



## **Transition Year Module in Holocaust Studies**

### **1. Module Outline**

This course seeks to examine how antisemitism was promoted in Europe and normalised over time. Identifying the humanity of victims of the Holocaust is a crucial part of the course. The study of the Holocaust seeks to deepen student understanding and empathy, promoting reflection and moral consciousness, and building on civic values and awareness of human rights.

The aim of Transition Year (TY) is to promote the personal, social, educational and vocational development of students and to prepare them for their role as autonomous, participative, and responsible members of society. Students participate in learning strategies which are active and experiential and which help them to develop a range of transferable critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills.<sup>1</sup> A key to a successful TY programme is using a wide range of learning, teaching and assessment methodologies and activities.

#### **1. Building in flexibility for schools**

The time allocated to TY history related modules varies in schools depending on their devised programme. The NCCA Guidelines<sup>2</sup> have informed the planning of this module. However, with the demands of the various aspects of the TY programme, there is a need for flexibility to consider the available number of lessons, time for independent learning, class time and project work. With this in mind, the design of this course provides flexibility for teachers to focus on certain aspects in greater detail than others, depending on the time available and the students' level of interest and engagement.

Full details on how this course uses resources from the existing HETI *Holocaust Studies for Senior Students* and other web-based resources are contained under Accessing Resources later.

Each of the module's ten Units of learning emphasises core learning, and if time permits, for extended learning. In every Unit, there is ample material in the core learning to cover in the minimum of two lessons. In providing autonomy for schools the TY module in Holocaust Studies can be adapted to suit individual school capacity, student interest and most crucially, the time allocated on the TY timetable. Teachers have significant autonomy in deciding how to plan, sequence and deliver teaching, learning and assessment to meet the differentiated needs and interests of their students. When planning for delivery in the classroom teachers should consider the sensitive nature of much of the material and how the students may respond or be able to engage with the content.

Curriculum content is a matter for selection and adaptation by the individual school having regard to the TY Guidelines, the requirements of students and the views of parents/guardians. Content and

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<sup>1</sup>

Transition Year Guidelines [https://ncca.ie/media/2512/ty\\_transition\\_year\\_school\\_guidelines.pdf](https://ncca.ie/media/2512/ty_transition_year_school_guidelines.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://ncca.ie/en/resources/ty\\_transition\\_year\\_school\\_guidelines/](https://ncca.ie/en/resources/ty_transition_year_school_guidelines/)

methodology should be decided upon in the light of the ability levels and needs of the particular students.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Learning activities

- Much of the huge bank of pre-existing resource material that HETI has produced will be drawn on in the course of delivering this module. So too will many of the methodologies contained in its resource packs, Holocaust timeline and other supports.
- With a particular focus on TY, these will be augmented where possible with methodologies which promote opinion forming, reflection, experiential and self-directed learning by students.
- Students should have opportunities for engagement with sources, undertake case studies (e.g. of the Holocaust in one European country), visit to a museum, use of ICT and archives, completion of an essay or an oral presentation, create a piece of work that symbolises the Holocaust (art, creative writing, drama sketch, poetry, monument design...), engage with a visiting speaker, etc.

## 3. Topics (also referred to as **Units of Learning**):

1. Pre-war Jewish life and the impact of Nazi antisemitism
2. Ghettos
3. Nazi camps (transit camps, concentration camps, labour camps, death camps)
4. Killing Squads (*Einsatzgruppen*)
5. Jewish resistance during the Holocaust
6. Rescue and Righteous
7. After the Holocaust
8. Non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust
9. The Holocaust and other genocides
10. Ireland and the Holocaust

## 4. Aims:

- To encourage understanding of what it meant to be Jewish in pre-war Europe and during the 1940s
- To become aware of the diversity of Jewish life and the implications of the Nazi rise to power on Jewish people throughout Europe
- To identify the many facets of Nazi persecution of Jewish people and other victim groups
- To examine the rationale for the establishment of ghettos and concentration camps
- To understand the extent of the destruction of Jewish people and other victims of the Holocaust and to understand the 'industrialised' methods of murder in death camps
- To develop student engagement with less well-known aspects of the Holocaust e.g. Jewish resistance, the Righteous among the Nations, the non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust
- To use student learning about the Holocaust to help deepen their awareness of other genocides
- To encourage student and teacher reflection, and link to creativity through the arts, literature, commemorative events and memorials where practicable

## 5. Learning Outcomes:

Using learning outcomes places an emphasis on the knowledge, understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate after a period of learning. On completion of this module in Holocaust Education, students should be able to:

1. develop the key skills of senior cycle through their learning and assessment tasks
2. develop an understanding of the vocabulary and terminology associated with the Holocaust

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<sup>3</sup> Transition Year Guidelines [https://ncca.ie/media/2512/ty\\_transition\\_year\\_school\\_guidelines.pdf](https://ncca.ie/media/2512/ty_transition_year_school_guidelines.pdf)

3. expand capacity to locate, search and constructively use visual, aural and documentary sources including web-based archives to gather information and deepen understanding of the Holocaust
4. develop capacity to discuss and form opinions on challenging topics and defend them with their peers
5. engage with cross-curricular modes including art, literature, music and film to explore the Holocaust
6. become critically aware of how easily promotion of hatred and sectarianism in society can lead to catastrophic human costs through the example of the Holocaust
7. investigate aspects of Jewish life before the Holocaust, and develop a contextualised chronology of pre-War Nazi actions against Jewish and other people
8. understand chronologically and thematically the core stages in and elements of the Holocaust during the Second World War and internationally afterwards
9. develop an awareness of the different perspectives of Holocaust victims, survivors and perpetrators
10. explore racial, political, economic aspects of the Holocaust in individual countries outside of Germany
11. understand and empathise with the victims and survivors of the Holocaust
12. demonstrate the link between the Holocaust and important developments in justice and human rights in the aftermath of the Second World War
13. use the historical skills and knowledge from learning on the Holocaust to analyse and understand causes and consequences of other genocides
14. to appreciate the importance of human rights, freedom of speech and democratic values

#### **6. Learning approaches:**

The pedagogical approach to be employed throughout this course concentrates on students' self-directed learning including exploring sources for information and forming opinions based on the evidence presented (as outlined above). This approach fosters an interactive, lively classroom or e-classroom, involving debate and discussion with peers. In doing so, students' literacy and interpretative skills will be developed and so will their oracy, critical thinking and self-confidence in expressing themselves.

#### **7. Assessment approaches:**

The Units of Learning will foster oral presentation and speaking opportunities, essay and project work, formative assessment and feedback, cooperative planning and mounting of an exhibition or appropriate Holocaust commemorative event. Several of the Units lend themselves to project work e.g. the non-Jewish groups who were Holocaust victims, the implementation of the Holocaust in countries other than Germany.

#### **8. Evaluation methods:**

Portfolios<sup>4</sup> provide students with concrete evidence of their progress and achievements, which they discuss, review and share with teachers, parents and peers. Examples of types of evidence of learning that might be included in the portfolio are:

- written work (stories, letters, poetry)
- project work and/or work in visual arts
- charts, diagrams, photographs
- video recordings of the learner's participation in an activity, event or achievement

## **Why teach the Holocaust?**

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<https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Level-2-Learning-Programmes/Assessment-and-reporting/Portfolio-assessment/>

*'The history of the genocide perpetrated during the Second World War does not belong to the past only. It is a 'living history' that concerns us all, regardless of our background, culture, or religion. Other genocides have occurred after the Holocaust, on several continents. How can we draw better lessons from the past?'* Irina Bokova. Director-General of UNESCO, 27 January 2012.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)'s mission is to promote peace-building, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education and culture. UNESCO was created in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and was shaped by the context of that war, and the recognition of the nature of Nazi ideology. For the first time, a state had pursued as a matter of national policy the annihilation of groups deemed unworthy of living. The reality of the Holocaust (known also as the Shoah) and the attempted destruction of Jewish people constituted a systematic programme of mass extermination unprecedented in history.

The nature and extent of the mass murder carried out by Nazi Germany, underpinned by racial ideology, and seeking to define certain groups of people as inferior and unworthy of life, was the context that gave rise to a new word being formed: Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin coined the term 'genocide'. UNESCO has set out a rationale for the teaching of the Holocaust that is rooted in the conviction that young people must learn about the Holocaust to better understand the cause of Europe's descent into genocide, and the subsequent development of laws and institutions designed to prevent and punish genocide, so that similar mass atrocities can be avoided in the future.

This commitment to ensuring that future generations must never forget what happened and must learn from these events is also evident in the Irish school curriculum. The designation of 'special core status' to Junior Cycle History means that all junior cycle students will study the subject and will encounter the Holocaust in the course of their studies. Specifically, at the end of three years of studying history at post-primary level they will be able to:

- *examine life in one fascist country .... in the twentieth century* (learning outcome 3.9)
- *explore the significance of genocide, including the causes, course, and consequences of the Holocaust* (learning outcome 3.10)

In fulfilling these learning outcomes, students will explore the experience of Jewish people living under fascism and trace the course of events that led to the annihilation of 6 million of their number in Europe, while also learning about the fate of other oppressed minorities.

UNESCO holds that fundamentally, teaching the Holocaust can heighten awareness of the danger of genocide in the contemporary world and bring to the fore an appreciation for individual rights and universal values. In this context, and in the context of the development of the TY course, it is useful to explore some aspects of the rationale articulated by UNESCO for this important work.<sup>5</sup>

### **1. *The Holocaust was a defining moment in history***<sup>6</sup>

There is a consensus among historians that the Holocaust has characteristics that appear in other genocides, including the targeting of a specific victim group or groups, mass violence perpetrated against that group and the deprivation of that group of the essentials required for existence. But the Holocaust also has characteristics that make it a distinct and unprecedented phenomenon in history. For instance, it was the intention of the Nazi regime as the war unfolded to murder every Jewish person in territories it controlled. Moreover, the annihilation of the Jews served no pragmatic purpose or was not primarily motivated by economic or political considerations – their destruction

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<sup>5</sup>Adapted from *Why Teach the Holocaust* (UNESCO 2013)  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000218631>

<sup>6</sup> See David Cesarani, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933-49*. Pan Macmillan. London: 2016. The introduction section offers interesting thoughts on teaching the Holocaust

was based on a racist ideology. Consider this statement: 'Race is the decisive and moulding force in the life of nations. Language, culture, customs, piety, traditions, lifestyle, but also laws, governmental forms and economies, the whole variety of life is racially determined' (Der Reichsführer SS/SS Hauptamt, *Rassenpolitik*, Berlin, 1943). The centrality of race in Nazi ideology implied a hierarchy where some races were considered superior, and where inferior races could be deemed 'parasitic', thus justifying their murder. The distinct and unprecedented nature of this ideology as embodied by a state and realised in the Holocaust makes the study of this phenomenon necessary.

## **2. Genocide is not inevitable**

It is important for young people to understand that man-made catastrophes like the Holocaust are not accidents of history but could have been prevented. Genocides occur because people and governments make decisions that perpetuate discrimination and persecution. The way the horrors of the Holocaust unfolded illustrates the fateful consequences of human actions and decisions. The complexity of the Holocaust and the confluence of various factors, including historical, economic, religious, and political aspects, as well as the shifting dynamic of the war, affords students many opportunities to consider how human actions were responsible for what unfolded, and how what happened was not somehow inevitable or pre-ordained.

## **3. States and citizens have responsibilities**

An important factor in teaching the Holocaust is that it enables students to think about political responsibilities and to explore how governmental structures function. The crucial fact that the Holocaust was a state enterprise fully legitimised by law needs to be grasped by young people, as it raises questions about the use and abuse of political power on a national and indeed international level. One dimension of this is the role of governmental and quasi-governmental organisations such as the SA and SS in attacking the Jewish populations of Germany and Europe. Another dimension relates to the actions of German doctors and nurses in the so-called 'Operation T4' euthanasia programme in which more than 300,000 people with intellectual or physical disabilities were killed over six years. On an individual level, the participation of regular German soldiers in the murder of over 1 million Jews as part of the killing squads in parts of eastern Europe warrants consideration of human behaviour, human choices and decision making, conformism and the power of ideology to lead people to violate internationally recognised human rights on such a scale.

## **4. Silence contributes to oppression**

Students should be challenged to think about how doing nothing while others are being brutally oppressed by government or state actions is a form of complicity which, in the case of the Holocaust, had devastating consequences and created a climate where the actions of collaborators became socially tolerable. In exploring this aspect of the Holocaust, students should be aware that, while most people did not speak up against the Nazi regime, those who did often had an important impact. Attention should be drawn to the actions of thousands of non-Jewish people who risked their lives to save Jews from being murdered: hiding them, providing false papers, rescuing children, or helping people to escape. Other examples of individual courage in the face of Nazi brutality include the objections of some religious leaders to the T4 euthanasia policy and the remarkable actions of non-Jewish German women who were married to Jewish men, and whose protests in the 'Rosenstrasse' demonstrations led to the men's release. Positive examples of individual and collective action in the face of state oppression are important for young people to hear about in understanding how the choices and decisions individuals make can have profound effects.

## **5. Prejudice and racism have roots**

Studying the Holocaust offers important insights into the nature of prejudice and racism, and their political, social, and economic ramifications. The identification of Jewish people and other groups in

Nazi Germany as 'others', their stereotyping, stigmatisation, de-humanisation and ultimate destruction has parallels in instances of genocide in Cambodia in the 1970s and Rwanda in the 1990s. Teaching and learning about the Holocaust can enable students to appreciate and be sensitive to the position of minorities in society and to accept and celebrate diversity.

The emergence of the specific form of racism encapsulated in antisemitism is important to consider. Rooted in ancient theological anti-Judaism, antisemitism in Europe in the 1930s was also based on nineteenth century pseudo-scientific racist theories (e.g. Eugenics) and was further fuelled by socio-political and economic developments both in Germany and internationally. This study also allows for reflection on modern forms of antisemitism, evident in incitement to hatred, violence and Holocaust denial or distortion.

The value of such study is emphasised in this statement:

*'My understanding of genocide is that it is an extreme form of identity-related conflict stemming not from the mere differences between groups, but from the implications of those differences, reflected in gross inequalities, discrimination, marginalisation, exclusion, stigmatisation, de-humanisation and denial of fundamental rights. The most effective form of prevention is therefore constructive management of diversity to promote equality, inclusivity, respect for fundamental rights and observance of democratic values and practices.'* Francis Deng, Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, End of Assignment Note, 2012.

### **6. Modern technology can be abused**

Study of the Holocaust indicates how mass violence and murder was enabled through the utilisation of the best available technology. Learned engineers and architects, many associated with well-known and respected businesses and firms, designed, and built gas chambers in which millions of people were murdered. In a more general sense, the Holocaust, like more recent instances of genocide, was facilitated by the governmental structures of a nation state, planned by an established bureaucracy, facilitated by different parts of society, and perpetrated by state-affiliated military groups using the most efficient means at their disposal to pursue their murderous policies. Learning about the power of technology in this way can also support students' understanding of contemporary violations of human rights enabled by technology and social media.

## **Teaching Emotive History**

Teaching emotive themes in history requires a sensitivity which has implications for teachers' pedagogical approaches<sup>7</sup>.

- In the case of the Holocaust, this sensitivity is perhaps more acute given the numbers of students in Irish classrooms whose family backgrounds may be in countries where the major events of the Holocaust took place. Indeed, there may be students who identify strongly with those groups who were singled out for persecution by the Nazi regime, or students with family members who participated in the oppression.
- A second consideration is that when teaching the Holocaust, 'it is all too easy to 'paralyse' the learner with images and information which are impossible to assimilate into an ordinary framework of meaning.' (Geoffrey Short, Carrie Supple and Katherine Klinger, *The Holocaust in the school curriculum: a European perspective*. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg: 1998)

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Stradling, *Teaching 20<sup>th</sup>-century European History*. Council of Europe Publishing. Strasbourg: 2001; pp.106,107

- Thirdly, some students may have a morbid fascination with the cruelty and sadism of those who ran the camps, conducted medical experiments on victims or were members of death squads.
- Fourthly, some students find it difficult or impossible to comprehend what happened because of the sheer enormity of the scale involved, while others may seem desensitised to it either out of shock or due to constant exposure to violence (real or dramatised) in mass media or other channels of entertainment.

Council of Europe experts and educationalists at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Remembrance Authority in Israel<sup>8</sup>, offer some advice that may be helpful to teachers:

- It is important for teachers to be sensitive to their own and their students' responses, which includes teachers reflecting on how they will respond to various types of student reactions. Teachers' own professional judgement should be invoked as they know their students and their students' context best.
- While keeping one's teaching at the level of generalities – events, dates, statistics - might seem the 'safe' thing to do, this does not necessarily aid student understanding. It is difficult for students to relate to photographs of gas chambers or of living and dead victims after camps were liberated. It is more helpful to try to comprehend the experiences of individual people through looking at testimonies, biographies, letters, stories, and diaries, for example.
- Yad Vashem recommends that teachers work with young people in exploring the human dilemmas faced by victims. For example, they might consider the circumstances of Jews in 1930s Germany who saw themselves as an integral part of the societies in which they lived and who were faced with such questions as: Should we stay or leave? If we stay, how do we deal with the deteriorating conditions we face? If we leave, where do we go and what will we do if some of our families choose to stay? Equally, questions could be asked of how Jewish people can retain some sort of normal life if living in a ghetto, or how could survivors of camps come to terms with what happened to them and attempt to build a new life?<sup>9</sup>
- It should be possible to look also at the dilemmas faced by those who resisted, bystanders, those who tried to help, and even collaborators and perpetrators. By placing an emphasis on the human dilemmas faced, students may be supported in trying to comprehend more readily the enormity of what happened.

## Principles to Consider

The following observations from Jean-Michel Lecomte, who was commissioned by the Council of Europe to advise on teaching the Holocaust, may also be of value to teachers reflecting on the sensitivities and complexities involved.<sup>10</sup> In warning of the dangers posed by overly simplistic or generalised teaching approaches, he makes the following observations:

1. Today, we know what happened and are inclined to make judgements with a hindsight that the people of the time could not have done. Note the example cited here in this excerpt from Lecomte's address:

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<sup>8</sup> See [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

<sup>9</sup> The Historical Association's TEACH report (Teaching Emotional and Controversial History) explores teaching such themes to students aged 3-19 years and can be accessed at [www.history.org.uk](http://www.history.org.uk).

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from paper given at the Council of Europe's 90<sup>th</sup> European Teachers' Seminar, Donaueschingen, Germany, 6-10 November 2000 and published in the conference report 'Teaching about the Holocaust and the history of genocide in the 21<sup>st</sup> century'. Council of Europe Publishing. Strasbourg: 2003

*Pupils are looking at a snapshot taken in a street of the Warsaw ghetto in the winters of 1941/2. A man is selling books from a shabby pram to the passers-by. What comments should we make about this photograph? I propose two possible alternatives. 'Those who are going to die are still interested in books!' or 'After one year of privation, ill-treatment and confinement in the ghetto, this inquiring spirit shows that we are still human beings, still living beings'. Today we know that those people are doomed, but if we regard them as such, we ourselves take part in the dehumanisation process of the Nazis. Respect bids us draw attention to the fact that the ghetto with its ill-treatment and harsh measures had failed to make the Jews inhuman or subhuman. On the one hand we could choose a formula designed to hold the attention and strike the imagination of youngsters, but they might well do no more than feel pity or conclude that the Jews were passive and preferred books to fighting back. On the other, we have an analysis which takes account of the reality of the time. These people have not lost their human dignity although they are immured. The principle to be upheld is that of empathy with the time, empathy with history.*

2. We must ask ourselves the question, who would I have been in that place and at that time and what would I have done?

The author refers to Primo Levi's thoughts on 'the grey zone', where he challenges the easy assumption that people can always be classified in a binary manner as either good or bad. Students should be challenged to put themselves in the shoes of people at the time, who experienced events as they happened, understood what was happening, were influenced by events, and reacted or failed to react to them. This requires consideration of the distinctive nature of each country affected in the light of its own diversities and particularities, where some had large, well-integrated Jewish communities and/or a strident antisemitic movement whose views were shared by the general public. Similarly, neutral countries, like Ireland, can be assessed according to degrees of indifference or good will. It thus becomes evident to students how difficult it was to be a responsible citizen or, to echo Primo Levi, a human being. These reflections can lead students to ask if it is any easier today – what do we see? What do we not see? What do we not want to see? What are we going to do about it?

3. We must avoid the twin dangers of historicisation and sanctification

The temptation to teach students proven, unquestionable facts and to keep strictly within the limits of the past holds the danger of trivialisation, where the Holocaust is presented as a series of events bound in time and space. This prevents the Holocaust being a focus of learning in the context of other past and indeed future episodes of genocide. Equally, there is a danger in using words like 'unspeakable', 'inconceivable' and 'unimaginable' in describing what happened – because the reality is that the Holocaust did happen. The world continued after Auschwitz and is permeated with the fact that Auschwitz existed. In short, teachers must live in the present and steer a course between trivialisation (it is over and done with and sanctification (there is no longer anything else)

## **Pedagogical Approaches**

Recent curriculum and assessment development processes in history and in learning and teaching more generally, both in Ireland and internationally, have led to the promotion of certain pedagogical approaches. Teachers are referred to the Junior Cycle History specification and associated assessment guidelines, and to the Leaving Certificate history syllabus and associated teaching guidelines for further elaboration on such approaches and the thinking underpinning them.<sup>11</sup> While teachers' own professional judgement is the key factor in selecting instructional methods to teach

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<sup>11</sup> See relevant documents by following the relevant links at [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie)



this resource, the following emphases might be considered. These are arranged in no particular order.

### **Multi-disciplinary/ cross-curricular approach**

Transition Year by its nature lends itself to this approach. Combining and integrating appropriate historical, literary, artistic, and musical materials, for instance, provides a meaningful way for students to use knowledge acquired in one context as base for further learning in other contexts. For instance, in studying Auschwitz, students could explore Primo Levi's work in English class. There are also opportunities to develop student thinking in civic, political and citizenship education.

### **Understanding the discipline of history**

History teaching has evolved in recent times from a model whereby students acquired knowledge about what happened in the past to a consideration of the nature of history as a discipline, and an exploration of not just what we know about the past, but how we know it. Students acquire both contextual or substantive knowledge about people, issues, and events but also about the conceptual underpinnings on which the work of the historian is based. Fundamentally, this relates to the following key principle often referred to as 'the three Es'; that the study of history entails an 'exploration of what historians believe to have happened in the past based on an enquiry into the available evidence' – note the focus on Exploration - Enquiry- Evidence. This three-pronged principle is a useful synopsis of the discipline and rigorous regard for fairness and truth that is at the core of the historian's work.

### **Historical consciousness**

Being historically conscious means that students acquire a distinctive way of seeing the world and their place in it from a historical perspective. They are aware of the impact of change, both short-term and long-term, on the human condition and in different spatial and temporal contexts. They also have a sense of historical empathy or regard for the motivations and actions of people in the past, in the context of their time. They can make judgements about the significance of events in the past and appreciate the need to examine challenging and often difficult issues from more than one perspective. Historically conscious students are mindful of how their environment has been shaped by people and events in the past and bring this historical sensibility to bear in their appreciation of human achievement.

### **Enquiry focused approach**

The enquiry-focused approach involves organising a set of lessons around an enquiry question on which the teaching and learning activities are focused. It aims to give a clear focus to a series of lessons, to clarify for all concerned what the learning purposes are and to ensure that the sequence of lessons is leading to improved understanding on the part of the students.

Christine Counsell outlines the rationale behind the approach.<sup>12</sup> The following is an edited extract:

*Choosing a sequence of interesting historical enquiries gives a clear focus to any scheme of work. This approach has several advantages:*

- (i) It prevents a superficial run through the content and leads pupils into deeper levels of historical understanding.*
- (ii) It allows students to engage in real historical debate. Historians usually begin with a question.*
- (iii) It motivates students by giving a clear focus to their work. Identifying key questions is a powerful way of 'sharing clarity with learners'. Teachers are thus reinforcing that*

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<sup>12</sup> Christine Counsell, *The Twentieth Century World*. The Historical Association. London: 1997. PP. 30-31.

*the whole point of a sequence of lessons or activities is to build towards some attempt at answering the question. Some teachers who use this approach will refer to such a question in every single lesson. Pupils are constantly reminded of what they are trying to do and why.*

(iv) *Key questions can shape and limit an otherwise sprawling content.*

(v) *It encourages pupils to produce more substantial and significant outcomes at the end of a section of work.*

### **Multi-perspective approach**

This approach encourages young people to explore the Holocaust from a variety of perspectives to get a more holistic and informed overview of what happened. Multiperspectivity in the context of teaching the history of the Holocaust aims to gain:

- a more comprehensive and broader understanding of events and developments by considering the similarities and differences in the accounts and perspectives of all involved
- a deeper understanding of the historical relationships between nations, or cross-border neighbours, or between majorities and minorities within national borders
- a clearer picture of the dynamics of what happened through examining the interactions between the people and groups involved and their interdependence.<sup>13</sup>

Much work on multiperspectivity in history teaching aims to recover the history of 'the invisible', the economically and socially disadvantaged, the politically marginalised, and teaching the Holocaust affords powerful opportunities to do this.

### **Critical thinking approach**

Students should have regular opportunities **to** develop their ability to interrogate, correlate and evaluate evidence and to foster their critical thinking skills. The skill of framing questions effectively and invoking questions at different levels of thinking should be utilised by teachers frequently to support students' acquisition of critical thinking skills and enable them to make judgements based on evidence. Moving away from rote learning approaches towards meaningful engagement with different types of sources of evidence, where students are encouraged to discuss and critique, is a valuable pedagogical approach. Pair, group work or co-operative learning approaches are recommended in this regard. Such skills also help students to look critically at online sources where dubious or unhistorical perspectives are offered, or where instances of distortion or denial about the Holocaust occur and allow students to subject such perspectives to rigorous scrutiny and criticism.

### **Historical significance**

An important part of developing students' historical consciousness is supporting their capacity to make judgements about historical significance. So many aspects of the Holocaust can be evaluated from this perspective. A useful methodological approach is to subject various factors to an evaluation based on the 5Rs<sup>14</sup>:

- Remarkable (the event/development was remarked upon by people at the time and/or since)
- Remembered (the event/development was important at some stage in history within the collective memory of a group or groups)
- Resonant (people like to make analogies with it; it is possible to connect with experiences, beliefs or situations across time and space)
- Resulting in change (it had consequences for the future)

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<sup>13</sup> See Stradling, *op cit*, pp.137-156 for more thoughts on this approach.

<sup>14</sup> Counsell, Christine. 2004. 'Looking through a Josephine Butler-shaped window: focusing pupils' thinking on historical significance' in *Teaching History* 114. London: The Historical Association.

- Revealing (of some other aspect of the past)

### **Eyewitness testimony**

Testimonies from survivors, bystanders, or liberators can add greatly to our understanding of history. While the number of Holocaust survivors has diminished over time, many have recorded their experiences. Tomi Reichental and Suzi Diamond are two survivors who made their lives in Ireland after the war. Zoltan Zinn Collis, Geoffrey Phillips and a few other Holocaust survivors also came to Ireland, The USC Shoah Foundation has thousands of survivor testimonies online as well. Listening to personal stories helps students to discover a wide diversity of individual experiences of this history and relate them to the collective dimension. They will be exposed to the lives of people, before the Holocaust, emphasising their cultural and historical dimension and limiting the risk that students might perceive them uniquely as victims.<sup>15</sup>

### **Understanding the role of evidence**

It is important that students attend to the fundamental role of evidence in enabling their understanding of the Holocaust. Students should explore the nature of source and evidence and make judgements about the usefulness and limitations of different types of evidence. Students should appreciate the provisional nature of historical judgements and that such judgements may need to be revised in the light of new evidence. Students should explore different types of repositories of historical evidence and consider how archaeology and new technology assist historians in forming judgements about the past.

### **Big picture thinking**

The notion of the 'big picture' relates to the idea of a usable historical framework that allows students to see the past in a broad global context. A 'big picture' framework helps students to see significant patterns of change over time. As students learn, they can place their new knowledge and understanding in this framework, extending it, and deepening it as they continue to ask questions of the past and acquire new knowledge and understanding. The 'big picture' also allows for students to deepen their chronological understanding and to appreciate how history is characterised by 'eras' or 'ages' of change. A 'big picture' of the past can be revisited and developed regularly over the course of students' lifelong learning.

### **Historical empathy**

As outlined elsewhere in this document, the concept of historical empathy is a vital one for students to acquire if they are to meaningfully engage with the Holocaust. This concept requires of students that they see people in the context of the times in which they lived and seek to make judgements about the actions of people based on the context of these times. Put simply, it means that we make judgements based on what people at the time knew, and not with the benefit of hindsight.

### **Formative assessment and feedback**

Formative assessment approaches are at the heart of the *Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015). The importance of teachers providing feedback to students on their learning and providing opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and to identify how they can be more successful in reaching their goals cannot be overstated. Such thinking informs the design of classroom-based assessments at junior cycle (CBAs). Teachers are encouraged to build on the approaches undertaken at junior cycle

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<sup>15</sup> See extensive use of eyewitness testimony in Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust*. Fontana Press. London: 1997

in supporting student learning in this TY course. See the NCCA website [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) for further resources.<sup>16</sup>

### **Student Voice, Agency and Participation**

Much work is being done at classroom and school level to promote concepts of student voice, agency and participation. This work is rooted in ideas around assessment in the Framework for Junior Cycle, where students are encouraged to take more ownership of their learning and to engage in dialogue and feedback discussions with their teachers. These ideas also extend more broadly to students having a sense that their voice matters and that they have a right to have that voice heard and acted upon in all matters that affect them. Where students experience their voice being heard at classroom level, research tells us that they have a more positive attitude to school as a whole and more likely to be positively disposed towards civic values and indeed democracy itself, as school is the first place where students experience such values. Learning about the Holocaust can provide students with many opportunities to reflect on how individual human beings, groups of people, societies and states can shape the world they live in and how they are shaped by that world. This learning extends to reflecting on the conditions that give rise to situations where catastrophes like the Holocaust can happen, and to exploring instances of genocide or violation of human rights in the contemporary world, and to exploring how they as young people and citizens can help to shape the world in which they live.

### **Key Skills**

Learning outcomes-based courses in junior and senior cycle are designed to allow for the realisation of overarching key skills for each cycle. These key skills are integrated throughout the design of specifications and syllabi. Teachers should be mindful of ways of helping students to develop these skills in framing learning, teaching and assessment experiences. These key skills can be viewed at [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie)

#### **Embedding the Key Skills of Senior Cycle**

This module in Holocaust Studies contains clear links to the key skills of Senior Cycle identified by the NCCA  
For example:

#### **Information processing**

This key skill helps learners become competent in specific skills of accessing, selecting, evaluating and recording information. Through engaging with sources for the study of the Holocaust students can gather information and sift it for relevance, bias, propaganda and other challenges to truth. Thus, learners develop an appreciation of the difference between information and knowledge, fact and opinion, and even some of the nuances of language, which were particularly important in advancing antisemitism and the Holocaust.

#### **Critical and creative thinking**



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<sup>16</sup> See the *Focus on Learning* resources at [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) for further guidance on formative assessment approaches and visit [www.ict.ie/history](http://www.ict.ie/history) and [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie) to source further valuable resources and approaches to history teaching, learning and assessment.

Engaging with and empathising with Holocaust stories provide students with opportunities for analysing and making good arguments, challenging preconceptions and assumptions. Working with a range of sources will provide many opportunities for examining evidence and reaching conclusions.

### **Communicating**

Students will be involved in analysing and interpreting texts and other forms of communication. They will learn to express opinions, discuss, reason and engage in debate and argument in written and oral formats. They will have their listening skills honed through engaging with survivor testimonies, and be asked to express their opinions, views and emotions. The module should provide opportunities for composing and performing in a variety of ways and for presenting using a variety of media, including PowerPoint, audio formats and possibly through short dramatic pieces, plays or more creative means.

### **Working with others**

This can involve pair and group projects, identifying responsibilities in a group and establishing practices associated with different roles in a group (e.g., leader, team member). This work can also be done online in line with the school's Information Technology (IT) and Acceptable Use Policy.

### **Being personally effective**

Students' individual and group activities will require them being able to appraise and evaluate their own performances, receive and respond to feedback. Identifying, evaluating and achieving personal goals, including developing and evaluating actions plans can and should be part of any significant research or project work undertaken within this module.

## **Research Projects**

When halfway or more through the TY Holocaust module, it may be appropriate for students to undertake structured research projects, if so desired. In addition to being exposed to quite a deal of factual information about the Holocaust, students will have been developing their research skills:

- The ability to examine a primary document or photograph and find key information or draw conclusions from such sources, often in discussion with other students.
- Using online archives to locate articles, primary sources, etc. and develop the key skills of senior cycle through their learning and assessment tasks (LO 1)
- Developing their understanding of how different people can view events from very different perspectives, and their capacity to formulate views through using the available evidence.
- Capacity to locate, search and constructively use visual, aural and documentary sources including web-based archives to gather information and deepen understanding of the Holocaust (LO 3)
- Learning how to organise material, considering chronology but also sorting what they encounter into categories, before writing paragraphs under identified headings. Aided by peer and teacher-led discussion, this has encouraged them to reflect on what is significant and what is less so.
- Students have been developing capacity to debate and discuss and to form opinions on challenging topics and defend them with their peers (LO 4)

Undertaking a research study is possible individually, in pairs or in small groups provided there are clear 'job descriptions' for each member. Still ensuring that teachers guide students in selecting their research areas, it is also important that:

1. Students have considerable freedom in choosing a subject about which they are genuinely enthused. Try to discourage the too obvious or well-known, e.g. 'Auschwitz', 'Mengele'.

2. In pairs, ask each student to present an outline plan (3/4 sentences) orally to a partner and then ask the partner to explain to the class why the topic is important and worth researching further.
3. Allow the first (proposing) student to clarify anything he or she wishes to, and emphasise the question: *But why is it important?* - not *What is it about?* or *Tell us what happened.*
4. Students' selections, and specific tasks if working in groups, should be challenging and tailored to each student's capacity. Ask each to identify three sources they plan to use in their research.
5. The emphasis should be on developing and improving research skills and on the quality of organisation and reporting. This is a chance to stress that mere regurgitation of passages from books, websites or Wikipedia is not the aim. This is also an opportunity to remind students of the dangers of digital misinformation, using the guidance found at [www.medialiteracyireland.ie](http://www.medialiteracyireland.ie).
6. Whether class time will be dedicated for some research or it is to be done at home, set a deadline for initial drafting and reporting, and a final deadline e.g. three weeks to first draft, allowing at that stage for teacher feedback and peer-review. Allow two more weeks to final report.
7. The finished report research is presented in essay format but doesn't have to be. This is not the Leaving Certificate and shouldn't be treated as such. There are opportunities for poster-style presentations, PowerPoint or podcast, taking students' preferences into account. For a guide to making a podcast, see [www.podbean.com](http://www.podbean.com). It may be possible for a student or group to report in the form of a dramatic monologue or role play, provided these achieve the project goals.
8. Regardless of what reporting format is chosen, encourage students to record which sources provide them with key information and insights. Where citing written sources, give the author's name, the title of the book or article, name of the publisher and date of publication. For internet sites, the URL should be given, the author's name, the title of the article, the date written (if available)
9. This is a chance to develop students' understanding of how to construct such a report e.g. a written format could use an opening paragraph explaining why the topic is important, then three to five paragraphs (or PowerPoint slides), each focused on a different significant aspect of the topic, contributing to the answer of the enquiry question posed at the start.

### **Possible Research Topics**

*Whether as individuals, in pairs or small groups, each student should have a clearly defined research goal (\*\* Denotes particularly difficult topics, requiring consideration of students' sensitivities).*

**Pre-War Jewish life:** It could be possible to investigate Jewish life in a specific German city, such as Berlin or Frankfurt, or in a specific country in mainland Europe, not forgetting that places like the east end of London and, indeed, Ireland, had Jewish populations with strong cultural identities. Individual Jewish people like Albert Einstein, Walter Rathenau, Rosa Luxembourg, or famous Jewish people involved in entertainment, the arts or sport could be gateways to research.

**Rising antisemitism:** The Nuremberg Laws and the November Pogrom (*Kristallnacht*) have been covered already, but there is scope to look at antisemitism in European countries outside of

Germany, or to look more specifically at Nuremberg issues like the restrictions on marriage, property ownership, educational opportunities etc. in Germany.

**\*\*Ghettos:** The ghettos in Warsaw and Lodz have been looked at in the coverage of the main topic, but there are many possibilities for case studies of ghetto life throughout Nazi-occupied countries, or indeed for some studies of historical ghettos in cities like Venice and Frankfurt. The ghetto-style camps such as those at Marzahn and Lackenback for Roma and Sinti people, could also be considered.

**\*\*Camps:** A student research project might focus on one of the different types of camp, such as forced labour camps or detention camps, a camp possibly visited on a school tour (like Dachau), or one of the extermination camps apart from Auschwitz e.g. Treblinka, Belzec, Chelmno, Sobibor, Majdanek. Remember, we are looking for the significance, not necessarily the awful details.

**\*\*Killing Squads:** Our topic has identified Babi Yar significantly, but students could focus on killing squads or killing sites in several other countries if desired e.g. Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania or Russia. Killing sites like Kovno or Vinnutsia can be just as upsetting as Babi Yar, so tread carefully. Death marches are not covered specifically in our topics but could be of interest to an ardent researcher, for example the death march from Auschwitz in early 1945 (See [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org) etc.).

**Resistance and Rescue:** Again, steering away from the examples we have looked at in Topics 5 and 6, there are dozens of examples of Jewish and Roma resistance groups, individual resisters (Jewish and non-Jewish), and rescuers. The Righteous Among the Nations database at <https://righteous.yadvashem.org/> has thousands of possible subjects – you could select topics from less well-known countries or places whose people may be largely Muslim or of other religions. This helps to link rescue to a human rights framework. Don't forget either that you might be able to enter your work for the HETI Mary Elmes Prize. Check this out at [The Mary Elmes Prize - HET Ireland](#).

**Thinking outside these boxes:** Some students in your class may come from or have relatives in European countries. This might give them an extra interest in some topics or, indeed, cause extra anxiety. Countries to the west, north and south of Germany can also have important Holocaust narratives. Students do not have to look at eastern Europe only, of course.

**A meaningful research project could also have a cross-curricular theme or outcome.** Holocaust art, poetry or an aspect of literature could be examined, as could Holocaust memorials e.g. the Berlin Holocaust memorial. There are also some interesting Holocaust memorials in Ireland which could be studied. For example, a grove of trees was planted in Memorial Gardens by then-Taoiseach John Bruton in 1995 and a fine memorial to the Holocaust was erected in the Garden of Europe, Listowel, Co. Kerry also in 1995. An oak tree surrounded by yellow croci stands in the grounds of Russborough House since 2017, in memory of all the children who died in the Holocaust. That was planted by Holocaust survivor Suzi Diamond.

Similarly, the outcome of a meaningful piece of research could be the scripting of a short play, podcast or other work. A play or role-play could be an ideal way to promote group research, provided it is well chaired and directed by group members and always mindful of the need to be sensitive to what students may feel uncomfortable with. There is also no reason why a student project couldn't focus on a movie and look in detail at whether it is historically accurate: *Schindler's List*, *Life is Beautiful*, *Defiance* and others could provide such material, provided the analysis has rigour, is focused on important issues and reported on in a well-structured manner.

## Accessing Resources

The ten topics in this module are based broadly on pre-existing HETI material *Holocaust Studies for Senior Students*. In the original HETI pack, there are thirteen 'lessons' or topics, so some degree of selection has been carried out in order to maximise the chances of engaging with all ten topics in busy Transition Year contexts.

If you look at any topics in this module, you will find that suggestions are given for using resources from the HETI pack, and that each resource is given a number e.g. Handout 1.7, 2.2, etc. As we are covering the module in just ten topics, do not be surprised sometimes if you find a document numbered 8.5 in Topic 7, for instance. It just means that the document is located in Lesson 8 of *Holocaust Studies for Senior Students* but is being used in Topic 7 of the TY Module.

There are several ways to locate these resources. They are available:

- in a documents pack from HETI, entitled *Holocaust Studies for Senior Students*,
- in electronic form on a USB or
- via the website of HETI at [www.hetireland.org](http://www.hetireland.org) where you can find them, along with other supports, under Holocaust Education Resources.

Please feel free to contact HETI at any stage for any assistance you may need in getting the resources for this course. That is what we are here for.

We hope that teachers who may already be familiar with the resources provided by HETI will be able to see that we are not trying to reinvent any wheels here, but simply to use the resources more specifically in a manner tailored towards TY methodology and good practice.

In every topic in the TY module, we have also provided numerous links to web-based resources, along with guidance on how these might be used if and when time permits. Each and every one of these web resources has been carefully checked for historical accuracy and usability, and we hope teachers and students find them useful and interesting.

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