seeds from the Terezín tree have been planted as Holocaust memorials in other parts of the world – including at the UK's National Holocaust Centre in Nottinghamshire. More information about the Terezín tree can be found here: <https://www.holocaust.org.uk/the-terezin-tree>.

Next, ask students to read the information on the worksheet relating to the **X Troop** and then, working in pairs, ask the students to answer the questions that follow (**Task 4**).

The X Troop is an example of armed Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. Many students may be unaware of this elite group, its role in World War 2 and its connection to Wales. In general, the history of this type of Jewish resistance has been marginalised, which has arguably contributed to the false perception that the European Jews were passive in the face of Nazi oppression. In fact, given the immense obstacles faced by Jews at the time, the scale of Jewish resistance is extraordinary. For example, Jews fought the Germans in five of the largest ghettos in eastern Europe; there were Jewish rebellions in the killing centres of Treblinka, Sobibór and Auschwitz; and dozens of Jewish paramilitary groups operated in the forests of eastern Poland, Lithuania and Belarus.

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Collect continued

By analysing the photograph of the memorial to the X Troop, students have an opportunity to think about the purpose and effect of memorials in general.

Students may be encouraged to consider that:

- The purpose of memorials may be, for example - to remember individuals and communities, to mourn the loss of so many lives, to celebrate those who saved lives, to honour the memory of what was lost, to rehumanise victims, to honour those who survived, to educate, to prompt reflection and contemplate the obligations of the living.
- Memorials can shape future generations' understanding of history.
- When creating memorials, artists and communities make choices about what aspects of a particular history are worth remembering and what parts to leave out. For example, it is notable that although a large number of the X Troop were Jewish refugees, the word 'Jewish' does not appear on the memorial and there is no mention of the context of the Holocaust. This may have been to remember 'all members', be they Jewish or non-Jewish. However, students may consider that there were other ways to achieve this aim, while still recognising the contribution of the troop's Jewish fighters.

Some students may spot that amongst the wooden Christian crosses at the base of the memorial of the X Troop, there is also a Royal British Legion Remembrance Tribute Star of David, in honour of the Jewish members of the Troop.²

Construct

Ask the students to design and create their own memorial to the Holocaust or another form of Holocaust remembrance, which has a specific connection to the people and places of Wales (**Task 5**). The student worksheet contains guidance for the students on how to plan their designs. They may work in pairs or groups if they choose.

Communicate

Ask the students to share their memorial designs or acts of remembrance with a friend, other students or a member of their family and ask for reflections on their work from the audience. Ask them to write down some notes or keywords that capture these reflections.

2

Royal British Legion, *Remembrance Tribute Star of David* <<https://www.poppymshop.org.uk/products/remembrance-tribute-star-of-david>> [accessed 04 October 2022].



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Appendices

1. Handout 1: Glossary.
2. Handout 2: The Terezín Tree.
3. Handout 3: Inge Hack - Interview transcriptions.
4. Handout 4: Student Worksheet.

List of Activities

- Activity 1: Kindertransport and Child Refugees in Wales: Part 1 - Driving Forces.
- Activity 2: Kindertransport and Child Refugees in Wales: Part 2 - The Journey.
- Activity 3: Kindertransport and Child Refugees in Wales: Part 3 - Arrival in Wales.
- Activity 4: Jewish Life in Pre-War Europe – Identity, Diversity and Commonality.
- Activity 5: The Legal Effect: How Laws can Persecute or Protect.
- Activity 6: Prejudice and Propaganda.
- Activity 7: Britain and the Legacy of Loss - Part 1.
- Activity 8: Britain and the Legacy of Loss - Part 2.
- Activity 9: Re-thinking Responsibility.
- Activity 10: Resistance and Remembrance.

Cover Image

Inge and Edith Gordon. Image from Inge Hack's interview from the archive of the USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education, 1997. For more information: <http://sfi.usc.edu/>.

