



The
Historical Association
The voice for history

The Holocaust edition

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COVER IMAGE

Woman Wearing Mantilla,
Roman Halter, IWM Collections

Roman Halter is a Holocaust survivor. His entire family were killed in the genocide.

He recalls: 'On the Sabbath, sitting in the ladies' gallery in the synagogue, it was fashionable for Polish Jewish women to wear a Mantilla. My mother looked wonderful in it.'

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Publication of a contribution in *Teaching*

History does not necessarily imply the Historical Association's approval of the opinions expressed in it. The Secondary Committee of the Association has particular responsibility for matters of interest to secondary teachers and schools. Suggestions and comments are very welcome and should be sent to: the Chairholder, c/o The Historical Association.

Teaching History is published quarterly by The Historical Association. It is available at substantial discounts to members. Membership of the Association with *Teaching History* is £48.00 for individuals, £83.00 for secondary schools, £30.00 for concessionary members.

All the interpretations that teachers and students co-construct in history lessons are shaped by the assumptions and decisions that teachers make and by the preconceptions of their students. We inevitably start out with assumptions about what the Holocaust was and ideas – more or less explicit – about our aims in teaching about it. There are always other choices that we could have made – about the content; about the enquiries that frame our interrogation of that content; about the sources and resources that we work with. The materials we use have also inevitably been shaped by decisions about the nature of the Holocaust and by their creators' aims: textbooks frame the past in particular ways, as do films, documentaries, travel itineraries, and exhibitions. Furthermore, as is always the case in history, source materials are never innocent: relics of the past are shaped by their original context as well as by their interpretation. Our students are never blank slates either: their preconceptions always shape the sense that they make of what they learn.

This edition offers an important contribution to the history education community's evolving thinking about the ways in which our teaching and learning practices interpret the Holocaust. All the articles presented here ask questions about the ways in which things have often been done or make suggestions about doing things differently. The articles express a number of perspectives: those of classroom teachers, of teacher educators, of museum curators; and also – through the contribution of the Institute of Education's (IOE's) Holocaust Education Development Programme – of specialists in Holocaust education.

David Waters' article represents a sustained reflection on how a city – Berlin – and its histories can be used to promote historical learning. Which Berlin histories are visible and commemorated in the fabric of the city and which are not? How and why do public histories of Berlin change? How can we help students explore these issues as they walk the city? Waters draws on an impressive range of sources to develop novel itineraries through Berlin that ask students to think about place and about the ways in which histories can be placed and displaced.

Both Ian Phillips and Peter Morgan write about film. Holocaust imagery is very familiar, even clichéd. How can we get pupils thinking about it in novel ways and

seeing differently? Phillips reports work completed with PGCE students: a scaffold of questions with which to deconstruct images is presented and applied to archive images and to the analysis of Hollywood representations. Peter Morgan outlines innovative approaches to film and ways of integrating different types of film into the classroom, exploring how we can use feature film as an interpretation of the past, examining archival film footage as evidence and exploring the construction of historical documentaries as interpretations.

Chris Edwards and Siobhan O'Dowd describe how they set out to scope a group of Year 8 students' prior learning and preconceptions about the Holocaust as part of their preparation for teaching the topic in Year 9. Their findings show just how important it is to think systematically about what students bring to their learning: much of what the authors discovered surprised them and sharpened their thinking about how to move students on.

Understanding the Holocaust involves understanding *why* the people who perpetrated the Holocaust did the things that they did. As Wolf Kaiser shows, this is a complex question, since explaining the Holocaust means explaining the actions of individuals in very diverse positions whose actions were shaped by individual choices in the framework of structures that they had partially created themselves. Exploring these issues takes us away from the simplistic Hitler-centric explanations of the Holocaust to which many students subscribe, and is likely to help students better appreciate both the enormity and the complexity of the Holocaust.

Kay Andrews, Alice Pettigrew and Paul Salmons' articles express research and practice perspectives in Holocaust education arising from the IOE's extensive research and development programme.

Andrews raises questions about the eastern European destinations that

dominate Holocaust-related travel. These sites, typically, represent sites of death rather than life and, Andrews argues, do not enable students to engage with the true scale of the Holocaust as a pan-European phenomenon that relates to Salonika and Norway as profoundly as to icons of atrocity like Auschwitz-Birkenau. She offers suggestions about how site visits might be used to explore the narratives of the victims of Nazi atrocity in ways that focus on the diverse lives and communities that the Nazis set out to annihilate.

Both Alice Pettigrew and Paul Salmons contribute to an ongoing debate about the aims of Holocaust education. Pettigrew's contribution is unique, in the pedagogic debate to date, because it is grounded in systematic research into what English teachers perceive the aims of Holocaust education to be. Salmons' contribution brings a profound knowledge of the archives of Nazi atrocity and of resistance to it to bear on arguments about aims. Both authors come to similar conclusions by different routes. Pettigrew interrogates the claim, reported by many teachers in the IOE's national research, that Holocaust education should have broad citizenship aims, and concludes, in the light of leading work on anti-racism, that these aims must remain empty pieties unless we attend closely to specific social and historical contexts. Salmons questions the reluctance of many history teachers to provide an historical rationale for the study of the Holocaust, arguing that if we are genuinely to understand it, we must approach it through the discipline of history. It is only by taking the Holocaust seriously as history that we can do justice to those who – in the midst of death and destruction – struggled to preserve an archive of evidence indicting Nazi crimes.

Arthur Chapman
Katharine Burn
Christine Counsell
Michael Fordham
Editors



Much has changed in the English National Curriculum over the past two decades with new revisions, directives and priorities introduced by successive governments; but, throughout these changes, the Holocaust has retained its mandatory place on the Key Stage 3 history curriculum. It has also been a popular subject at GCSE and A level and in other disciplines across the Key Stages. In the other countries of the United Kingdom the Holocaust is not a compulsory subject but is widely taught in schools.

Commitment to teaching about the Holocaust remains strong. National research by the Institute of Education (IOE) indicates that more than 90% of teachers in England's secondary schools believe it will always be important to teach about the Holocaust. However, the IOE's research also revealed that almost half of teachers think it is difficult to teach about the Holocaust effectively and that most were unaware of the wide range of institutions, programmes and resources that are available to support them in this work. While we hope that this issue may help teachers in tackling those difficulties, we are also keen to highlight the range of further sources of support available.¹

In 1995 the first private memorial museum dedicated to educating about the Holocaust was established in Nottinghamshire. The Holocaust Centre (formerly known as Beth Shalom) has become a significant institution on the national and international stage. It welcomes thousands of school visitors every year to its Holocaust exhibition; has published a wide array of educational resources; created a sister organisation – Aegis Trust – that works actively in the field of genocide prevention; advised on the creation of new centres and exhibitions in South Africa and Rwanda; and established the UK's first Holocaust exhibition aimed at primary schools.

The Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) and the London Jewish Cultural Centre have developed networks of survivor speakers who visit school classrooms to give intensely moving and powerful eyewitness accounts. Both institutions have also produced innovative classroom resources and, since 1999, HET have been taking sixth form students on a one-day visit to Auschwitz as part of their four-part

Lessons from Auschwitz programme. HET also provides an outreach programme for schools including *Think Equal*, which aims to address racial tensions in urban areas. The Anne Frank Trust UK provides a travelling exhibition *Anne Frank: a History for Today* together with projects which promote positive citizenship, human rights, democracy and respect for the individual. Facing History and Ourselves offers resources and professional development aimed at exploring the links between the Holocaust and contemporary society.

In 2000 the UK's permanent national exhibition on the history of the Holocaust opened at Imperial War Museum London. With its innovative education service, classroom materials and professional development programmes, the Museum has become a major resource for teachers and students. January 2001 saw the United Kingdom mark its first national Holocaust Memorial Day. Since 2005 this has been run by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, which energetically encourages and supports commemorative events and activities in schools and communities across the country.

This year the Jewish Museum London reopened after a major investment tripling the space at their Camden site. It features a new Holocaust gallery, focusing on the moving story of Leon Greenman, an Englishman deported to Auschwitz with his wife and young son.

Alongside these national developments, the United Kingdom has played a leading role in the International Task Force for Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF) since its founding in 1998. Today this intergovernmental organisation consists of 27 member states, and a number of affiliated international organisations including the Council of Europe, the United Nations, and UNESCO. The ITF's Education Working Group has developed recommendations for schools that draw upon the rich expertise and diverse perspectives of educators from across the member countries.

Academic research into the history of the Holocaust continues to enrich our knowledge and understanding. We are fortunate in the UK to have not only the oldest historical archive on the Holocaust

– the Wiener Library in London – but also world class scholars at the Holocaust Research Centre at Royal Holloway, the Parkes Institute at the University of Southampton, and in other university departments across the country.

Since the Holocaust was first introduced into the English National Curriculum a huge amount has been achieved. However, significant challenges remain. Students and teachers testify to the unique power of meeting a Holocaust survivor but, in the coming years, the number of eyewitnesses able to tell their stories will dwindle. Much work needs to be done on how to relate the history of the Holocaust to other genocides and mass atrocities. The connection between Holocaust education and Human Rights Education needs to be better conceptualised and appropriate materials and classroom activities developed. Fundamentally, we need more research into how young people make sense of the Holocaust and what might constitute progression in their learning.

In facing these challenges, what is most exciting is the energy and creativity of the hundreds of teachers we are working with across the country on the IOE's national CPD programme. Bringing together the IOE's unique research-informed approach with the rich experience of classroom teachers creates an exciting mix, and we feel that together we can transform teaching and learning about the Holocaust in our schools. It has been a privilege to co-edit this special edition of *Teaching History* and we are grateful to the Historical Association for this opportunity. We hope that the ideas in these pages contribute to the ongoing discussions about how best to approach teaching and learning about the Holocaust, and that you will share your challenges, experiences and expertise with others in the IOE's professional development programme in a location near you.

REFERENCES

¹ The information given here details just some of the programmes and resources offered by these organisations. For further information please follow the links from the Networks section of the IOE's website dedicated to Holocaust education www.hedp.org.uk/networks

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HA Secondary News

Dear members

Welcome to this special edition of *Teaching History*. I would like to start my first Secondary News as chair of the Secondary Committee by thanking my predecessor Richard Harris. His clear, informed and authoritative leadership has been crucial in ensuring the committee remains focused and effective. On behalf of the committee I would like to record our gratitude for all he has done. I would also like to thank Alison Kitson and Ian Luff, two long-serving committee members who have recently stood down. The committee would like to thank them for their excellent contributions over the years they have been involved.

As you would expect, recent Secondary Committee meetings have been dominated by the ongoing debate on the nature of the secondary history curriculum. The latest news from the DfE is that a new National Curriculum will be taught from 2013. Consultation will begin from this month with the final curriculum published to schools in September 2012. Sad to say, even before details of the consultation process have been unveiled, much of the public debate has persisted in peddling uninformed myths about the supposed unpopularity of history and the failure of history teachers to equip pupils with the basics of British history. One glance at the contents page of any recent edition of *Teaching History*, or indeed a visit to one of the many hundreds of excellent history departments around the country, would quickly demonstrate the excellent work that challenges and inspires so many pupils. Fortunately the HA is well placed to ensure an informed debate can be held. The release of the 2010 survey report generated plenty of press interest, with reports in *The Times*, *Mail on Sunday*, *Daily Telegraph* and *TES* amongst others. Further recent newspaper articles relating to history teaching have continued to refer back to its findings, as has Simon Schama in his role as government adviser. The survey has also provided a useful evidential base for discussions with the DfE on the reform of the secondary curriculum and these are likely to be ongoing into 2011. A third survey is planned for 2011. Building on this, the HA has now also published a 'Statement on History in Secondary Schools' to ensure a clear message is heard from the 'Voice of History' on the key concerns of HA members. Its key messages are:

1. The teaching of history needs to be given sufficient time on the curriculum.
2. There is a need for specialist history teachers to ensure high-quality teaching.
3. All children are entitled to a proper history education regardless of ability, background or the school they attend.

There is further good news in the fact that the government is genuinely interested in history. While those of us who remember the debates around the inception of the original national curriculum know this can be a double edged sword,

the engagement of the HA in this process made for a better curriculum. As these debates surface again the HA will continue to present clear evidence of where the problems currently lie and positively engage with the process of curriculum reform. The Secondary Committee are especially keen to ensure the voice of the history teacher is heard clearly in this process and would welcome your views.

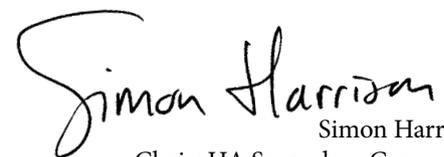
Also on the horizon are changes to teacher training. At the time of writing details of this are unclear. However it does seem that these may represent a threat to the many excellent PGCE history courses around the country that have benefited so many of us over the years as trainees, mentors and through research and the dissemination of best practice. We will be monitoring developments closely in this area and do everything possible to protect access to the best-quality subject-specific provision for history trainees.

The committee has recently supported work on bursaries to further the cause of history in schools and colleges, funded by the generosity of Joan Lewin's bequest to the HA. Projects such as history clubs, magazines and classroom-based research have all been awarded bursaries recently. We hope to publish details of these soon and also open applications for further bursaries.

On the website, the Student Zone is proving very popular, along with new briefing packs, podcasts and other support materials for teachers. Visit www.history.org.uk to find out more. The HA is also exploring the use of social media to further engage with members and the wider public. Look out for news of our presence on Twitter and Facebook in the coming months.

Finally, do keep an eye out for more details of the 2011 HA Conference, which will be held in Manchester on 13 and 14 May. As always there will be workshops on a range of aspects of secondary education alongside many other areas of broader interest. In addition there will be a keynote address by Sir Ian Kershaw. It looks as if it will be another excellent event so do book early. A full programme will be advertised soon on the website.

The next few months are likely to see history in secondary schools increasingly under the microscope. We have an excellent opportunity to inform and influence the debate, to ensure our pupils continue to get the very best from their history lessons. Do engage with this debate in any way you can and be assured that the HA are working actively on behalf of members both publicly and behind the scenes to do the same.


Simon Harrison
Chair: HA Secondary Committee

Berlin and the Holocaust:

a sense of place?

As more and more schools take students on visits to locations associated with the history of the Holocaust, history teachers have to find ways to make these places historically meaningful for their students. David Waters shows here how he introduced his students to the multiple narratives associated with the history of the Holocaust by examining how meaning lurks in the physical fabric of the city of Berlin.

A sense of place?

We begin in the area around Potsdamer Platz, Berlin.¹ In the 1920s and 1930s this was Europe's busiest thoroughfare. It was heavily bombed in the Second World War and became part of the death strip of the Cold War. The building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 split Potsdamer Platz in two, and this can still be seen as you walk across the paved memorial of the wall and follow it down Stresemann Strasse. Take a quick left down Erna-Berger Strasse and you are in the death strip once again, faced with a surviving watch tower. Follow the wall down to Niederkirchnerstrasse and you are presented with a complex and yet helpful juxtaposition: the basement of the old Gestapo HQ below, and a large stretch of the Berlin Wall above. Also on this street are references to Prussia's past: the impressive decorative Martin Gropius Bau still littered with holes from the fighting of the Battle for Berlin in 1945. This is Berlin: a complex layering of history manifest in one place.

Berlin can be a confusing city for students to visit. In many ways they prefer simpler narratives and cities like Krakow are, for them, more pleasing to the eye. In Berlin, there are layers upon layers of history everywhere you go – one layer can often obscure the next. What sort of narratives should we construct about Berlin when visiting it?² To get a sense of place in Berlin you need to introduce the students to the complexity of its layered history, and to walk among its buildings, to get some sense of meaning. In her influential article on place, Liz Taylor draws the following helpful analogy: '...a landscape is like a palimpsest... a parchment that has been erased and then written or drawn upon afresh, often the original shows through.'³

Was it Marc Bloch who said that an historian should 'walk among the hedgerows' in order to understand the past?⁴ I have been struck by these ideas as I have visited Berlin in particular. But how do you get a sense of place, and how do you help students develop one?⁵ I suggest below a number of narratives that can be unravelled for students to get some sense of place of Berlin and its part in the Holocaust. The meaning of these narratives is best evoked through Berlin's buildings, communities, memorials and, through memoirs and literature, its voices too.

Berlin and the Holocaust – the Nazi centres of power

The remnants of the old Gestapo HQ's torture cells combined with the exhibition of photos at the 'Topography of Terror' are a good place to start to help students get some sense of the story of the Holocaust and its relationship with Berlin.⁶ This museum has recently opened and has an impressive and unusual, if shocking, collection of photographs. The collection also examines the role of the SS, SD and Gestapo in some depth as all three of these organisations were based around this site. From here, turn left up Wilhelmstrasse and you are faced with the largest surviving piece of Nazi architecture in Berlin – the old HQ of the Luftwaffe, where Hermann Goering presided. It is important when telling the story of the Holocaust to explore the history of those who planned and perpetrated it; this walking tour of the old Nazi Government Headquarters allows students to reflect on the relationship between that narrative, and the place in which they now stand.⁷ Further

David Waters

David Waters is Head of History at St George's School, Harpenden, a comprehensive school in Hertfordshire.

Figure 1: Timeline of persecution of Jews in Berlin, 1930s.
Around 160,000 Jews lived in Berlin

1 April 1933	Boycott of Jewish shops.
September 1935	Nuremberg Laws passed.
1933 – 1939	80,000 Jews emigrated from Berlin.
April 1938	All assets of Jews above 5,000 Reichmarks had to be registered.
June 1938	Jewish businesses publicly identifiable.
July 1938	Jewish doctors banned from practising.
August 1938	All Jews given name Sara / Israel.
September 1938	Jewish lawyers banned from practising.
27 October 1938	'Polish' Jews evicted from Germany and driven to border.
9 November 1938	November Pogrom (<i>Kristallnacht</i>). 12,000 Jewish men from Berlin deported to concentration camps. Jewish synagogue on Oranienbergerstrasse saved by local police but many destroyed.
11 November 1938	Jews to pay 1 billion Reichmarks for murder of vom Rath and to pay reparations for damage of 9 November. Jews forbidden from museums, cinemas, theatres, concert halls, parks.
January 1939	Non-signing of official name punishable by one month in prison.
August 1939	Outbreak of war: Jews not allowed radios, telephones, not allowed out in evening. No soap allowed to be sold to Jews, no laundry to wash Jewish clothes.
September 1941	All Jews to wear Star of David.
October 1941	Deportations of Jewish people in Berlin began, at rate of 1,000 a month. First deportation of 1,000 people is to Lodz ghetto.
1942	School on Grosse Hamburger Strasse shut down. Old People's Home on Grosse Hamburger Strasse used as deportation centre. The Gestapo from Vienna sent to Berlin to speed up process. Deportations commence unannounced.
20 January 1942	Wannsee Conference convenes on 'solution of Jewish Question.'
June 1942	Deportations of over-65s to Theresienstadt 'model' ghetto.
February 1943	'Operation Factory'. Otto Weidt betrayed, Gestapo clear out his workshop.
15 May 1944	Alice Licht sends postcard on way to Auschwitz to Otto Weidt. He travels there to save her.
May 1945	Liberation.
1941 – 1945	55,000 Jews deported from Berlin to extermination camps. 1,900 survived the camps.
1941 – 1945	8,000 Jews stayed in Berlin – of privileged status.
1941 – 1945	7,000 Jews threatened with deportation committed suicide.
1941 – 1945	7,000 Jews went into hiding, 1700 survived.

up Wilhem Strasse, off Voss Strasse, the story of the Reich Chancellery and Fuehrer Bunker can be retold. The site of Hitler's bunker is now an unremarkable place – there is a small information board in a car park marking the dark, flooded, location below ground.⁸ The government's uncertainty about what to do with the bunker is an interesting talking point for your students. Farther on is the controversial Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. The vast field of granite blocks here is supposed to disorientate and raise questions of dislocation. This is a good location to discuss acts of memorialisation, particularly in considering how location and context relate to remembrance. These memorials also highlight the need, as Nemko has argued, to ensure our students are well prepared to think critically and take on interpretations and constructions of the past before they visit, such as through a scheme of work on memorialisation beforehand.⁹ This short walk around Berlin allows the students to gain a sense of place of Nazi corridors of power in Berlin. It also enables them to gain an introduction to the Holocaust and its ongoing relationship with Berlin.

Berlin's Jewish community, Nazi persecution and the Holocaust

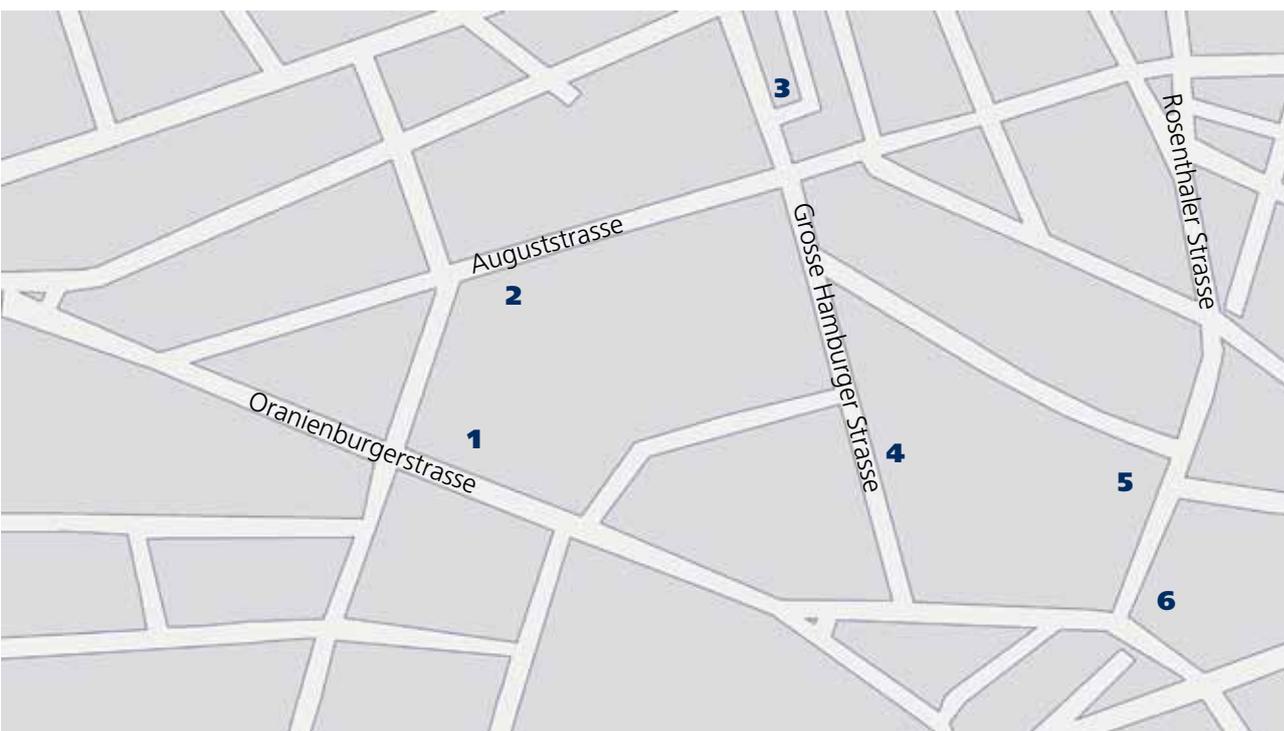
When telling the story of the Holocaust in Berlin, it is of course vital to get a proper understanding of the history of the different Jewish populations of Berlin.¹⁰ An effective, additional way of conveying the vitality of Berlin's Jewish population and of the tragedy of its persecution is to first visit Libeskind's striking Jewish Museum in Kreuzberg. The architectural design of the building seeks to symbolise, through its axes, not only the harrowing narratives of exile and extermination, but also a continuity and celebration of Jewish life. The exhibitions of Jewish culture add a certain richness to our understanding and give a greater sense of the diversity within the Jewish population of Berlin, which helps students get a sense of the relationship between people and place. Libeskind's deconstructive architectural design for the museum also provokes fascinating discussion about its success and suitability as a representation and memorial of the Holocaust.¹¹

Berlin's Jewish population in some ways experienced a more liberal and tolerant existence in Berlin than in many other European cities, at least until the 1930s. There were around 160,000 Jews living in Berlin by this time, spread around different parts of the city, and the different communities and synagogues exuded considerable vitality. While the Jewish museum gives an excellent insight into the lives of some Jewish people in Berlin, walking around the old Jewish district itself, retelling some of the remarkable stories, gives students a richer grasp of these lost communities.

The area around Oranienburgerstrasse provides some sense of place of Jewish Berlin. However, because the Jewish population was so thoroughly purged during the Holocaust there are now only remnants here. The New Synagogue on this street, with its resplendent dome, provides in some ways a useful weathervane of recent Jewish Berlin experience. Once a thriving 3,000 seat venue for worship, it was attacked in the November 1938 Pogrom (*Kristallnacht*) as were many synagogues in Berlin; the New Synagogue was saved only by the actions of a local policeman, Wilhelm Krutzfeld. During the Second World

Figure 2: Jewish Berlin, old district. Mitte – Scheunenviertel

Jewish Berlin, old district. Mitte – Scheunenviertel



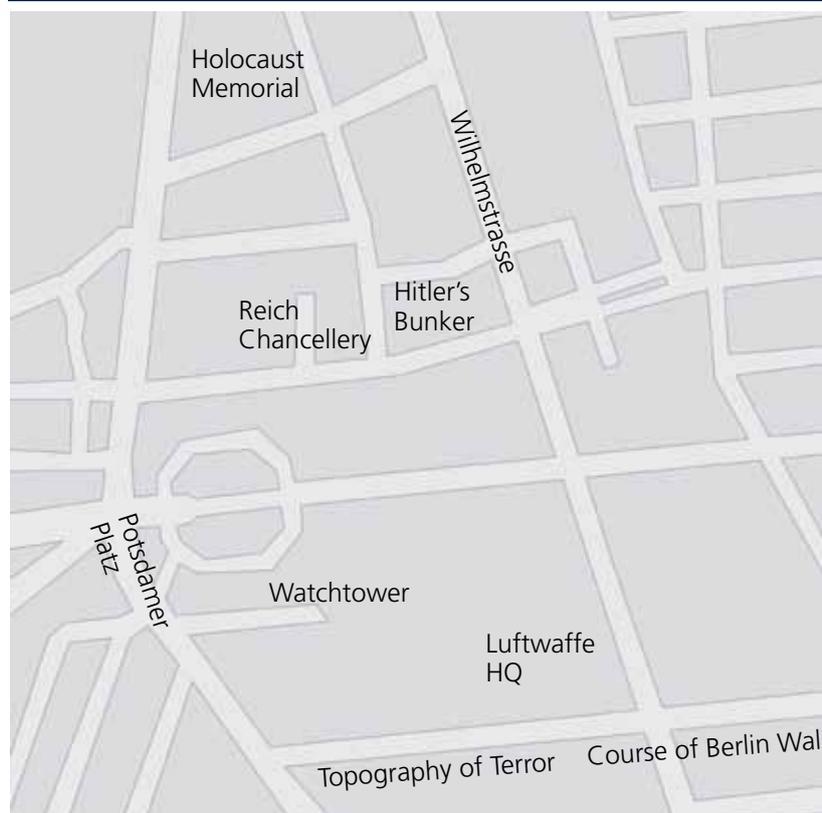
- Key
- 1 Oranienburgerstrasse No. 28-29, Jewish Community Administration Building, New Synagogue, no.30
 - 2 Auguststrasse 14-17 1861-1943: Jewish Hospital, Home and Community Centre
 - 3 Der Verlassene Raum, Memorial Koppenplatz
 - 4 Grosse Hamburger Strasse: Jewish Old People's Community Home, Old Jewish Cemetery, Jewish boys' school.
 - 5 Rosenthaler Strasse Silent Heroes Memorial Centre, Otto Weidt Workshop for Blind no. 39
 - 6 Police Station 16: Hackescher Markt 1 – saved synagogue in *Kristallnacht* and warned Weidt of Gestapo raids

War it was unfortunately mostly destroyed by Allied bombing. As this area was in the Eastern Communist zone during the Cold War and the Jewish communities were so damaged, the building fell into disrepair before its recent post-reunification renovation as a Jewish centre. It is a place that inspires deep reflection because the back of the building has been left as a shell – the majority of the main synagogue is now open to the skies behind a glass screen. The museum inside and its thoughtfully composed exhibits of a time of Jewish vitality provide an interesting contrast with the architecture and help one to visualise the Jewish community in this district. Again, as a representation of the persecution of the Jewish community in Berlin this is a striking metaphor.

It is useful to think of the Jewish community in this area as something of a triangle, enclosed by the streets of Auguststrasse, Oranienburgerstrasse and Grosse Hamburger Strasse. Signs of regrowth can now be seen – kosher cafes, shops and even schools in the area. Grosse Hamburgerstrasse is a thought-provoking street, and there has been a Jewish community here since the seventeenth century. The Jewish school reopened in 1993, having originally been a boys' school from 1863 to 1942. Despite the sense of some vitality in this area today, one is painfully reminded of the heavy impact the Holocaust imposed on the Jewish people of Berlin, and this is arguably no more powerfully felt in Berlin than here. The school and adjacent old people's home were seized in 1942 by the Gestapo and used as a holding and assembly area for the area's Jews before they were shipped off to concentration and extermination camps. Around 55,000 Jewish people in Berlin would await this fate. Just off to the right of Grosse Hamburger Strasse in Koppenplatz is a thought-provoking memorial to that traumatic event – an oversized table and chair permanently tumbled over as if in an act of panic. The work of art *Der Verlassene Raum* is set in an isolated square, surrounded by some of the Jewish homes that would have been raided by the Gestapo. It all helps to add to a sense of

Figure 3: Potsdamer Platz and the Nazi centre of power

Potsdamer Platz and Nazi Centre of Power



place and of the story of the Holocaust for the Jewish people of Berlin, as do voices of those who were witness to it:¹²

One day, at the beginning of October 1941, our roommate Mrs Hohenstein received a form from the Jewish community in which she had to list her possessions...we didn't take these lists very seriously but Mr Hefter from the Jewish Community seemed almost bewildered, saying

Figure 4: Stumble stones



that one thousand Jews would be picked from their homes and deported that evening. The thousand people were those that had received the 'lists'...just after eight o'clock that evening, two Gestapo officers demanded to be let into Mrs Hohenstein's room. No more than ten minutes later, Mrs Hohenstein came to us, face as white as a sheet, to tell us she was being taken away; the 'gentlemen' didn't know where she was going. Then the 'gentlemen' led her to the door. We heard it slam behind them and listened to the quiet little steps and the echo of boots stamping down the stairs. Then it was all silence again.¹³

Behind the old people's home was an old Jewish cemetery which, in 1943, the Nazis blew up with dynamite. As the oldest Jewish cemetery in Berlin, started in 1672, it was a place that represented Jewish cultural continuity. There is a powerful memorial on this street to the Jews who were taken from here. The cemetery is also preserved as it was left by the Nazis, with one solitary gravestone having been replaced – that of the philosopher Moses Mendelsohn. The stone provides recognition of Mendelsohn's philosophical work, and also serves to symbolise the role played in the Berlin community by the Jews who were buried there. You are encouraged to remember the old Jewish community by the stones beneath your feet. 'Stumble stones' have been placed in the pavement, located outside buildings recording the names of the Jewish people who lived there. These stones are researched and paid for by local people, often schools, and put in place by the artist Gunter Demnig.¹⁴ In this way, the 'stumble stones' help to situate the memory of the victims of the Holocaust within the fabric of the Berlin streets.

By walking around this district you can gain some sense of place of the different Jewish communities of Berlin, and

how these people's lives were torn apart through persecution and deportation. Many were sent on from Berlin, initially to Lodz, and later to Theresienstadt, or Auschwitz-Birkenau. By showing the relationship between these sites in Berlin with the experiences of the people involved, the narrative of the Holocaust becomes much more vivid for students.

From October 1941 approximately one thousand people were transported out of Berlin every month. We never found out where they were sent... The Jewish community had to provide stewards to pick up people selected. They were now taken to 26, Grosse Hamburger Strasse, a former Jewish Community Old People's home. The trains now left from the Grunewald Freight Station. Rumour had it they attracted too much attention from the general public at Putlitzstrasse station. Around 7000 people threatened with deportation committed suicide between 1941 and 1945.¹⁵

Alternative narratives of the Holocaust and Berlin?

Can a different sort of story be told of the Holocaust and Berliners? Just a stone's throw away from Grosse Hamburger Strasse, round the corner from the restored shopping arcade Hackesche Hofe, a new museum marks the remarkable life of Otto Weidt. He tried to keep Jewish workers away from the Nazis, hiding them and helping them to escape. His restored 'workshop for the blind' on Rosenthaler Strasse is a small, if powerful, story of ordinary Berliners who tried to help the Jews of the city.

Then one day, two Gestapo officers suddenly turned up in the workshop unannounced and told the blind workers

to get ready to go with them. They took no notice of Otto Weidt's protests...[however]...once again the Gestapo gave into him. Otto Weidt himself went to the collection point and picked up his blind workers. They all walked back from Grosse Hamburger Strasse to Rosenthaler Strasse, Weidt leading his blind workers still in the aprons they had been wearing when they were taken away.¹⁶

Weidt even went as far as travelling to Auschwitz-Birkenau to save one of his workers, Alice Licht. Many of the Jews who Weidt helped were murdered by the Nazis, but he also saved a significant number. Their testimonies, photographs, letters, diaries, poems, postcards and artefacts housed in the Otto Weidt museum all help to engender an understanding of Berlin's relationship to the Holocaust.

*It can't be denied
It's an actual fact
We live in the same Reich but build our own state*

*Take President Weidt for example
Whose name is known far and wide
For more than a year he has gathered around him
A pretty considerable bunch of Jews
He shares their sorrows and their joy
Anxiously hoping for better times¹⁷*

There is also a small exhibition space adjacent to this of the *Silent Heroes* of Berlin – Berliners who hid Jews in their homes and helped them to escape during the Second World War.¹⁸ The wider question of the extent of opposition of Germans to the Nazi regime is one explored in much more detail at the excellent German Resistance Memorial Centre.¹⁹ Weidt's story is also an interesting one as a window on Germany and its memorialisation of the Holocaust. As part of a wider Adenauer-era policy of forgetting, Weidt's actions were not widely recognised in West Germany itself until the 1960s, when a new generation helped to effect a different perspective.²⁰

Not far from the Jewish district around Oranienburger Strasse is the memorial to the women of Rosen Strasse. The popular history of the women of Rosen Strasse is that, in February and March of 1943, the Gestapo rounded up some of the last of the Jews of Berlin; among these were 1,800 men who were married to non-Jewish German women. The men were taken to a Jewish community building on Rosen Strasse and held, people assumed, for onward transportation. The wives of these men gathered and formed a peaceful protest; it is estimated that thousands of women took part. This occurred for over a week and the men were eventually released. It seems like the peaceful protest persuaded the Gestapo not to transport the men. While it is a moving memorial to visit, yet it is arguably difficult to get a sense of place here as all the contemporary buildings were destroyed and have been replaced with more modern structures. Nonetheless, an uplifting story of the Holocaust and Berlin can arguably be told.²¹

From Berlin to the Holocaust – steps to extermination

You may wish to give your students a greater depth of understanding of the different stages of the Holocaust. The

Jews of Berlin passed through one of three railway stations, and the memorials at one of those stations, Grunewald, convey their experiences and the scale of human loss. There is also something particularly resonant about the railways when studying the Holocaust: in this case, the desolate platform of track 17.²² Some of Berlin's Jews were sent on to Sachsenhausen before being transported to extermination camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau. While Sachsenhausen was a concentration camp rather than an extermination camp, it does give students an understanding of the role this place had in the Holocaust: the conditions of camp life, torture, medical experiments, gassings and death marches all happened here and are powerfully evoked through memorials and existing structures. It is an important and thought-provoking visit and allows students to understand the enormity of the Holocaust.²³ For most of our students on their recent history trip, it was their most profound experience, primarily because they were so affected by the sites there – the scale of the Holocaust was more tangible once it became situated in a place:

We visited Sachsenhausen on the second day of the trip... we began a tour of around the camp and in particular the barracks, in which those the Nazis deemed 'inferior' were 'housed'. Whilst touring the barracks I learnt how the people were forced to sleep three to a bed and were constantly beaten, humiliated and dehumanised by the common things we today take for granted, these include things such as privacy and names, as the inmates were addressed by their numbers. Although Sachsenhausen was a concentration camp and not a death camp they still possessed gas chambers and the brief encounter with this execution apparatus was somewhat disturbing and one that I shall not forget in a long time.

The nature of the Holocaust as a 'Final Solution' was of course discussed at the Wannsee Conference of 1942. The *Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz* memorial is an important place to visit, especially for the more able and older students. Whilst much of the narrative of the Holocaust is probably as well covered elsewhere in Berlin, it is the sense of place one gains from walking the rooms, and the gardens, the contradiction of gentility and mass murder that really hits home in a more cerebral way.²⁴

Memorialisation of the Holocaust – the story of Germany today?

How then, to start with the study of the Holocaust and Berlin? I like the idea of the landscape of Berlin and of the story of the Holocaust being like a palimpsest as Liz Taylor suggests.²⁵ To go from a *space* to a *place*, something of the wider story of Berlin has to be told before the layers of different narratives, in this case about the Holocaust, can be explored. I think that inasmuch as this is possible, it is important that students try to gain a sense of place by 'walking the hedgerows'. It also seems a sense of meaning is important to grasp a sense of place, and the various memorials of Berlin certainly help to engender this. Perhaps the best memorial to start with is where some argue it all began: Bebelplatz and the book burning of 10 May 1933. Here you will find an interesting installation by the Israeli artist Micha Ullman: empty

bookshelves sunk below ground level. Next to the installation reads a quotation from Heinrich Heine from a play of 1821: '...where books are burnt, people will eventually be burnt too.'

The different narratives of Berlin and the Holocaust which I have outlined have all been considered by those who have constructed memorials to the people involved. If students are to grasp the purpose of these memorials, they need to understand how those constructing the memorials call upon those narratives. The memorial off Linden Strasse powerfully conveys the absence of the Jewish communities of Berlin, the shock of deportation is conveyed through the memorial *Der Verlassene Raum* and the process of transportation powerfully remembered at Grunewald station. The memorial of Rosen Strasse provides a different discussion, as does the delay in recognising the contribution of individual Berliners, who, like Weidt, helped to save the lives of Jews in Berlin. As interpretations of the Holocaust as a whole, the memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe, the Jewish Museum, Sachsenhausen and the *Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz* provide interesting contrasts for discussion. Each of these provides students with an opportunity to explore the process of memorialisation.

The memorials are an intriguing aspect for students to explore. They are an excellent way in to the story of the Holocaust and Berlin, and they also lead to another narrative of Berlin and the Holocaust which can be discussed – the Berlin and Germany of today. How do groups in Germany today remember, and make sense of, their own past, which includes the Holocaust? Indeed, a visit to Berlin raises the question of how *should* anyone remember and memorialise the Holocaust? I asked a colleague of mine this very question when we were visiting the 'Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe' in Berlin in May this year: 'not like that' was his response. This memorial is a great talking point and stimulates interesting discussions with our students, primarily over its actual design. The memorial is also surrounded in political controversy, not only over its final design, but also the location and scale of the memorial and the cost.²⁶ These are interesting questions and topics for debate with your students. How should we remember the Holocaust, how should it be memorialised and what do the recent memorials in Berlin tell us about Germany and Berlin today?

Memorials will divide your students – this was certainly true of our group when we visited the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe this year. They will have strong views about which memorials are more effective or appropriate than others. I think this is a good way to get into the myriad narratives of Berlin and the Holocaust. The memorial at Grunewald, track 17 is illustrative of this point. It is not only an affecting design, it also cleverly plays on the sense of place of this location. Moreover, it raises more difficult questions: why did it take the German railways so long to construct a memorial to the Holocaust, considering their involvement, to some extent in it? This is one of many memorials that have been constructed since reunification. In many ways the explosion of the memorialisation of the Holocaust in Berlin and Germany tells us a great deal about Germany today.²⁷ Some time ago, Wrenn rightly pointed out that when dealing with historical sites, teachers need their students to be aware

of such issues, that 'the way in which these sites are reshaped to suit the preoccupations of future generations will tell historians of the future as much about the thinking of their own times as about the distant past.'²⁸

A discussion of the relationship between the narratives of the Holocaust, the ways in which it has been memorialised, and how both of these become situated in the fabric of Berlin, therefore provides us with an understanding not only of Berlin and the Holocaust, but also of Berlin and Germany today.

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- 24 www.gwhk.de/engl/kopfengl.htm is the official website. The BBC film *Conspiracy* (2001) evokes the chilling atmosphere of the house – it is helpful to show this to students before they arrive.
- 25 Taylor, *op cit*.
- 26 See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/4531669.stm>
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A question of attribution:

working with ghetto photographs, images and imagery

Holocaust imagery is very familiar, clichéd even. How can we get pupils thinking about it in novel ways and seeing differently? Phillips reports work completed with his PGCE students, proposes a scaffold of questions with which to deconstruct images and applies it to archive images and to Hollywood representations. Images are actions – interventions in particular contexts. Phillips' scaffold aims to highlight a number of important features of images in order to draw attention to the tacit or explicit intentions behind them. In what ways does a ghetto image, taken by German soldiers on leave, enact relationships that enabled the Holocaust and how can we help students appreciate this dimension of such photographs? How do Hollywood images of the Holocaust make use of perpetrator photographs and how can we get pupils debating the ethics of representation?

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The Rough Guide to...

This small travel guide shows the work of reconstruction and development that has been completed or put in hand in the last three and a half years and will enable the traveller to see the country and the people as they really are. The newly explored territory is still subject to constant change, the editor therefore cannot vouch for the accuracy of every particular.

As a member of the coalition forces one will speak the native language only when absolutely necessary, learning the language is in any event difficult for Europeans.

When travelling on long isolated stretches of road, or travelling at night, it is advisable at the present time to carry side-arms.¹

The 'edited' extract from the travel guide is deliberately ambiguous: I use it with beginning teachers to explore ways that sources and evidence convey inherent attitudes, values and beliefs. The 'source' is in many ways unsatisfactory but by introducing Riley's Layers of Inference model it quickly becomes apparent that there are obvious questions that need to be asked of this source.² Using the idea of an audience, or readership, it is more obvious that the guide was written for adventurous or even reckless tourists – the kind of person who wants to do something different, is interested in getting off the beaten track and is happy to ignore Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice to travellers. The reference to 'side-arms' and the 'coalition' prompted the suggestion that this was written for soldiers or possibly contractors working in Iraq or some similarly dangerous part of the world. If the latter was the case then perhaps the guide is or was a semi-official publication written by some military official, quite proud of the way that the country has been pacified and economically developed. Except that this is not the *Lonely Planet* guide to Iraq or Somalia or the Yemen: it is the 1943 *Baedeker Guide* to the General Government-territory of German-occupied Poland not incorporated into the Third Reich but placed under the civil administration of high-ranking Nazi Hans Frank.³ This travel guide provides an insight into the mentality of the Nazi bureaucrats occupying Poland and, despite the date (post-Stalingrad), there is a sense that the Nazis believed their presence in eastern Europe was permanent. Is the guide evidence that adventurous Germans – the military, the police and even civil servants – were being encouraged to visit Poland out of curiosity, to observe the 'less developed' Poles? Or did the publication simply reflect the vanity of Hans Frank, the Governor General? The language is worth careful consideration: Krakow and Lublin were described as cities 'now entirely free of Jews', and other references to the Jewish population pointedly use the past tense.

Götz Aly and Susanne Heim's *Architects of Annihilation* examines the nature and the scale of the Nazi occupation, presenting a multifaceted bureaucracy and

Figure 1: Developing an analytical technique: what questions can we ask about photographs taken in the ghettos? Moving away from 'When?', 'Where?', 'Why?' and 'Who?'

Ethical issues	Striking a pose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How ethical are these images? Begin by considering the extent to which they are official or unofficial images and how this might lead into discussion about attitudes and values. ■ Do we know who took the photograph? Sometimes this involves making deductions about the relationship between the photographer and the objects in the photograph. ■ Should we be using these photographs? This activity is designed to help you think more objectively about the images you might use in your teaching and the different questions you are able to ask of the images. Above all it is about not accepting these images at face value. ■ What do these photographs tell us about the attitudes of the photographers? This does depend upon the nature of the images. A photograph of a German soldier taunting a Jewish person in some ways conforms to expectations. Are the more problematic photographs the ones that suggest a kind of (ethnographic) curiosity? ■ Do we know anything about audience, purpose and intent? This again is more difficult. Could some photographs be considered as nothing more than souvenirs? What kind of images would – or would not be shared by family members back home? Might this give you a deeper appreciation of the range of attitudes prevalent in Nazi society? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Subject and object. The subject of the photograph as far as this exercise is concerned is the sense of narrative that the photograph conveys. The object or objects in an image might refer to individuals in a photograph but it is also about the relationship of object or objects to each other and also the nature of the pose and even the demeanour of the characters in the photograph. ■ Composition. Stills taken from propaganda films and feature films are more deliberative. A photograph is not simply taken but it is 'arranged': a deliberate creation. It is important to consider the message the photograph is trying to give or the impression it is trying to create. ■ The background is important because it can provide a context and/ or visual clues. Background might also be used deliberately to create a contrast or highlight a tension.

What are the technical issues?

- Lighting can be used to create shadow, especially if 'top' or 'bottom' lit.
- Camera angles create a different effect if a crowd is viewed from above – or below in the case of the ghetto stairway.
- Lenses with different focal lengths and with different depths of field create very different effects where individuals are lost in a large space to one which emphasizes the denseness of a crowd.

Understanding photography – then and now

- Digital cameras mean that people today are far more prolific in terms of the number of images that they will take on holiday.
- In the 1930s and 1940s photography was an increasingly popular pastime. Smaller cameras meant that more people were able to record their own intimate family moments.
- Cameras within the reach of 'ordinary people' had fixed lenses and fixed shutter speeds; the film itself was slower and needed relatively longer exposure to light.
- These technical considerations meant that it was difficult to take candid photographs where people were moving or where the 'object(s)' were unaware of the camera being pointed at them.
- Serious amateur and semi-professional photographers had access to more technical cameras which offered more scope for creativity but even they were always limited by the quality of the film stock available.
- Film itself was relatively expensive. An advert for Ilford 'Selo' film in the 1930s was selling at one shilling (5p) for eight exposures at a time when a pint of beer cost tuppence (1p), making a film about £10.00 in today's prices.⁴ This suggests that taking an individual photograph was likely to be more considered or thoughtful.

providing a compelling analysis of an ‘imperial’ experiment. While the matter-of-factness of the guide reveals a great deal about Nazi attitudes towards the occupied territories in the east it also connects to the large number of soldiers’ ‘leave’ photographs which appear on the web.⁵ There was an element of semi-official tourism and despite official prohibitions on photography many German soldiers enthusiastically created a visual record of their service life. While French soldiers might have carried a field marshal’s baton in their knapsacks it appears that German soldiers kept Leica cameras in theirs.

Whose images are these?

I began using contrasting photographs of ghetto life as an exercise in raising a level of awareness among beginning teachers about the kind of images they might use in their teaching and getting them to ask questions about using perpetrator images to teach the Holocaust. We also examined the manner in which these images differed from photographs taken by the Jewish photographers Mendel Grossman and Henryk Ross who created an extensive record of ghetto life in Lodz. This then elided into an exercise which linked archival ghetto images with the recreated ghetto scenes in *Schindler’s List* and in *The Pianist*. The availability of these (perpetrator) images on the internet raises ethical issues which are worth exploring with beginning teachers and with pupils. *The Baedeker Guide* provides a useful starting point to discuss ideas about:

- Audience – who the guide was written for and how the readers might have used the guide.
- Authorship – the intentions of the author(s) and their purpose in publishing the guide.

It is possible to impose or transfer this simple framework on to the photographic images and move pupil thinking beyond banal categorisation into ‘useful’ primary sources which may or may not be ‘biased’. Perhaps our practice with photographs is not too sophisticated and we do not normally go beyond reading the visual narrative – ‘what information does this photograph contain?’ As teachers we probably recognise that photographs are hardly ever value-free or purpose-free but this might be difficult for pupils to appreciate. Ghetto photographs, however, have the potential to engage pupils with complex issues which go beyond analysing the surface image. Figure 1 outlines an analytical framework of questions that we might use to begin exploring these issues and Figure 2 uses some of these questions to frame and interrogate a Ghetto photograph.

Looking at the picture of German soldiers in Lublin ghetto in Figure 2, the surface narrative, or the ‘the subject’ of the photograph, simply concerns two soldiers, possibly on leave, posing for a photograph taken by a third friend. The complexity lies in asking questions about what the soldiers were doing in the ghetto or who the photograph was being taken for. Asking questions like this takes us beyond the explicit content of the image and interrogates the image’s immediate context, opening up the thinking. Working with these photographs enables the teacher to explore ethical and moral questions, that we might not traditionally think of as conventionally historical, and to explore some of the technicalities surrounding 1940s photography.

There are, however, some preliminary matters relating to the provenance and the nature of these images. Most of the illustrations used in this exercise were found on the internet and while it is one matter to make a note of the URL there are often few clues on the website about the origin of these images. The photograph of the two German soldiers in Lublin Ghetto can be found on the following website: www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ The site holds a wealth of other resources but there are few clues to the identity of the ‘authors’ of the website or the provenance of the photographs.

Classifying images and imagery

Making sense of ghetto images is important and if pupils think that they are simply a random collection of photographs they might not be able to focus on key aspects of the photography and the imagery. There are three ‘categories’ of photographic images available. Thinking about differences between the images can allow pupils to make valid comparisons between photographs within a group and to contrast the nature of the images between different groups.

There are at least three categories of ghetto image that are readily available online and elsewhere:

- Perpetrator images – photographs or stills taken by the Germans themselves. This might be considered too broad a group. Still images in particular drawn from propaganda films such as *The Eternal Jew* were deliberately created to present the inhabitants of the Polish ghettos in an unfavourable light. Perpetrator images would also include the large number of private photographs taken unofficially, sometimes by German soldiers, sometimes by officials such as Walter Genewein, a German accountant working in the Lodz Ghetto.⁶ The photographs range from seemingly innocuous street scenes to more sinister images where Jews are being intimidated, humiliated or tormented.
- Images taken by ghetto photographers. In the Lodz Ghetto two photographers in particular, Mendel Grossman and Henryk Ross, created a photographic archive of everyday life in the ghetto from 1939 to 1944.⁷ These images were semi-official in that Grossman and Ross worked for the Jewish administration in the ghetto. They were, however, ‘insiders’ and were able to get closer to their subjects and the viewpoint of the photographer is much more sympathetic. Grossman and Ross consciously made many duplicate images and took care to ensure the survival of their visual record in the full knowledge that they themselves might not survive.
- Images in contemporary representations of the Holocaust, such as the films *Schindler’s List* and *The Pianist*. It is interesting to ask how Spielberg and Polanski constructed these representations and how they referenced well-known images from German propaganda films in their respective films to convey a sense of historical accuracy or authenticity.

It is also important to understand something about the provenance of these images when looking carefully at

Figure 2: German soldiers in Lublin Ghetto⁸

Subject: street scene Lublin Ghetto

German soldiers, ordinary enlisted men, off duty, walking around Lublin Ghetto, photograph probably taken by third soldier. One of the soldiers has a simple sling supporting injured right hand. The soldiers are looking quite relaxed, their uniforms are quite informal, they are not wearing helmets and they are not carrying weapons, except perhaps a side-arm, and are therefore not patrolling the ghetto.



Composition

Two soldiers in centre of photograph each turned at slight angle with space between, right and left shoulders facing towards camera. Viewer drawn into space behind in busy ghetto street.

Background

Busy street scene, possible street traders / market – goods on edge of pavement just out of shadow. People stopping and looking? Summer – most people in jackets, short length of shadows. Street intersection, small square, two- to three-storey houses. Most people not paying any attention to German soldiers.

Object(s)

Two soldiers, civilian, left foreground, young boy behind soldiers, woman to right and behind soldiers. Soldiers, relaxed stance, looking directly at camera. Civilian left foreground walking past photographer, no interest. Woman head turned to look at soldiers but not at camera. Boy, head slightly to one side, looking through gap between soldiers directly at camera.

photographic technique. Figure 2 exemplifies an individual soldier's 'leave' photographs. His souvenirs might need little explanation in terms of photographic technique: one soldier had a camera and his comrades simply posed for the 'snap'. On one level such photographs simply serve as a record of an individual's wartime experience and while the image might not be too difficult to read, the attitudes and values of the photographer himself are worth more detailed consideration. By contrast 'official' images, such as images 3.1 and 3.2 in Figure 3 (p.16) which served propaganda purposes

were careful and deliberate constructions and therefore the technical elements of the image need more careful analysis. While we know such images served Nazi propaganda, it is important to be able to develop a more critical appreciation of the techniques employed by the cameramen. Developing the ability to read images in this way not only develops historical understanding but the transferable skill of visual literacy. Images of ghetto life in contemporary films, of course, are carefully crafted also, in ways that will be discussed further below.

More than a sorting activity?

Working with a range of photographs is designed to move pupils beyond accepting these images as more or less useful primary sources. Source-based activities often focus on the reliability of photographs or on their usefulness. As we know to our cost such activities can result in quite predictable outcomes: 'photographs are useful because they provide us with (visual) information', and so on. The activities described here are designed not only to help pupils to use visual sources in more critical ways but also to help beginning teachers develop confidence when working with challenging visual sources. An awareness of the provenance and the nature of these photographs should not make anyone reluctant to work with perpetrator images. Having that deeper or more nuanced understanding of the context of these perpetrator images opens up the possibilities for a multi-layered analysis which explores issues central to Holocaust education: whose 'story' is being told and how do we distinguish between the nature of the sources we might use? In some respects history teachers are possibly more comfortable using written sources: they are less problematic, contexts are more obvious and different perspectives are more apparent. The narrative of a documentary or literary source can be more straightforward to read. Even for less able pupils, teachers have a number of strategies to make the source accessible: adapting the text or verbally paraphrasing. There are also the internal signposts, individual words or phrases which enable both teacher and pupil to get inside the text. Visual sources are not necessarily more accessible. When we try to move beyond surface description, how much of what we say is conjecture, how much is speculation and how valid is the speculation?

How might you view the image in Figure 2 if the caption simply read: 'German soldiers in Lublin'? There are no distinctive visual clues in the photograph to link it to the Lublin Ghetto and without that context the narrative might appear relatively uncomplicated. While the caption: 'German soldiers in Lublin Ghetto' might not substantially change the narrative, the image takes on an entirely different meaning when this context is added, and issues relating to the attitudes, values and beliefs of the two soldiers, and, of course of the photographer, come to the fore. The focus of any enquiry has shifted from one based on the image as a primary source containing information to a prompt which focuses thinking on the ethics of the individual photographer. Consider these questions:

- Does this photograph suggest that German soldiers could tour the ghetto just like tourists?
- Might the photograph be shared with family back in Germany?
- What might that family think about what was happening to Jews in Poland?
- Might the Nazi authorities have been more sensitive to ghetto tourism, say from 1941 onwards?

These questions are speculative, they might even be considered to be a-historical but they do open the way to explore important issues which are central to

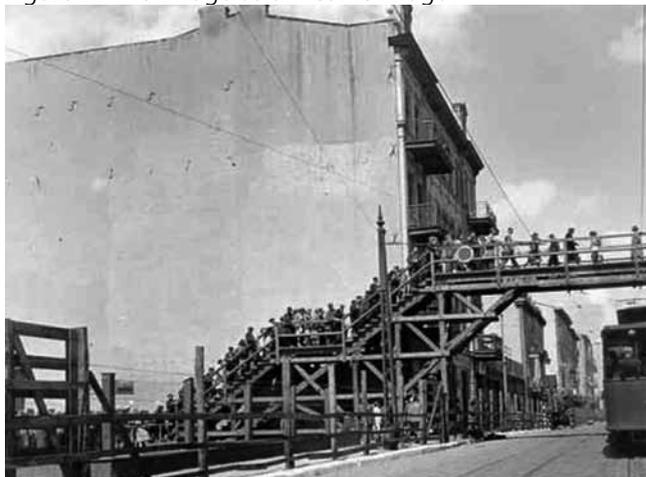
Holocaust education: working with pupils to develop their understanding of audience and purpose could transform this source from a value-free ephemeral snap into something challenging and significant.

Working with beginning teachers I also feel it is important to help them to develop an awareness of the methodological and disciplinary issues related to Holocaust education. As undergraduates quite a number of them will have studied modules which, in one way or another, were Holocaust-related. They were not necessarily made aware of the debates that have arisen in Holocaust education about the ways in which teaching about the Holocaust should be framed, as a history of the 'Final Solution' or as a history of the Holocaust which has as its focus the diverse Jewish experiences of this period. This activity aims to heighten their awareness of the nature of the archival sources that they might use as teachers and draw their attention to the need for reflection when selecting sources to use in their teaching. Where practice is sometimes less effective – or where opportunities are not carefully enough considered – photographs and film tend to be used less critically. There is a tendency simply to accept a visual source as evidence, relying on GCSE-style questions asking students to assess the utility of a source. The technical considerations in Figure 1 are intended to highlight both the nature of the image and the 'status' of photography in a pre-digital age. These peripheral issues influence the way we work with images.

This consideration brings us to Polanski and Spielberg. In the recent Institute of Education report *Teaching About the Holocaust in English Schools*, the film *Schindler's List* was the resource most used to teach about the Holocaust.⁹ *Schindler's List* can be criticised for presenting a distorted view of events which is both redemptory and possibly even optimistic rather than an exceptional episode, there is however much in Spielberg's cinematography that is worth careful exploration and this is why the screen shots employed in this activity were valuable. Watching the film focuses attention on the narrative. A still image enables more careful analysis of the imagery and the ability to draw comparisons across the range of visual sources: perpetrator images, images taken by ghetto photographers, and the screen shots from *Schindler's List* and *The Pianist*. At first glance it appears that the directors of both films were simply creating a series of tableaux which imitated largely Nazi imagery.

The class activity was in some ways speculative. I wanted to see what would happen when the group of beginning teachers was presented with a number of screen shots from *Schindler's List* and *The Pianist*. As reference points they also had a large number of perpetrator images and images taken by ghetto photographers. The activity was devised as a role-play where they took on opposing roles of film editors working 'against' a production team. The team of editors had to challenge the production team about screen shots which they (the editors) wanted to remove from the film. The argument for censoring the film focused around the fact that the producers were simply replicating Nazi propaganda and recycling Nazi images of Jews. The production team had to argue for the integrity of the film and this hung on far more than arguing that the particular images were needed for the sake of authenticity.

Figure 3: The Bridge as an Iconic Image?¹⁰



3.1 An image from the Lodz ghetto. This photograph shows Jews being lined up to walk over the Lodz ghetto staircase on cue to create the right kind of image for the Nazi film crew. Why are there no Jews walking over the footbridge in the opposite direction? Perhaps proof, if any were needed, that these images have been deliberately fabricated.



3.2 An image from the Lodz ghetto. The cameraman at the bottom of the steps would have his image of a 'flood' of Polish Jews moving non-stop downwards.



3.3 Still from *The Pianist* (2002). Propaganda film crew. Film director Roman Polanski setting up a 'ghetto tableau' depicting a Nazi film crew such as that which might have taken the images in Figures 3.1 and 3.2.



3.4 Still from *The Pianist* (2002). On the crowded ghetto footbridge the boom camera focuses on the actors playing the hero Wladyslaw Szpilman, on whose autobiography the film is based, and his father.

Discussion was meant to focus equally on technical aspects of the images and how the producers might have been influenced by Nazi images but, in re-creating scenes, the production team had to show that the camera work provided a different perspective. The most obvious example here involves the photographs and screen shots involving the ghetto bridge (see Figure 3).

A bridge may seem like an innocuous subject for a photograph but as the sequence of images demonstrates, Polanski went to some lengths to recreate a prominent aspect of life in the Warsaw Ghetto. The 'original' photographs which depict the film crew were taken in Lodz but highlight one important aspect of ghetto life in Poland: the fact that ordinary life went on outside the enclosed walls. Anyone could walk down a 'normal' street or take a tram that effectively bisected the ghetto. The bridge – and the way the Nazis used the imagery associated with the bridge – becomes a significant object, particularly if we think about the way the metaphor of a bridge is more usually employed: as a means of reconciling warring factions.

How has Polanski used the camera, while depicting an 'authentic' event (filming Jews coming across the bridge by a German propaganda unit) in order to convey meaning? As a quick exemplification activity it would be possible to take photographs of pupils on a flight of stairs using a wide angle lens and a telephoto lens and contrast the results. The use of a telephoto lens creates an image of a dense, never-ending crowd streaming down the staircase. Polanski replicates this but then the boom camera lifts to the bridge walkway and focuses in on the main characters of the film – Adrien Brody and Frank Finlay amongst the crowd of extras. This is more personal, it connects with the characters in the film but this aspect of the film has also employed Nazi imagery. Is this legitimate in the quest for authenticity or bad taste?¹¹

In another scene Adrien Brody walks along the ghetto streets where Polanski has set up a number of 'tableaux' or staged images which are taken directly from Nazi propaganda films. The purpose of the Nazi film was to show the Jews as uncaring or unconcerned by the poverty and squalor around them. Starving children begging on the street were filmed behind

Jews passing by on the pavement. The shot is taken from the shoulder down so that the faces of the Jewish people are 'hidden'. A similar image of a dying man prostrate on the pavement with his son is also framed to create an image of people walking past unconcerned. Such images were not taken to present a picture of suffering but to highlight how 'different' Jews were from Germans who – it is implied – would show a more humane response. The fact that this very suffering was caused by the German occupation was, of course, lost upon those blinded by an ideological, antisemitic view of Jews as 'subhuman'. Is Polanski wrong to use such imagery? Are these scenes set up simply to create a sense of authenticity? Alternatively does the cinematography create a subtly different message?

Looking at perspectives

In discussions after the workshop there were a series of reflections which highlighted the value of these 'lessons in visual literacy'.

*I think the idea introduced to us about looking at the perspective of the shot and how it may have been altered was really helpful. The shot of the bridge I found particularly interesting as it showed how the two different photographers had manipulated the same image: the Nazis to dehumanise Jews and show the extent of the 'Jewish problem'.*¹²

These comments are important. We know such images are dismissed as propaganda, we know the purpose and the intent of the film-makers. It is one thing to simply state this as a fact, but being able to dissect the image provides a deeper level of understanding, one which makes the activity transferable. It is also important to understand how film-makers realise or visualise their productions. There might be an inevitable debt to historical iconography but understanding the influences of the director and the way the cinematography works demonstrates a more critical approach to visual imagery. This is more than being able to point out flaws in continuity or the irritating habit of pointing out historical inaccuracies (a trait which continues to annoy members of my family!) but demonstrates an ability to think more critically about what one sees.

*It does show just how easy it is for a simulated image to become synonymous with an accurate visual portrayal of an event. It was also a well-conceived concept of how you could build a lesson around the idea of created reality vs. actual reality, but make it challenging for the participants.*¹³

Film is an important medium but the power of the narrative can distract from critical thinking. Time to look and think beyond hitting the pause button is key, as this final comment demonstrates:

The idea of using the movie stills instead of watching the movie appealed to me as you could really focus on the images that were beneficial to conveying understanding of what actually happened. It takes away the danger of a movie lesson, we've all experienced no matter how good/ important/ interesting/ harrowing the movie, kids switch off as soon as the DVD player switches on. This task engages the pupils with the images; they have to interpret,

*analyse and evaluate the sources and through this can form an understanding of the events.*¹⁴

Finally the activity is more than transferable. Understanding the mindset of the perpetrators – the photographers in the Polish ghettos – might be challenging. Being aware that such attitudes are not exclusive to the middle of the twentieth century is perhaps more so. While Browning's *Ordinary Men* showed how it was possible for people to be drawn into committing unspeakable acts in the context of the Nazi occupation of eastern Europe, the opening chapter of Joanna Bourke's *An Intimate History of Killing*, entitled 'The Pleasures of War', demonstrates what can happen when 'the enemy' or 'the other' is viewed as somehow less than human.¹⁵ As inoffensive as some of the tourist photographs might appear, they played some part in viewing the Jewish population of Europe as 'different'.

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- ² Riley, C. (1999) 'Evidential understanding, period knowledge and the development of literacy: a practical approach to "layers of inference" for key stage 3' in *Teaching History*, 97, *Understanding and Learning Edition*, pp. 6–12.
- ³ Aly and Heim, *op.cit.*
- ⁴ www.peterwallage.com/Photophernalia.htm Sometimes when tracking down details like prices one is forced into Googling some very odd places – this was from the website of a camera enthusiast.
- ⁵ It might be instructive to compare two websites which hold significant numbers of contemporary images. The first, from the The Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance website, is an on-line exhibition 'And Still I See Their Faces' at <http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.aspx?c=jmKYJeNVJrF&b=478527> The second site, which holds a significant number of images, is www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ It is less considered in its use of images and it was on this site that the photograph of the soldiers in Lublin ghetto were located. The on-line exhibition 'And Still I See Their Faces' is an incredibly rich resource which illustrates the diversity of the pre-war Jewish communities of Poland. There is also a Polish site which contains some valuable images of ghetto life, significantly a photograph of the bridge in what might be considered 'normal' use. It is far less crowded and creates a very different image from the staged photographs of Nazi propaganda: www.ghetto.lodz.pl/index.php/en/history?start=1
- ⁶ *Storyville*, the BBC4 documentary series, recently broadcast a film about Genewein and the colour photographs he took in Lodz: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007415k Other images relating to Lodz can be found at: www.ghetto.lodz.pl/index.php/en/galleries/43-galerie-zdj
- ⁷ Many of the photographs taken by Grossman and Ross can be found in Adelson, A. and Lapides, R. (1989) *Lodz Ghetto: inside a Community under Siege*, Harmondsworth: Viking-Penguin.
- ⁸ This image can be found at: http://books.google.ch/books?id=vOWmEHLgsAC&pg=PA63&dq=historical+consciousness:+narrative+structure&hl=en&ei=xaXRTJW8J8Xb4ga0zKzdDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCcQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=historical%20consciousness%3A%20narrative%20structure&f=false
- ⁹ Pettigrew, A. (2009) *Teaching About the Holocaust in English Schools*, London: Institute of Education, p.44. The film *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) was cited by 127 teachers as a useful resource; 57 claimed it was their most useful resource.
- ¹⁰ Images 3.1 and 3.2 can be found at www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ghettos/Lodz/gallery/period/lozdstairs.html Images 3.3 and 3.4 are screen shots from *The Pianist* (Roman Polanski, 2002).
- ¹¹ This type of imagery was used in pre-war Nazi propaganda films which dealt with the 'problem' of the mentally ill. The nature of these films is discussed in Burleigh, M. (2002) *Death and Deliverance: Euthanasia in Germany 1900–1945*, London: Pan Macmillan, chapter 6, 'Selling Murder: The killing films of the Third Reich'.
- ¹² Edge Hill VLE PGCE student reflections on workshop session, September 2010.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ Browning, C.R. (2001) *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, London: Penguin. Bourke, J. (2000) *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare*, London: Granta.

triumphs Show

Headteachers, Hungarians and hats: using family photos to bring the diversity of Jewish lives to life

It is 9.35am on a wet Tuesday. As the rain falls outside, fingers twitch in a Year 9 history classroom. The instruction is given and 28 pairs of hands spring into action, rifling through envelopes and tearing them open.

Inside: the missing pieces in this morning's puzzle – the illuminating stories of six European Jews.

Fast-forward ten minutes and the scene has changed. The envelopes, now discarded, have been emptied of their information and put to one side. All across the room, members of 9H are deep in discussion, busily sharing what they have found out. In four minutes, they will each respond to today's lesson question: just how different were the lives of European Jews before the Holocaust?

Thinking it through

For students to comprehend the scale, significance and impact of such an event, they need to develop a 'bigger picture' understanding of what Jewish life was like before, during, and after the *Shoah*. As the classroom resources developed by the Institute of Education have shown, looking at 'ordinary things' can be a highly effective way for students to discover the Holocaust and consider some of the complex issues it presents us with. In this lesson, authentic family portraits were used to not only 'hook' students into an investigation of pre-war Jewish life, but also to get them thinking about the diversity and depth of Jewish experience in Europe before the onset of Nazi persecution.

'Diversity' was chosen as the lesson's key concept for two reasons. By looking at the variety of early twentieth-century Jewish experience I hoped first to engage my students in lives that were quite different (but in some ways similar) to their own. Although the families they would look at might not reflect the majority Jewish experience of the time, this would be a price worth paying if students were able to get more of a 'feel' for the families being looked at. If they began to see them first as individuals with distinct identities rather than the (later) victims of an oppressive regime, they would hopefully get a closer sense of how Nazi persecution impacted upon Jewish lives as our enquiry developed. The six individuals were themselves very diverse: I wanted students to break down the stereotypical Nazi 'Jew' and grasp something of the diversity of the cultures and ways of life that the Nazis set out to obliterate.

Setting it up

Finding suitable resources was quite a challenge. After (what felt like) hours scouring the internet for usable images, I came across centropa.org, an 'interactive database of Jewish

Memory'. Because family members upload many of the photographs in the archive, they are frequently accompanied by a short oral history of the image: just enough context to really bring each image to life. I decided that to make best use of the resource I would try to find the most surprising images I could to use in the lesson: images that would really challenge any preconceptions my students had about Jewish people at this time. Sorting by nationality and activity, I selected the six photos that I thought would engage their attention most: images from France, Germany, Romania and (most surprising to 9H) Turkey.

Recall and respond

As a settler activity, the lesson began with students analysing a map of European Jewish population distribution and answering two quick questions. Where were most Jewish people living at this time and which countries were home to the smallest Jewish communities in 1933? A useful introduction: each student now had a working understanding of the area of enquiry even before I had revealed the lesson question.

A familiar photo was then projected on to the IWB. During the last lesson, students had worked in pairs to analyse a well-known image from the period: Holocaust survivor Frank Bright's Jewish school photo from 1942. I asked them what they could remember about the image and hands shot into the air. 'They're Jewish...' responded one student, 'They're wearing yellow stars,' added another. 'It could have been taken to mark a special occasion,' stated a third, 'But why are they smiling?' questioned a fourth.

Fantastic! Students were remembering not only the inferences they had made during the last lesson but also the process they had followed to make them. I explained that today would be similar (but with a twist) and their focus was palpable. We moved on to the lesson's central task.

Details, guesses, questions

Each pair was given a sealed envelope. Inside were the six images that had been selected from the archive. Opening them up, the envelopes were emptied and their contents

laid out on desks. Having surveyed their options, each student then picked the one photograph that interested them most before sticking the image into their books.

Working against the clock, the students then embarked on investigating each image.

For the first two minutes, they noted down all the details they could see; anything they could clearly identify. Once the timer bell rang (I run a tight ship), a second period was spent making guesses. Who could these people be? Where are they from? What are they doing? I wanted all possibilities to be considered and nothing to be ruled out.

A third interval was spent asking questions. What claims can I make about the image already? What would I like to ask and find out? Once completed, pupils then selected a second image from those left and repeated the process: now they had two photos they could directly compare.

Reveal and reflect

It was now time for six mysteries to be solved. Throughout the room there were questions to be answered, claims to be either refuted or upheld. Just why was a Jewish man wearing a fez? What was *really* taking place in image number 4? Was that a French sign in Photo 2?

Opening up a second envelope, such questions were addressed. Inside, an oral history for each image provided each photo with context, enabling students to identify that which they had – and had not – been able to find out. Via scaffolded discussions, life stories were shared and claims assessed. The activity had really foregrounded the possibilities and potential pitfalls of evidential enquiry: the limitations of interrogating one source without context. Above all, it had highlighted the historical agency that each student possessed. Having learned about the experiences of four separate individuals, all students were now well placed to respond confidently (in writing) to the lesson question posed.

'This surprised me'

The lesson had clearly engaged students not only in the lives of others but also the processes (and possibilities) of evidential thinking. The written responses produced showed that students had immersed themselves in both the business of 'doing history' as well as the varied lives of European Jewry. As a handful of students had reflected, it was surprising to discover how much they could find out from a single image, and some of what they did find out was surprising too. In



Figure 1: One of the 'surprising images' students could select from envelope one – Centropa / Matilda Cerge

Figure 2: An example of the oral history sources that students found in their second envelopes

SOURCE 1: Matilda Cerge remembers her Grand-uncle, Jakov Kalef. The photo was taken in 1918.

This is my grand-uncle, Jakov Kalef. The picture was taken in Carigrad (Istanbul) where he served in the army.

My grandmother Matilda was the head of the family. She rented out our apartments and maintained the shops. Jakov helped her. He took care of her and our family, as if he were our grandfather. Jakov was on the board of the Jewish community and sang at the synagogue. He was very involved in local Jewish life and would keep my father and grandmother informed about everything.

particular, it was encouraging to see that students had begun to develop their appreciation of 'what it means to be Jewish' beyond the limits of their prior understandings. For some students, seeing that Jewish people lived 'ordinary lives' had been their key finding. For others, discovering that 'being Jewish' was but a single aspect of an individual's identity was theirs. Notions of what it meant to be Jewish, what Jewish people did (and 'looked like') had certainly been shaken up. Either way, it was clear that they thought of them first as people, like them, not as victims or statistics.

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The edge of knowing:

investigating students' prior understandings of the Holocaust

Students make sense of new learning on the basis of their prior understandings: we cannot move our students' thinking on unless we understand what they already know. In this article, Edwards and O'Dowd report how they set out to scope a group of Year 8 students' prior learning and preconceptions about the Holocaust as part of their forward planning for delivering the topic in Year 9. Their findings show just how important it is to think systematically about what students bring to their learning: much of what the authors discovered surprised them and the process of enquiring into what students already thought helped sharpen thinking about how to structure future learning in ways that would challenge and develop students.

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The importance of mapping prior understandings

We were curious to find out something about what our Year 8 students knew and understood about the Holocaust *before* beginning formal teaching of the topic in Year 9. In part, we were persuaded by Sam Wineburg's instruction to attend to what our students already knew about history and were charmed by Suzanne Donovan and John Bransford's use of *The Fish Story* to illustrate the learning principle that students bring prior knowledge and understandings of the history topics that we teach in our classroom.¹ Two *Teaching History* articles precede us. Anna Pendry's study was the first to demonstrate the benefits for the history teacher of mapping prior understandings in a history class and Robin Conway's nuanced approach carried this a great deal further.² With this in mind we sought to map our students' prior understandings of the Holocaust and to use the data to inform our teaching aims and lesson planning.

Research in history education has shown us that students' historical knowledge is derived from contexts outside of classrooms, typically from home, community and the mass media.³ We conjectured, therefore, that our students would bring to our classrooms different kinds of understandings about the Holocaust drawn from various contexts and circumstances. What narrative of the Holocaust would they tell? Had they been exposed to historical representations of the Holocaust that varied from or contradicted those that we wanted to present to them? Responding to this, we think we have a role to play as challengers of students' misunderstandings and as developers of what is already known. We view students' prior knowledge as the edge of our students' knowing or as the point at which to begin the planning of new learning.

The aims debate in Holocaust education

The Institute of Education's (IOE's) research report highlighted the choices teachers make when planning lessons for a Year 9 unit on the Holocaust.⁴ The term 'Holocaust' is contentious. Abridging a topic of this magnitude into a short course involves selection: context and a chronological starting point have to be decided upon and the perspectives of the perpetrator and victim negotiated. An overarching aim has to be established: should this be to develop students' historical thinking with a focus upon topic knowledge and second-order concepts or to deliver citizenship and moral education?⁵

Our position, and this underpins this study, favours the development of historical thinking over and above citizenship and moral education. We think there is a place for a discussion of moral questions but we consider this ancillary to our main concern: to teach the Holocaust using the disciplinary concepts of history. Our interest in prior understandings relates to our interest in developing our students' historical understanding about the Holocaust.

In themselves students' prior understandings do not resolve the many problems of Holocaust education lesson planning; however, we would like to suggest that they can be used to inform the process in ways that are helpful. Students' specific areas of

Figure 1: The photograph task

Image source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



Question: Write a caption for this photograph which describes what is happening.

conception and misconception can be taken as signposts that can be used to give direction to the setting of learning objectives and the selection of content. Our intent here is to tempt teachers into conducting surveys of the prior understandings of their own students and to use the data to inform their own planning of lessons.

Methods

During the summer term of 2009 we collected data from one Year 8 class consisting of 26 boys. The class completed a short written questionnaire and we followed this up by conducting a semi-structured small group interview with four students that lasted approximately 20 minutes. Our questions spanned: knowledge of events, the causes of the Holocaust, the significance of the Holocaust, students' prior Holocaust education, the sources of students' prior knowledge about the Holocaust and students' interests relating to the Holocaust. What follows is a summary and discussion of our findings.⁶

The photograph question

We began by inviting students to write a caption for a photograph.⁷ The photograph (see Figure 1) shows a Jewish family walking along a Berlin street on 27 September 1941. About this time the wearing of the Star of David was made compulsory for all Jews living in Berlin. Tragically, in October 1941, a short time

after the photograph was taken, the deportations of Jews from Berlin to ghettos and extermination camps in eastern Europe began. These facts were kept from the class. However, when introducing the questionnaire to them we offered a prompt by explaining that the term Holocaust refers to the systematic extermination of Jews by the German Nazi Party during the Second World War and that the photograph showed a scene from the Holocaust. How many, we wondered, had a prior knowledge of the Star of David worn by the man and women in the foreground? Would they know what it signified? What inferences, if any, would they draw about what was happening?

Responses to this task provided us with our first indication that the class did indeed possess prior knowledge of the Holocaust. Half the class went beyond our introductory prompt and identified the badges worn by the two adults as the Star of David and displayed an understanding that wearing this badge signalled discrimination and segregation during the Nazi era. Historical context was noted with 12 students locating the scene in Nazi Germany. Eight responses interpreted the scene in the photograph as depicting a Jewish family before the Holocaust. As one wrote:

This is the segregation of Jews. Everyone can tell that they are Jewish because they have been forced to wear a Star of David. Everybody is trying to stay away from them because Hitler tried to blame Germany's problems on the Jews.

In this response the student hints at an understanding of state policy in Germany during the 1930s; an understanding of the repressive nature of state-sponsored persecution of the Jews within Germany and the mood of suspicion that it engendered among German citizens. A small number of students located the scene in pre-war Germany and showed a general understanding of the segregation and persecution of German Jews before the Holocaust. This group identified a mood of menace in the photograph; as one wrote, they are 'trying to blend into the crowd'.

Nine students interpreted the scene as a family under pressure attempting to flee persecution during the 1930s, as we see in this example:

I think these people here are running from Hitler and the German army; they are probably gone in a rush because they have no cases and maybe only a little money. They'll probably be getting on a train and are probably Jewish, they are not alone.

A third group of eight saw a family en route to a concentration camp, a prelude to murder:

Looking at this picture I think I can see the Star of David on them so I think they are going to the train station to go somewhere that they don't know, then they are going to get gassed but they don't know that.

Responses to the photograph showed that this class would bring to formal teaching in Year 9 a varied range of prior understandings about the Holocaust. In a few cases understandings were detailed and in most cases they showed a familiarity with some of the main events.

The follow-up interview supported this impression, though in one particular case a surprising misconception surfaced. In interview one student explained that what lay behind his choice of caption, 'family splits', was a previous study of the Blitz. It emerged that he had no previous engagement with Holocaust education in primary school. There he had studied the Home Front in Britain during the Second World War and it was to this topic that he returned to read the photograph. He explained that he thought the family in the photograph were being evacuated and that, 'it was not just in England that they did evacuate'. His reading was that of a family being taken to a place of safety away from bombing.

Narratives

The second question asked students to describe what happened during the Holocaust. The responses confirmed our first impression that this class's prior knowledge of events varied in levels of complexity. Their descriptions were invariably from the point of view of the perpetrator, concentrating upon state policy and the 'Final Solution', particularly the murder of the Jewish people of Europe by gassing. Almost all students viewed the victims of the Holocaust as exclusively Jewish with only two students identifying the victims as Jews, homosexuals and Gypsies. One student in a textured account wrote:

A person called Adolf Hitler murdered millions of Jews, Gays and Gypsies. What they did was they would round

them up and separate them into grown strong men and children were kept at the camp the rest were told they going for a shower so the Germans would put them on a train and take them to a shower room. The gas would come out of the shower nozzle and kill them. This gas called Zyklon B. They would also take the clothes and rings/shoes they would burn the clothes and shoes and keep the jewellery and sell it or wear it. This happened in 1940-45.

Students varied in their knowledge of the scale of the Holocaust. For some it ran into many millions, one boy thought 20 million, for others it was thousands. There was a shared understanding that its scale was vast, with many students writing that *all* the Jews were to be murdered. There was a shared familiarity and indeed fascination with the details of the 'Final Solution'. Students wrote about selections, slave labour, the deception of the gas chambers and the recycling of personal belongings. Some were able to convey this in vivid detail:

During the Holocaust more than 6 million Jews were killed by being gassed and some in concentration camps such as Auschwitz (one of the Biggest). They were separated. All men were forced to do labour but such men and women were not needed and usually led straight to the gas chambers. They were told they would be having a shower but instead of water gas came through the hoses. Hitler thought they were scum and he needed a perfect race with blond and blue eyed Germans. They were usually transported there by cargo train in carriages like cattle.

For these students the Holocaust *was* the narrative of the Final Solution and the level of the detailed knowledge that a small group of students displayed about this surprised us. However, not all students located the Holocaust during the Second World War; some set the event as pre-war; and some students' knowledge of events was more fractured:

Thousands of Jewish people were murdered in concentration camps. Many, many people were put in something like a cage and then gas was sprayed on them all because they were Jewish. The Nazis then dug a huge hole and would throw the thousands of Jewish bodies into the hole and then bury them.

Shared understandings alongside variations in depth and coherence of knowledge were noted. Misconceptions also arose. One student thought that the Jews were persecuted because 'they stood up for themselves'. Another student thought that Poland was a Jewish country and posed a threat to Hitler. One student stated that:

During the Holocaust the German Nazi Party searched the countries they took over for Jews so they could murder them and let Christianity rule.

In interview a similar range of understandings emerged, one student stating that:

I thought in the Holocaust the Germans found all the Jews and made them stand out as Jewish by giving them the Stars. After a while they sent Jews to labour camps to

do work and stuff and then onto death camps. I heard that they used the Jewish peoples' clothing and gave them to Nazis' people who did not have any clothes. And they also shaved their hair off. They use the hair to stuff mattresses apparently. And then they sent them down this long row which leads to death chambers. They had trees around the death chambers so they would not look that bad and there they would think they were having a shower but were really were gassed and they died.

While a second student added:

I put Jewish people persecuted by Hitler. German people would often gang up on them and take their property and not pay them. Hitler made it extreme built concentration camps so he could kill them.

Building upon this class's prior knowledge and understanding of the narrative of events can begin, we thought, with aspects of Jewish religious and cultural life before the Nazi era, an aspect few displayed any sense of. Students articulated a nascent understanding of antisemitism, expressed as hatred towards the Jews. Setting this in a long-term European context would move this forward. Our students told the story of the atrocities committed by the Nazis. This could be countered, we thought, with narrative material constructed from Jewish sources.

The students' description of the Holocaust was a two-stage process: persecution in Germany followed by extermination in camps. Other transitions such as radicalisation during the 1930s, the impact of the outbreak of war; ghettos, and the steps leading to the 'Final Solution' could be introduced. The geography of the Holocaust could be extended to include eastern, western and southern Europe; most students limited events to Germany and Poland. Forms of resistance were mentioned, though poorly understood. Most students saw that the victims of the Holocaust were exclusively Jewish, but few mentioned the other groups who were persecuted under the regime. Students mentioned the involvement of ordinary Germans in the Holocaust with little understanding of how varied that involvement was. Thinking in this area tended to be black and white.

'Hitler was a nutter'

Our third question asked students to give at least one cause for the Holocaust. In the follow-up interview a small group of four students carried out the short discussion reproduced in Figure 2.

In the discussion students' causal thinking varies greatly in sophistication, ranging from monocausal explanations in terms of the personality of Adolf Hitler to multi-causal explanations mentioning a range of personal and impersonal factors. In interview three students attributed the personality of Hitler as the prime cause and viewed the Holocaust as a premeditated act, with Hitler single-handedly implementing the Holocaust from the centre of Government. For these students the Holocaust happened because of a personal vendetta by a racist. Daniel takes this view and locates the cause of the Holocaust within a particular moment: Hitler's rejection from Art College in Vienna. Ben is different; he

Figure 2: A student discussion of why the Holocaust happened (small group interview extract)⁸

Daniel

I think it was Hitler because he wanted the Germans to be like the perfect race, blond hair and blue-eyed people. He feared black people and Jews so he got rid of them so he could have the perfect race.

Ben

I would sort of say though it wasn't all Hitler though he won an election which made the Nazis have control in Germany and they sort of believed in his ideas. So it wasn't all his ideas they sought of come up with it together.

Oliver

Well I think Hitler just didn't like the Jews. I think not all Nazis hated the Jews. I think Hitler just had a personal reason.

Jack

I think it was mostly Hitler as well really.

Ben

Hitler sort of talked about the German being like a superior race compared to others so they thought he was being flattering towards them so they thought they would vote for him so that is how he got into power. I was going to say they were really bad times after WWI they needed a scapegoat so they got the Jews.

Daniel

I heard that Hitler had a bad past with the Jews. The Holocaust was not just the Jews it was black people and stuff like that. I did not think the perfect world was a world just without Jewish people he thought it was a world without black people and homosexuals as well. And Jews as well, and Gypsies as well, so he killed them. He has personal vendetta against the Jews. He was half Jewish and before he became a politician he had a lifelong ambition to become an artist and he went to a Jewish art school and was expelled. So he renounced its faith and then grew a grudge against the Jews.

introduces into the discussion a more complex set of factors, combining the long term and short term, state policy, the economic, the individual and the masses.

Challenging these causal understandings, we thought, would necessitate a study that constructed a narrative of events that was robust enough to support a causal analysis that was plural, containing a range of long- and short-term social, economic and political factors. We would begin with Ben's contribution. Ben's historical thinking, with its causal relationships and interpretation, would be our benchmark of understanding. In general, the class's causal thinking was monocausal. Challenging this would mean devising enquiries that questioned the primacy of Hitler as single main cause. Webs of causes and contrary causal interpretations could be introduced in ways that disturbed the class's apparent sense of ease with the 'Hitler was a nutter' school of thought.

Questionnaire responses displayed a similar range of causal understandings. Ten out of 26 students made explicit

references to Nazi racial theory as the primary cause using terms such as ‘impure race’, ‘perfect race’, ‘superior race’ and ‘inferior race’, linked to the idea of world domination. Ten out of 26 students took the view that the primary cause lay within the personality of Hitler, formulated as, ‘Hitler did not like the Jews’ or ‘Hitler was a nutter’. Other explanations were offered and these were highly significant and gave us pause for thought because, alarmingly, they located the main cause of the Holocaust to be the Jews: the first suggested that the Jews threatened Germany and the second stated that the Jews caused the Holocaust because they refused to conform. It is difficult to interpret such ‘explanations’, without further data on student thinking; however, important implications for teaching clearly follow. In the first explanation, for example, the student seems to have taken what they have learned, from whatever source, at face value. There are clear dangers here, in terms of substantive misconceptions, and this comment underlines the importance of handling Nazi propaganda very carefully and critically in lessons and the importance of considering a range of perspectives and narratives, rather than simply focusing on Nazi policy and perspectives.

Previous Holocaust education

Our next question asked students to recall their previous school experience of Holocaust education. Were the primary schools in any way shapers of our students’ prior understandings of the Holocaust? We found some evidence for this in the following interview discussion.

Daniel

I did study it slightly in Second World War.

Ben

We did Anne Frank in our school and then we went to the Imperial War Museum – there was a lot of stuff there about the Holocaust, which we looked at.

Oliver

We did a lot of stuff about Evacuation in England.

Jack

We studied Second World War and glanced over that for a few lessons.

In the discussion an association is made between the Holocaust, the Second World War and the British Home Front. Ben states, ‘we went to the Imperial War Museum – there was a lot of stuff there about the Holocaust which we looked at.’ A number of students reported that they had made museum visits that contained Holocaust material. It is unclear if they mean by this that they had visited the Holocaust Exhibition in the Imperial War Museum. This may be inaccurate given the age restriction. Did they actually mean they visited a Second World War collection?

In the questionnaire, encountering *The Diary of Anne Frank* in primary school featured strongly in the recollections of eight students. 18 out of 26 students stated that they had not been taught the Holocaust in primary school. When asked if they had experienced Holocaust education during Years 7 and 8, 14 thought not and 12 thought they had. Again, *The Diary of Anne Frank* featured in these responses.

The area of school assemblies and the Holocaust arose with five students recalling assemblies containing a Holocaust theme. Something of this was captured in interview:

Daniel

We had an assembly about it.

Ben

Yes we had an assembly about it. It was about dictatorship and genocide.

Interviewer

Do you know why you had the assembly? What did you learn from the assembly?

Ben

We learnt about the Holocaust and also modern-day atrocities – like what some people are doing in some parts of Africa. How they are killing different people because they believe in different things.

The responses to this question suggested that a proportion of our students had encountered the Holocaust at an earlier Key Stage, quite possibly in different subject areas, and most certainly in collective acts of commemoration. The implications for our planning, we thought, were threefold. First, we would incorporate a metacognitive element. We would ask them to reflect upon their previous learning of the Holocaust and set this against the new learning that we would introduce. Second, noting our students’ familiarity with *The Diary of Anne Frank*, we would deploy it as a source of historical evidence for the Holocaust. Third, we would explore the association some appeared to make, derived from their study in primary school, between the Holocaust and the British Home Front and discuss the possible misconceptions the association engendered.

Holocaust sources: evidence and interpretation

We asked students which Holocaust sources they had encountered. Results showed the range was considerable with some types clearly predominating. In interview it emerged that one student had attended a screening of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* and another had read the novel on which the film was based. A student reported that he had watched *The Secret Life of Anne Frank* over Christmas on television explaining that it showed, ‘how they had to hide’. A student had used a computer to complete homework on the Second World War. *Horrible Histories* had been looked at and museums had been visited. In interview the group selected television, computers, museums and books as their preferred ways of finding out and one commented that you could learn more from, ‘reading than watching TV’, while another chose *The Diary of Anne Frank* as his preferred source because:

...it was about how she felt and not someone else who had written it. Not just historians’ opinions.

The questionnaire suggested that these students have admittance to a culture that is abundant in Holocaust related materials. The most popular source-types were film, television and museums, with printed sources being accessed to a lesser extent. Eight students reported having read about

the Holocaust in the form of a novel, 14 as history books and 12 as a diary.

In the case of film and television interpretations of the Holocaust, popular with this class, it would be interesting to apply Peter Seixas' observation that students have a tendency to read feature films uncritically as 'windows on the past'.⁹ This is a useful phrase that can be applied to how some students view museums, websites and written sources as well. The learning opportunity we drew from this section was that there was an advantage to be gained from working with sources students were already familiar with, in the case of this class, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, to develop their understanding of the second-order concepts of evidence and historical interpretation.

Why does Holocaust education matter?

Next, we asked students, should the Holocaust be taught in school? A majority of the class thought the topic to be of major importance: 22 students out of 26 either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposition that it should be taught in schools. The four students in interview shared strong feelings that the Holocaust was important and that it should be a compulsory element. However, when it came to explaining why it was important there was less clarity. One student explained that it was important because 'quite a lot of things happened'. Another argued that it was important because 'it is great sacrifices what they did for us'. A third thought because we 'should learn from our mistakes'. A fourth student argued that it was unique:

I thought it should be highlighted because of the events coming up to Holocaust – like learn about wars and stuff but it was unlike any wars before they were not like it. We are talking about 20 million Jews being killed. This was a war which went on for five years 20 millions killed in the space of five years – should be talked about.

The interview data revealed students had three rationales for learning about the Holocaust: first, the Holocaust is important because of its scale and complexity – it is quite literally a big event; second, it teaches lessons; third, the present owes a debt to those who died. Recently, Richard Harris and Terry Haydn suggested that students struggle to understand the value of learning history.¹⁰ Their advice was to open up discussion with students on why school history matters. We think this can be extended to a discussion of why school Holocaust education matters.

Historical significance

The 2008 History National Curriculum suggests that designating the Holocaust as historically significant should be seen as a judgement and not a fact. The History National Curriculum attainment targets shows a progression in an understanding of 'significance' that involves recognising that judgements about the significance of events change over time and are subject to differing perspectives and criteria.

22 out of our 26 students strongly agreed or agreed with the proposition that the Holocaust was a significant event

in history. Only one student disagreed. The criteria of significance upon which students based their judgements is summarised in the following points:

- In terms of numbers killed it was the biggest example of genocide in history.
- It was an unprecedented event.
- It changed the way people lived.
- It is well remembered today.

Here we see four positions taken up. There is the scale of the event, a quantifiable justification. Second, it is argued that the Holocaust was an unprecedented event. Third, the Holocaust was a major turning point. Last, the Holocaust is significant because contemporaries are prepared to imbue the event with importance through acts of remembrance. These four justifications are the edge of their knowing and they provide us with a set of criteria from which to develop further their conceptual understanding of historical significance. With this set of criteria we can discuss with students that different arguments can be presented to justify the claim that the Holocaust is historically significant. Which of their four arguments best supports the case for historical significance?

Students' interests

Our final question asked students to state their personal interests in this topic. In interview and questionnaire the following list surfaced:

- What were conditions like in the Concentration Camp?*
- More about why it happened.*
- What caused Hitler to hate the Jews more than other races and how in general the German population did nothing about it?*
- What did the Jews do to deserve it?*

What fascinated this class stayed within the range of understandings that we have noted thus far. As Alison Kitson observed, students want to know more about what happened and why it happened.¹¹ They were drawn to know more about what happened during the 'Final Solution'. They were intrigued by the issue of escape, fascinated by the personality of Hitler as first cause and how he was able to persuade others to follow him. Of course, it is not a matter of just satisfying these interests and concerns in a way that simply panders to students' interests. However, we do think that the questions students ask themselves are good starting points for developing more sophisticated historical enquiries.

The last question is, of course, worrying. Caution is required in interpreting a question of this nature, however. Our first reaction was to wonder what it was in students' sources of prior knowledge that had led the students who wanted this question answering to this gross misconception.

On reflection, however, the question becomes more puzzling and perhaps more revealing of non-topic specific aspects of student thinking. Many students often expect the world to make sense in ways that are rather naïve – children often expect things to happen the way that they did for a 'good' reason, for example. History teaches us, of course, that very much the opposite is often the case.

Conclusion

As we noted at the start of this article, it is always important to try to understand the multiple and varied forms that students' prior knowledge and understanding can take (see Figure 3). Accessing students' prior understandings of the Holocaust can be done with a light touch involving little more than casual questioning. It can, however, be more than this and in agreement with Conway and Pendry it is suggested here that a more systematic approach be more widely considered.¹² Such engagement, we have found, yields invaluable information with which to inform practice. The idiosyncratic nature of prior understandings, their ability to surprise, warns against an over-reliance upon assumed notions of students' knowledge: better to find out yourself.

Acquired from school and non-school social and cultural contexts, students' prior knowledge of the Holocaust signposts the development of more detailed knowledge and understandings. Falsehoods, misconceptions and partial understandings can be challenged. Students' conceptual understandings of change and continuity, cause and consequence, significance and interpretation can be assessed and developed.

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- ⁷ The source of this photograph is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website: www.ushmm.org/lcmedia/viewer/wlc/photo.php?RefId=55169
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Figure 3: Forms of prior knowledge and understanding

Student knowledge and understanding in history is often analysed in terms of the following distinctions:

- **Substantive or 'first-order' prior knowledge and understanding**
Knowledge and understanding of specific historical events, actors, locations and events and of topic-specific concepts.
- **Procedural or 'second-order' prior knowledge and understanding**
For example, understandings about evidence and how we can know the past or understandings of cause and of how to construct causal explanations of events in the past.

The sense that students make of the past is also, of course, shaped by their broader substantive understandings of how the world works, including, for example, ideas about what people are, what societies are, and so on.

Our analysis of pupil prior knowledge and understanding also suggests that it is helpful to think about student preconceptions in terms of narrative framing, or in terms of the kind of story that they think a particular historical topic represents (who do students see as the key agents in the story and from what perspective do they tell the story?).

How can we deepen and broaden post-16 students' historical engagement with the Holocaust?

Developing a rationale and methods for using film

Peter Morgan represents what is best about the reflective practitioner – an experienced teacher of some 15 years' standing, he continues to challenge himself and to seek ways to improve and develop his classroom practice. Deeply influenced by the pedagogy and resources that he encountered on the CPD of the Institute of Education's Holocaust Education Development Programme, Morgan critically reflects upon the opportunities and challenges of exploring this history with sixth-form students, shares his innovative approaches to skilfully integrating different types of film into the classroom and considers how these approaches can be further developed in response to the latest thinking in Holocaust education.

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Introduction

This article is a reflective account of the way I have responded to several challenges facing history teachers trying to teach the Holocaust. Along with the teaching of African slavery, this subject area raises some of the most difficult issues involved in the teaching of history. It can leave teachers like me questioning what they have done in their classrooms in the past.¹ In discerning and meeting these challenges, I have been influenced by the resources and professional development provided by the University of London's Institute of Education (IOE) through their national Holocaust Education Development Programme.² This article gives examples of my efforts to explore and reflect on these challenges through my own classroom practice.

The challenges might be summarised as follows: understanding and making appropriate use of the emotional force of certain resources and activities; helping students to discern the dominance of perpetrator-driven narratives and balancing such narratives with those constructed from other perspectives; helping students to reflect on appropriate interplay of 'big picture' and small story when finding out about the Holocaust; managing the tension between the narrow demands of examination specifications and richer, more contextualised historical learning; and, finally, ensuring that the critical tools of historical enquiry, especially the disciplined questioning of sources, are brought to bear on all these issues. Many of these challenges overlap or are closely related. In this article, I will reflect on my own developing approaches to handling some of them using different types of film.

I consider such an approach particularly important because film is how the vast majority of the population, young and old, experience history, whether through enjoying feature film as entertainment or, increasingly, recording their own lives and world through audio-visual means. Three main uses of film will be discussed: examining feature film as an interpretation of the past, examining archival film footage as a primary source and using it as evidence and exploring the construction of historical documentaries (another form of interpretation of the past). These usages sometimes overlap or come together to serve each other. With feature films, I will share how I have helped students to deconstruct the film as an interpretation, for example by exploring the film's properties, structure and impact or by examining how far the film reflects or departs from different types of evidential record. With film as primary source, I will share creative ways of teaching students to interrogate the source material in order to uncover and explore various layers of meaning and to establish evidence for stories hidden or untold. With documentary film, I will consider how different media – music, photographs, survivor testimony – are integrated to construct narrative and to give meaning. Through this emphasis on relationship between interpretation and evidence, I have attempted to transcend the narrowness of the examination specifications.

Despite the fact that I have been teaching for 15 years, recent reading in this area and, especially, participation in the IOE's professional development programme has shown me

how much I can still add to my knowledge and practice, but my goals are becoming clearer and I am becoming more confident in my discussions with my pupils regarding these more difficult and sensitive areas of learning: I want students to gain a richer and more rigorous appreciation of some of the complex issues involved in understanding the Holocaust historically. I will begin with an example from my own practice using documentary film in order to illustrate the complexity of the above challenges. I will then give three examples from my developing practice, using Roman Polanski's feature film *The Pianist* and two short BAFTA-nominated educational films produced for Teachers TV by Available Light, in collaboration with the IOE. The first of these relates to feature film examined as interpretation. The second and third are particularly influenced by IOE approaches and relate to film as primary source and film as the complex blend of primary source extracts and interpretation found in a constructed documentary.

Discerning the complex challenges through reflection on my practice

I will begin with an illustration of how some of these challenges have presented themselves to me within my own practice. Although productive of much worthwhile learning, the example that follows is also problematic. It reveals some of the dimensions of the challenges listed above.

One of the first lessons I teach to a sixth-form class taking an examination unit entitled, 'Hitler, Antisemitism and the German People' involves a creative manipulation of a well-known television documentary.³ I show the students the first 23 minutes of the episode, *The Road to Treblinka*, from the BBC television series, *The Nazis: A Warning From History* by Laurence Rees.⁴ I replace the sound with the choral movement from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and ask them to consider why I have done so. I also ask for their reactions and any other thoughts arising. At times, the music seems uncannily synchronised to what is unfolding on the screen, particularly when the film footage illustrates the Barbarossa invasion with the music slowly and quietly building to one of its famous peaks or when the choir reaches its full volume while photographs depicting the massacre at Kaunas in Lithuania are presented. Whenever I do this, it always strikes me that the students concentrate so much more than they ordinarily would. They seem to actively reflect on what they are watching and they can be seen making greater than usual efforts to see and read the subtitles. The music ends as a Polish man finishes describing a massacre where he could hear small children calling for their mothers and fathers and the camera pans up towards the treetops. I always find this moment almost overwhelming and the students are usually left speechless. After this, it is quite hard to elicit discussion.

And therein is the first major problem. I may have engaged them to perhaps an unprecedented degree but have I also traumatised or even manipulated them, and for what purpose?

I do, of course, have an answer to this last question. Otherwise I would not have continued to repeat this exercise. The activity prompts students to comment on the huge gulf between the positive power of the music and the horror of what is unfolding on screen. This can be used to highlight the chasm between the best of modern European, and indeed German, culture and its nadir. This juxtaposition is rendered even more disturbing and perplexing by the fact that Reinhard Heydrich, the high-ranking SS officer tasked by Goering to develop a 'solution to the Jewish Question' and one of the chief architects of the Holocaust, loved this music and was a very competent violinist. Moreover, the irony of Beethoven's deafness considered alongside the way in which physical imperfections were viewed by the Nazis underlines aspects of the profound puzzle that faces historians: how to explain that the terrible and extreme events of the Holocaust were not an aberration from general European history but a part of it, and what this means for our understandings of western 'civilisation'.

At the same time, despite these educational benefits, several questions remain concerning the validity or appropriateness of such a technique. What is the purpose of creating such an emotional reaction and is it appropriate or necessary in the history classroom? What are the boundaries between using emotion to build concentration or reflection and simply traumatising students? Might their age or maturity render the approach inappropriate? And if the emotional force is justifiable, questions still arise over the appropriate historical ends to which the students' newly cultivated curiosity and concern should be put. What forms of historical enquiry should or can such emotional experiences stimulate? Yet further questions arise over whether any such benefits are outweighed by the negatives of using images recorded by perpetrators in a narrative which depicts Jewish people solely as victims. How can the students become aware that such images were created by the perpetrators? What other kinds of context, whether gained through background knowledge or primary sources, might be necessary to ensure that they gain a broader perspective of who the victims were? I attempt to balance this out in later lessons but this in turn raises another problem. The examination specification for this unit does unfortunately emphasise a perpetrator narrative. It mentions neither the need to access the experience and perspectives of Jews and other victims, nor the role of Jewish resistance. How do we make time (or justify making time) for examination classes to encounter such rich perspectives, to engage in enquiries which will teach them to select and question a broader range of sources and examine how subsequent interpretations arise?

The distinctive pedagogy and classroom materials developed by the IOE helped me to reflect on some of these challenges and to rethink my schemes of work and general approach. In particular, the IOE's approach has led me to carefully justify the use of every image and piece of film, to highlight the problems of particular examples if they are used and to present the information in as wide a context as possible. In previous years, I failed to introduce the subject with information and images of Jewish life in eastern Europe before 1939. Nor did I teach lessons on resistance. Likewise I sometimes relied on images of Jews as the Nazis and their collaborators saw them. The time pressures and other pressures caused by the examination context are not, of course, likely to go away. But I have learned that it is important to discuss these and other

concerns with the participating students, to involve them in their own learning and to share some of the dilemmas facing teachers as we attempt to explore histories of mass atrocity in the context of a set of narrow examination requirements.

Moreover, the IOE resources and approaches have given me criteria for reflecting on the choice of materials and for thinking about how to get students to engage with their construction, origin and impact. Crucially, I have a clearer sense of how processes of historical enquiry and concepts of evidence – all of which are relevant to Advanced Level study – can be developed through a richly contextualised and critical study of subsequent interpretations. The feature film is ideal for such deconstruction. From their work on ‘interpretations of history’, lower down the school, our students should already know that films can never be treated as ‘windows on the past’ and should not be used primarily to show ‘what happened’, but rather engaged with critically, as a representation of the past to be deconstructed. Such earlier work on interpretations shows students that a study of feature film can foster intensely useful reflection on the attitudes of the film-maker and the socio-economic and cultural context he or she is working in, as well as the sources they use in the process of production. Because the critical deconstruction of interpretations such as film plays little part in examination specifications in this country, it can be the case that this disposition can be forgotten once pupils move beyond the early secondary years where ‘interpretations of history’ is a required part of the National Curriculum. With post-16 classes there is therefore a further reason to rekindle those understandings of how interpretations are constructed.⁵

Three examples:

1) Feature film: *The Pianist*

I will now illustrate the kind of approach that I have found effective in meeting these challenges. The first of these relates to a popular feature film, *The Pianist*. Feature film dramatises and creates human reactions. Being visual, memorable and dramatic, it has a big impact on students. It can also be an efficient way of conveying a kind of ‘big picture’. I give sixth-form students imaginary critical reviews of the film, *The Pianist*. They then have to respond to these from an historian’s perspective. Through this activity they begin to consider the issue of Jewish responses to events in the Holocaust and to reflect on how these can or should be filmed for a modern audience. In one of the imaginary reviews, I raise the issue of the nature and extent of Jewish resistance and ask students to investigate the ‘real’ history of this. The imaginary criticisms of the film are shown in Figure 1.

Although these criticisms would suggest that I wish the film to be defended, I do discuss the complexity and difficulties which are inherent to the depiction of these events in all filmed interpretations, whether these are more obviously controversial such as in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* or seen as works of great authenticity and integrity. Furthermore it is explained to students that authenticity does not necessarily guarantee the delivery of a balanced picture of the past. Omer Bartov has, for example, pointed out that in telling the ‘truth’ of Oskar Schindler, *Schindler’s List* essentially gives the viewer an intensely untypical story which arguably results in an untruth – or at least a distorted version of the past that

Figure 1: Critiquing *The Pianist* – using Roman Polanski’s film as a stimulus for historical enquiry

Students are required to respond to the following imaginary reviews of the film:

- ‘Many of the events depicted here seem to this reviewer exaggerated to the point where I seriously began to doubt the historical accuracy of this film.’
- ‘I did not realise that the Jews collaborated so much in their own destruction and were so passive in the face of persecution.’
- ‘One need look no further for an accurate account of the Jewish experience in every ghetto’.
- ‘A terrible film with a completely unnecessary obsession with detailing the depths of human misery which adds nothing to our lives. We do not need to see this.’

focuses overmuch on stories of rescue.⁶ Therefore students need to consider the importance of the role of choice of emphasis within cinematic representation, and the way that this affects how we see the past. Likewise different viewers, due to their own stance and already held knowledge and views, will interpret for example, the representation of Jewish collaboration or resistance in very different ways, despite the fact they have watched the same film.

The students then watch the first 50 minutes of the film. As they watch it, they know that this is the first stage in their preparation to write a review of the film which will counter or support the claims in Figure 1. They are then asked to do four things:

- Comment on as many examples of historical accuracy or otherwise as possible, using researched details to support or challenge the film.
- Comment on the issue of whether the Jewish people were somehow complicit in their own destruction – either through passivity or collaboration, using researched details to support or challenge the film.
- Use researched details to show that the experience of the Warsaw ghetto was not the same as everywhere else in Poland, particularly in terms of timing.
- Comment on the sensitivity and the appropriateness of the film’s depiction of the Jewish experience.

A technique I have used to keep students focused on recording relevant information is the use of a sheet with the timings of the parts of the film that have special historical interest. At each point, the students record their summary of the key events depicted (see Figure 2, with an illustration of how this completed sheet might look). I display the running clock on the screen so they know that they have arrived at

Figure 2: Key events and themes depicted in the first part of *The Pianist*, with time codes

5:30:	Restrictions on liquid assets (cash).
8:30:	No entry for Jews to cafés. Official decrees on parks and benches.
9:40:	1st Dec. 1939. Visible emblems on sleeves.
11:00:	Soldiers striking Jews in the street.
11:45:	Announcement of the Jewish District by Dr. Fischer. Jews to move there by 31st Oct. 1940. 360,000-400,000 Jews in Warsaw.
12:30:	Lack of money. Inability to work.
13:50:	31st Oct 1940. Jews enter the ghetto.
16:00:	Ghetto walls. Jews selling items to live.
17:00:	Black market, bribery and corruption. Crossing point over a gentile street running through the ghetto.
18:20:	Ritual humiliation of Jews by guards.
19:50:	Offer to join the Jewish ghetto police.
21:00:	Divisions within the ghetto. Some Jews still having access to fine food and wine. Black market, gold coins.
22:40:	Illegal printing press. Resistance. Planning for an uprising. Notices saying there will be a cleansing of undesirables.
24:30:	Smuggling.
27:20:	Night time raid.
31:50:	Behaviour of the Jewish ghetto police.
33:15:	Jews stealing from Jews.
35:10:	Employment certificates and resettlement.
36:44:	Workshops.
37:30:	15th March 1942. Closure of the small ghetto.
37:45:	German camera crew.
38:00:	Sorting looted property.
39:00:	Selection. 15kg of belongings. Arbitrary execution.
40:22:	16 August 1942. Waiting for resettlement.
42:00:	Knowledge of what is and what is not happening. Issue of lack of resistance.
46:00:	Sharing of the caramel. Resistance? Dignity?
47:00:	'Evacuation' by train.

the moments that they must later research and/or comment upon. The sheet alerts them to when they should be taking note of something. Stills from the film are also provided, to be used by the students and compared and contrasted with archive pictures while they research and write their piece.

At the highest level, students will use both primary sources (such as contemporary photographs) and secondary sources to support their evaluation of the film and begin to engage with the issues revolving around Holocaust historiography. In particular, they will have the opportunity to test the early interpretations of Raul Hilberg – that centuries of Jewish attempts to avoid confrontation in Europe conditioned them to obedience and actual collaboration⁷ – and of Hannah Arendt – who suggested that Jewish people went into the gas chambers 'like lambs to the slaughter' and, in so doing, facilitated the murder 'process' and ensured a higher death toll than needed to be the case.⁸ Students are encouraged to seek out more recent perspectives, which place more emphasis on victim sources, contextualise actions in terms of what was known and what options were available and stress less obvious and diverse means of resistance.⁹ Finally students can then test these perspectives with survivor testimony such as can be found on the Shoah Foundation website.¹⁰

In this way, I have sought to achieve a series of goals. First, I have helped the students explore perspectives other than the perpetrator-oriented narrative. Second, I have enriched the examination specification with wider historical context and more challenging and searching reflection on an *interpretation* than the specification requires, but I have done so in ways compatible with the examination aims. Third, by encouraging the students to behave more like real historians, engaging with the enormous diversity and complexity of this subject and the very difficult questions it raises, I have enabled them to participate in the continued challenge of shaping and testing new narratives. Finally, by evaluating this film in a classroom situation I have, hopefully, achieved a broader educational aim, that of preparing students to go out into the world better prepared to be consumers of mass popular culture and the problems of interpretation it contains.

2) Primary sources: the Gumprich family home movies

A second example of how the various challenges can be met through film can be found in the home movies made by the German Jewish Gumprich family between 1937 and 1939.¹¹ This time the film constitutes *primary* source material but, once again, its potential for historical learning can be unlocked when it is explored in an imaginative and thought-provoking way. I have reflected on the potential of this IOE resource and I now plan to use it to improve my practice further. In an activity developed by Kay Andrews which accompanies the film, students are helped to appreciate how important contextual narratives are, both for interpreting primary source material and for exploring possible meanings in the past. The students first watch the film without sound and are asked to interrogate the movies as sources by making inferences and asking questions. They might come up with points relating to the very ordinary aspects of everyday family life, middle-class dress or activities, the happiness of the people or the apparent strength of their relationships. They might also comment on how like their own lives those of

the children in the films seem to be. They may elicit various details, noticing that there is another couple in the films, and perhaps inferring that these are family friends.

After this, the film is replayed, but this time with the soundtrack added, and students are provided with contextual narratives that both further humanise and freshly dramatise these events. Students encounter a narration about the family with details of names and occupation alongside information relating to how Nazi policies increasingly limited the family's opportunities. The family's escape to England at the last minute is a relief; the revelation that the other couple in the film – Rabbi Julius Voos and his wife Stephanie – were murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau with their young son, Daniel, ensures students recognise that such escapes were by no means typical. Crucially, a third element of the IOE's methodological approach resists the urge to tell students what all of this means – to use this story to deliver a moral lesson. Instead, students are given space to discuss what issues, themes and questions it raises for them: to search for 'the deeper layers of meaning' in the past. The images may challenge perceptions of Jewish life before Second World War and confound Nazi stereotypes. They also raise the type of questions which need to be asked by students if they are to view moments in the past in a way which recognises the wider contexts and complexities contained within them. For example, why were the Nazis intent on persecuting such ordinary people? Could the family's flight be seen as an act of defiance or indeed resistance? Why didn't more people manage to escape? What factors influenced who survived and

Figure 5: Esther Bejarano, who survived the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp playing the accordion in the women's camp orchestra.

From a film made by Available Light for Teachers TV



Figure 3: Happier times: home movie footage of Louisa Gumprich playing with her children on the beach.

Still from a film made by Available Light for Teachers TV



Figure 4: Walter Gumprich and his sister, Bridget, mugging for their father's home movie camera, in Germany before the war.

Still from a film made by Available Light for Teachers TV



who died? Each of these questions – raised by the students themselves – establish lines of enquiry to be developed through the subsequent scheme of work.

3) Constructing narratives: music and witness testimony as primary sources; documentaries as interpretations

A third example relates to a short documentary film produced for Teachers TV, and invites students to engage in creative apprehension of primary sources' meaning by introducing thought-provoking juxtapositions and deeper contextualisation. This time the sources include a piece of music which is then related to another kind of source – oral testimony, and to written documents. Students listen to a short piece of accordion music, without knowing anything about it, and are asked to consider its nature and purpose. Only after this discussion are they introduced to the elderly musician – Esther Bejarano – and to her story. This comes in the form of an interview in which she relates how she played the accordion in the women's camp orchestra at Auschwitz-Birkenau, playing as the prisoners were marched to work and the new arrivals were marched to the gas chambers. Students are asked to reflect on how they would now listen to this music and consider the extent to which the historical context shapes its meaning. Further sources then give the students the very different perspectives of those who listened to it at the time. These included the musicians themselves; the camp inmates marching to and from the brutality of slave labour; the people arriving at the camp on new transports; and the SS guards, some of whom found great solace and pleasure in listening to it.¹² Through this activity the common perpetrator narrative of what happened at Auschwitz-Birkenau is given fresh perspective and is balanced by many other voices, rendering the past in richer and more nuanced ways. Such an activity helps students to become aware of the complex influences on our own meaning-making processes, such as the ways in which new contextual information can inform our own complex blend of emotional response and historical judgement about the significance of a piece of music.

This could then take the teacher and students back to issues regarding the use of music in the depiction of the Holocaust in films and documentaries. Questions could be explored regarding whether certain footage needs a soundtrack at all and, if used, whether it should consist of – for example – the haunting and moving strains of orchestral strings, such as Frank Pierson's use of Schubert at the end of his 2001 film *Conspiracy*, which dramatises events at the 1942 Wannsee Conference, or Steven Spielberg's use of Bach in the scene of the liquidation of the Krakow Ghetto in *Schindler's List*. Such an exercise might also take the class back to my use of Beethoven's Ninth as an accompaniment to the *Road to Treblinka* documentary, described earlier in this article, reflecting not only on how the music shaped their response to the film but on how the events portrayed may shape how they listen to that piece in the future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have found that the CPD programme and the rich resources of the IOE's Holocaust Education Development Programme have helped me to reflect on and transmit the

huge complexity of the Holocaust in a more meaningful and rigorously historical way. My students feel that they can engage with it and be part of an ongoing (rather than a finite) discussion. They can gain a sense of the bigger narratives not only drawing upon a wider context but also examining how stories of individual experience are fundamentally entwined, integrated and pivotal to its construction. Perhaps most importantly, as well as humanising the victim, they do the same for the bystander and perpetrator, thus taking us away from a more comforting narrative in which it sometimes seems as though the Holocaust is presented as an aberration from human history – as if evil aliens came down to earth before being defeated by the forces of good. Instead, a more complex, human and multi-faceted story emerges when students question primary sources in new ways and when they consider the construction of film as cultural artefact and its impact on different audiences. This messier, greyer version of events not only leads to a more appropriate and meaningful discussion of the Holocaust, but also contributes to an important role for history in the education and development of young people.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Such challenges have been explored from a range of perspectives in *Teaching History*, 127, *Sense and Sensitivity Edition*. See also the report commissioned by the British government's Department for Education and Skills (DfES) at that time: Historical Association (2007) *Teaching Emotive and Controversial History (T.E.A.C.H.) Report*, London: Historical Association.
- ² The Institute of Education (IOE), University of London was commissioned by the Pears Foundation and the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to develop a research-informed professional development programme in Holocaust education to be offered free of charge to all state-maintained secondary schools in England. For further details see the programme's website, www.hedp.org.uk
- ³ This unit is an option within their AS course, which, in England, is normally (but not necessarily) followed in the first year of the sixth form. We do the AS offered by the awarding body known as AQA. www.aqa.org.uk Specification: <http://store.aqa.org.uk/qual/gcse/pdf/AQA-2040-W-SP.PDF>
- ⁴ First broadcast on BBC Television in 1997. DVD released in May 2004 by 2 Entertain Video ASIN: B0001MIQ94
- ⁵ A requirement for pupils to examine, deconstruct and consider the audience and purpose of 'interpretations of history' was first introduced into the National Curriculum for England and Wales in 1991. See 'Attainment Target 2' in DES (1990) *National Curriculum in England. History*. London: HMSO. For an influential commentary on the new requirement, see, McAleavy, T. (1993) 'Using the Attainment Targets in Key Stage 3: AT2: Interpretations of History' in *Teaching History*, 72, pp. 14-17. This feature has remained in all subsequent national curricula, becoming 'Key Element 3' in England's revised, 1995 National Curriculum and a 'concept' in the 2008 National Curriculum. This curricular requirement has fostered an extensive discourse and variety of debates among teachers and teacher-researchers. For example, see Wrenn, A. (1998) 'Emotional response or objective enquiry? using shared stories and a sense of place in the study of interpretations at GCSE' in *Teaching History*, 91, *Evidence and Interpretation Edition*; or Banham, D. and Hall, R. (2003) 'JFK: the medium, the message and the myth' in *Teaching History*, 113, *Creating Progress Edition*. McAleavy lamented the failure of examination boards to pick up the nature of Key Stage 3 work and take it forward in GCSE and A Level: McAleavy, A. (2000) 'Interpretations of history' in R. Harris and M. Riley, *Past Forward: A Vision for School History 2002-12*, London: Historical Association.
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- ⁷ Hilberg, R. (1961) *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Chicago: Quadrangle.
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- ⁹ See, for example, the views put forward by Yehuda Bauer (2001) *Rethinking the Holocaust*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press; Michael Marrus (1987) *The Holocaust in History*, New York: Meridian; and summarised in the historiographical essays by Dan Michman 'Jewish Leadership in Extremis' and Robert Rozett 'Jewish Resistance' in Stone, Dan (ed.) (2004), *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- ¹⁰ <http://college.usc.edu/vhi/>
- ¹¹ The *Teachers TV* short film, produced by Available Light, and the accompanying suggestions developed by Kay Andrews of the IOE for integrating it into the classroom, can be found at www.hedp.org.uk/resources as can further elaboration of the IOE's methodological approach, developed by Paul Salmons and described in detail in the 'Ordinary Things?' materials on the same web page.
- ¹² Interview with Esther Bejarano, produced by Available Light for *Teachers TV*, the sound file of Bejarano playing the accordion and the lesson activity described here and created by Paul Salmons of the IOE can all be found at the IOE's Holocaust Education Development Programme website www.hedp.org.uk/resources

Nazi perpetrators in Holocaust education

The Holocaust is often framed, in textbooks and exam syllabi, from a perpetrator perspective as a narrative of Nazi policy. We are offered a different orientation here. Interrogating and understanding the Holocaust involves understanding *why* the people who perpetrated the Holocaust did the things that they did. As Wolf Kaiser shows, this is a complex question, since explaining the Holocaust means explaining the actions of individuals in very diverse positions whose actions were shaped by individual choices in the framework of structures that they had partially created themselves. Understanding perpetrator action and decision making is no easy task, of course, particularly given the enormity of the actions in question, but it is only through exploring the complex webs of values, beliefs and decisions that drove the Holocaust that we can begin to make sense of why it happened.

Wolf Kaiser

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Historical empathy without sympathy

When the trial against Adolf Eichmann was prepared in Jerusalem, a psychologist examined the defendant in order to find out whether he was insane or fully responsible for what he did. When the psychologist was asked afterwards whether Eichmann was 'normal', he answered: 'Yes, he is normal. Certainly more normal than I am after this examination.' The anecdote is a warning that dealing with Nazi perpetrators confronts teachers and students with the darkest side of human nature. But it also underlines that the Holocaust cannot be explained by supposing that the Nazis were insane or even some different kind of human beings. There were some pathological characters among the Nazi leaders, but this phenomenon can by no means explain how a systematic genocide could happen. Most Nazis and their collaborators were normal human beings who committed very extraordinary crimes.

Since the Holocaust was planned, organised, and executed by human beings, it can be explained, although the existing explanations may not yet be comprehensive and entirely convincing. In order to explain why the Holocaust happened we must try to understand what the perpetrators did and what they thought.

There is a German proverb saying: 'To understand everything means to condone everything.' In this case the proverb is certainly not applicable. Studying the Holocaust we are confronted with the most despicable attitudes and behaviour and most people will react with disgust and horror. And even when they go a step further and analyse how and why such inhuman attitudes and acts emerged, and on which ideology and dynamics they were based, the aversion will not fade away.

Reading a letter written by SS-officer Rolf-Heinz Höppner to Adolf Eichmann about the Jews isolated in the ghettos of the annexed Polish territories can be used as an example. Höppner referred in particular to the situation in the Lodz ghetto under German administration headed by Hans Biebow (see Figure 1) when he wrote on 16 July 1941: 'There is the risk that, in the coming winter, it will become impossible to feed all the Jews.' One would expect suggestions to follow how sufficient food supply could be organised. But the logic of the Nazi perpetrators is different; they would hardly go backwards and revoke a measure, but decide upon more radical 'solutions' to problems they themselves have created. So Höppner continues:

It should be seriously considered if it would not be the most human solution to dispose of the Jews, in so far they are not capable of work, through a quick-acting agent. In any case this would be more pleasant than to let them starve.¹

The document shows how Nazis who were neither near the top of the hierarchy nor in the centre of the Third Reich contributed to the radicalisation of anti-Jewish politics. Five months later they had found a 'quick-acting agent': The killing of Jews of the Warthegau in the gas-vans of Chełmno started on 8 December. When we interpret the document in its historical context, it does not lose its chilling potential; on the contrary: we understand that it is a product of rational planning and cynicism and this is more disturbing than insanity.

Difficulties that students face when they deal with Nazi perpetrators

The difference between historical explanation and comprehension without critical distance is very important for historians and for educators. It can happen that students – eager to understand the motivations of perpetrators – cross this line, not intending to approve the crimes, but showing them as an inevitable consequence of certain predispositions and constraints. This is not only educationally unwelcome; it is also historically untrue. The perpetrators had options (whereas the victims were often confronted with ‘choiceless choices’). Showing that the decision to take part in persecution and mass murder was based on the ideology of the perpetrators, on their ambitions or their authoritarian attitude does not mean to pretend that there were no alternatives.

Perhaps the most difficult task for students when dealing with Nazi perpetrators is to find an adequate language that can describe the perpetrators’ way of thinking and challenge it at the same time. Students tend to unwittingly reproduce the ideological language of the Nazis. They need help to express a critical analysis.

This is particularly important when we do not only focus on executioners of mass murder, but include those who prepared it ideologically, planned and organised it. If we want to understand why the Holocaust happened these perpetrators are more interesting than the killers. Studies should not be limited to persons who can be defined as criminals on the basis of the penal code. They must include journalists who spread antisemitism, jurists who undermined the state of law by interpreting and changing the legal system according to Nazi ideology, bureaucrats who coordinated anti-Jewish activities (see Figure 2), tax officers who organised the dispossession of Jews, railroad men who allocated the trains transporting the Jews to the death camps, and so on. However, it is important to differentiate between perpetrators and bystanders. The passivity of bystanders also had an impact on the events. But they were not themselves executors of discrimination, persecution and murder.

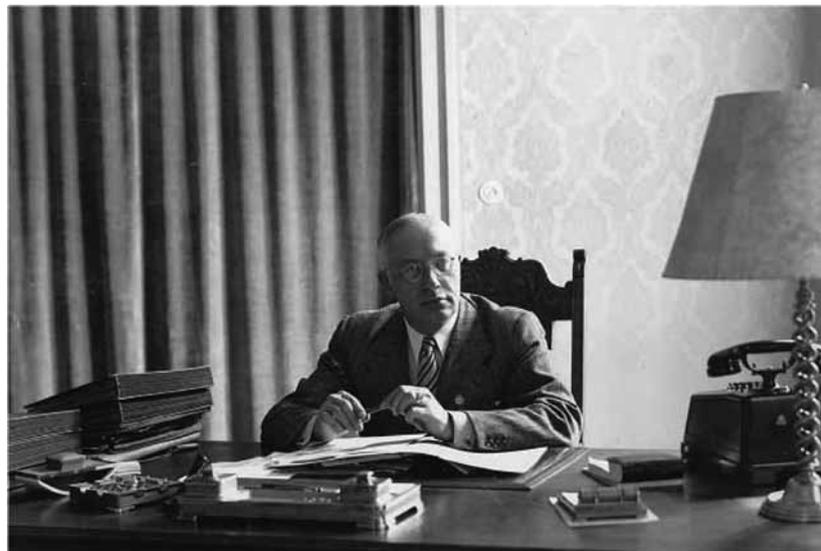
We cannot analyse the position and functions of perpetrators without looking at the society that generated, supported and tolerated the perpetrators. At the same time we have to explain the special responsibility of the perpetrators. The concrete relation between perpetrators and society must be described differently for different groups of perpetrators. Gestapo agents had a particular position in society and their relation to other citizens was different from that of tax officers who confiscated Jewish property and put it on auction, of SS-camp guards or of the officials of the ministerial bureaucracy preparing anti-Jewish legislation. It is not helpful to adopt the Nazis’ ideological concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (‘community of the people’) without examining its degree of reality, let alone vague ideas of the German people’s character based on national stereotypes.

When teaching about the Holocaust, we are confronted with high expectations. Holocaust education should inform our students about a complex historical process, which is difficult to understand. Furthermore, it should also make them think

Figure 1: Hans Biebow’s birthday, December 1942, photographer: Walter Genewein, the chief accountant of the ghetto administration in Lodz
Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt



Figure 2: Martin Luther, Undersecretary of State at the German Foreign Office, equipped with the weapons of the bureaucrats



about questions that are relevant for the present and the future. How do we reach such goals? Do students get a deeper insight into the history of the Holocaust by studying the perpetrators? Does this generate understanding of threats to human co-existence and reinforce values that characterise a citizen who is ready to defend democratic principles and human rights?

Dealing with the perpetrators provides access to crucial questions of Holocaust history. The Holocaust was the climax of more and more radical politics of the Nazis against the Jews. In order to analyse and understand this process we need to study the files documenting the activities of the perpetrators who initiated and controlled it. We must analyse their motivations and their way of thinking and behaviour, if we want to understand why this happened and why it was done in this manner. The victims had very little influence on the way things developed. Of course the letters and diaries written by Jews who were exposed to the escalating cruelty of the Nazis are very valuable sources for reconstructing their experiences, but in order to understand the driving forces

behind the radicalisation of anti-Jewish actions we must deal with the perpetrators.

Studying biographies of perpetrators

During the last 15 years, many books and papers on Nazi perpetrators have been produced and many individual or group biographies of perpetrators have recently been published portraying perpetrators in different functions within the agencies of the Third Reich and on different levels of the hierarchy. Studying such biographies is one possible approach.

Raul Hilberg began his book about *Perpetrators, Victims, and Bystanders* with a chapter about Hitler.² No doubt that Hitler has to be mentioned first when we speak about Nazi perpetrators. But the persisting notion that many people have that all crimes of the Nazis were initiated by Hitler and committed following his orders is certainly wrong. In his monumental biography of Hitler, Ian Kershaw quoted a phrase coined by a rather unknown Nazi functionary, the state-secretary of the Prussian Ministry for Agriculture, Werner Willikens, in 1934: 'working toward the Führer'.³ Kershaw uses it as the *Leitmotiv* of his book. It expresses Hitler's key-position, but it is also a hint that we have to look at the Nazi functionaries who developed initiatives on their own to realise the racist and antisemitic policy of the Third Reich. And we should include others in our syllabus who were not particularly keen to get rid of the Jews, but who nevertheless took part in their persecution because they understood that this was one of the main goals of the regime and that they would benefit from their participation in terms of career, power or wealth.

Perpetrators held different positions in the Nazi system not only in terms of hierarchy. There were diverse groups of perpetrators participating in the persecution and murder of the Jews. Not only those who committed the murder in the camps and at the shooting ditches: the members of the SS, of the police, and in not so few cases of the army have to be mentioned here. Also bureaucrats in many bodies of the state, municipalities, and the Nazi Party had an essential function in the process. They were involved in the discrimination and isolation of the Jews and the organisation of the deportations into death. Through anti-Jewish propaganda and harassment even members of the Hitler Youth paved the way for the radicalisation of anti-Jewish measures and the acceptance of these measures by many Germans.

A documentary called *Heil Hitler: Confessions of the Hitler Youth* provides an example that can be used with students of different ages.⁴ In this film, Alfons Heck, who was a fanatical member of the Hitler Youth, tells his story in a rather self-critical way. He remembers that the November Pogrom (euphemistically called *Kristallnacht*), when the synagogue of his hometown was burnt down, was an exciting spectacle for him. When he watched his best friend being deported, he felt that this was necessary for the good of Germany. As a 16-year-old at the zenith of his career in the Hitler Youth, he shot down an American fighter plane. Several interesting questions can be discussed after watching the documentary. Was Alfons Heck a bystander or a perpetrator? What motivations lay behind Nazi fanaticism? What responsibility did Germans have who became enthusiastic Nazis? What alternative behaviours would have been possible? Similar autobiographical memories given

by female members of the Hitler Youth equivalent, the German Girls League (*Bund Deutscher Mädel* or BDM), can also be used for exploring these questions.⁵

Another example – more suitable when teaching older students – is the biography of Franz Schlegelberger, state secretary and from January 1941 to August 1942 acting Minister of Justice in Nazi Germany. Different from Heck, Schlegelberger had a leading position in the ministerial bureaucracy of the Third Reich. He was the most prominent defendant in case three of the Nuremberg Trials, where he got a life sentence, mainly because of his responsibility for the infamous Poland Penal Law Provision. But Schlegelberger was not a fanatical Nazi like his follower in the Ministry of Justice, Otto Thierack. On 13 October 1942, Thierack wrote to Martin Bormann that he intended to turn over criminal jurisdiction over Poles, Russians, Jews and Gypsies, to the Reichsführer-SS Himmler. And he added with regret: 'In doing so, I stand on the principle that the administration of justice can make only a small contribution to the extermination of these peoples.'⁶ Such sentences cannot be found in Schlegelberger's writings. His attitude was ambivalent, and this makes him more interesting.⁷

Schlegelberger, an author of highly esteemed books of jurisprudence, tried to defend the independence of the judges against Hitler's interventions. But he did not extend this care to Jewish judges who were dismissed. Insisting on the rule of law and supporting the anti-Jewish politics of the regime actively and creatively was compatible for him. He held antisemitic feelings and had no reservations about discrimination against citizens simply because they were Jewish. It was important to him, however, that all actions of the state were in accordance with laws. In the end, his strategy did not even help to preserve the formal rules. In October 1941 Hitler read in a newspaper that a Jew from Kattowitz, Markus Luftglass, had been sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison because of illegally stockpiling eggs. Hitler demanded the death penalty for Luftglass, and Schlegelberger handed him over to the Gestapo for execution. Schlegelberger's case shows how a renowned jurist became a Nazi perpetrator. Denying Jewish citizens equal rights put him on a slippery slope on which there was no halt. In 1942 he argued that so-called half-Jews (*Mischlinge*) should be forcibly sterilised instead of being deported – an intervention that only proved that he was well informed about what was in store for the Jews.

Most of the perpetrators do not deserve a study because of their interesting character. Rather than aiming at reconstructing the life story of a fascinating personality, dealing with biographies of Nazi perpetrators should be understood as an approach that provides an insight into the historical, sociological and psychological conditions from which the Nazi crimes emerged. It allows us to deal with questions that go beyond describing what certain individuals did and what happened to them. In the context of Holocaust history our first question would certainly be what direct or indirect responsibility the person had for the persecution and murder of the Jews. This historical question could be followed by a more psychological one: how did these people become so unscrupulous that they participated in preparing or committing systematic mass murder of human beings? But we should also ask what the political and social conditions were that allowed people to plan or practise such

extreme violence. Referring to the complicated cooperation of people from many offices and professions in the Holocaust we might ask: which specific skills did they use in order to make the murderous machinery as efficient as it was? Questions referring to the aftermath should also be asked. Were the perpetrators put on trial or did they have to face any other consequences of their crimes after the end of the Nazi regime? How did they deal with their guilt?

We should also be aware that a biographical approach has certain limits. We will not always be able to give answers to all the aforementioned questions. And the answers will certainly not meet the expectation that analysing biographies of perpetrators could provide a comprehensive and satisfying explanation of why the Holocaust happened. It does not even allow for the construction of a causal link between the conditions and events in the life of a certain person and the crimes he or she committed. In many cases there is a lack of sources that would allow for the reconstruction of his or her motivation. Only a few Nazi perpetrators wrote diaries or letters revealing their mentality. And if they did so, they usually had good reasons to destroy them. There are some exceptions, such as the Nazi physician Friedrich Mennecke, who was deeply involved in the 'T4-programme' to murder mentally ill and disabled people and the selection of prisoners in concentration camps to be murdered in so-called 'Euthanasia' centres, the 'special treatment 14f13' (see Figure 3). The numerous letters of this physician to his wife were preserved and have been published.⁸ They give an interesting insight into this murderer's daily work and into his thoughts. The letters do not only reveal his racist and antisemitic sentiments, but also a total inability for self-reflection and a ruthless eagerness to contribute as much as he could to mass murder in the camps and 'Euthanasia' centres. Every day Mennecke tells his wife how many files he has got done; in other words, how many prisoners were selected for death in the gas chamber.

In research on perpetrators another kind of evidence is often used: the files of post-war criminal investigation and trials. These are rich sources of information. But these documents have to be interpreted very carefully. They provide a retrospective interpretation based on the evidence given by the defendant and by witnesses and the conclusions of the court. The defendant – advised by his lawyers – was of course interested in hiding certain aspects and highlighting others. And we also have to be aware that the attorneys and judges selected information according to the rules of the trial. They did not intend to write a historical biography, but to decide whether or how the defendant had to be punished according to the applicable laws. Nevertheless it is worthwhile studying such judgements. The documentation of the Nuremberg Trials⁹ and the series of 47 volumes containing judgments of German courts against Nazi perpetrators¹⁰ belong to the most important collections of evidence about the Nazi crimes. In these documents we can find biographies of the defendants and often a detailed description of certain events, which can serve as a clue for exploring the circumstances and the character and behaviour of the persons involved.

Analysing behaviour in key events of the Holocaust

Analysing key events instead of a whole biography can be an alternative approach. Students can usually study biographies only very selectively in the classroom because of their limited

Figure 3: Dr. Friedrich Mennecke and his wife Eva
Deutsches Bundesarchiv



Figure 4: Helmuth Groscurth
Deutsches Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1997-017-20



reading capacity and time restrictions. If we focus on a certain event, students can study the behaviour of several persons involved (including those who did not become perpetrators) and interpret the differences.

Saul Friedländer has written an excellent analysis of the murder of the children of Byelaya Tserkov – one of the most horrible stories in the gruesome history of the Holocaust.¹¹ It can be used as a case study, not because of the horror, but since it is instructive to study the different attitudes and behaviour of SS- and army officers on different levels of the hierarchy and their scope of action. Not only fanatic SS-murderers and Nazi officers were involved, but also military chaplains and an officer of the general staff of the army division who was one of the most committed opponents to Hitler among the high-ranking officers. The diaries of Colonel Helmuth Groscurth, who died in a Soviet POW-camp from typhus in 1943, were preserved and published (see Figure 4).¹²

When the SS was going to shoot the Jewish children whose parents had already been murdered, Groscurth, who had just arrived at the site, intervened and tried to save them. His intervention failed and he was sharply criticised by his Commander-in-Chief because of his attempt. Afterwards he wrote a report for his self-defence. This is a very ambivalent document. On the one hand Groscurth insisted that the troops should 'avoid violence and roughness towards a defenceless population', on the other his main interest seemed to be the honour of the army, not the survival of the children. He wrote:

*In the interest of maintaining military discipline all similar measures should be carried out away from the troops... Following the execution of all the Jews in the town it became necessary to eliminate the Jewish children, particularly the infants.*¹³

How could Groscurth, a deeply religious Protestant and anti-Nazi, write such sentences following the logic of the murderers? The bitter truth is that in the eclipse of humanity we will hardly find a hero without fault.

In many cases, Germans who were neither members of the SS nor of the Nazi Party not only failed to help Jews or remained passive, but even actively took part in the killings although nobody was forced to do so. In an exhibition about the crimes of the German Army an instructive example was given.¹⁴ Three commanders of companies got the same order from their superior to kill the entire Jewish population in the region of Krutchka in Belarus. One of them, Hermann Kuhls, a member of the SS, executed the order without hesitation. The second one, Friedrich Nöll, first tried to avoid this, but when the order was confirmed in a written form, he obeyed. The third, Josef Sibille, a teacher and active Nazi Party member since 1933, refused the assertion that the old Jews, women and children at the site were a risk for the security of the German troops and told his commander that his company would not take part. Asked when he would ever become relentless, he answered: 'Never'. His insubordination did not have any further consequences for him. Unfortunately, his behaviour was exceptional.

The question why so many Germans took part in the killings although they could have avoided doing so without risking

their lives has been widely discussed. Above all, the controversy between Daniel Jonah Goldhagen and Christopher Browning found a large audience.¹⁵ Goldhagen maintained that the Holocaust emerged from an 'eliminationist antisemitism'¹⁶ which he called a German national project deeply rooted in German culture, whereas Browning emphasised factors, which influenced the behaviour of the majority in the actual situation like group-pressure, a sense of insecurity in an unknown and hostile surrounding and brutalisation through the war experience. The German social psychologist Harald Welzer recently revisited Browning's explanation and added a detailed analysis of the killing process as an organised procedure, which facilitated the participation of those who were reluctant in the beginning.¹⁷ But he also stated that without racist ideology this would not have been accepted. He mentioned an alteration of the frame of reference, a rapid change of social norms through the measures taken by the Nazis against Jews and other minorities and widely practised in everyday life since 1933. This practice was based on the assertion of a fundamental inequality between human beings. The training programmes of the police, as described by Jürgen Matthäus, can be understood as an actualisation and intensification of this underlying assumption which made the policemen ideologically fit for mass murder.¹⁸

What was said about the motivations and mentality of murderers in police units cannot simply be applied to the bureaucrats who organised the deportations and mass-killings. Their behaviour deserves a special consideration. Christopher Browning's book *The Path to Genocide* contains an outstanding paper on three middle-echelon bureaucrats.¹⁹ Under the title 'Bureaucracy and Mass Murder: The German Administrator's Comprehension of the Final Solution' Browning portrayed three ambitious administrators who became active collaborators in organising genocide: Franz Rademacher at the Jewish desk of the German Foreign Office (see Figure 5), Harald Turner, the chief of the German military administration in occupied Serbia from April 1941 to the fall of 1942, and Hans Biebow, the head of the 'Office for Food Supply and Economics' in Lodz who was responsible for the ghetto administration. He shows them as 'normal' bureaucrats, being 'accommodators' as opposed to 'anticipators' of mass murder like Biebow's deputy and antagonist in Lodz, Alexander Palfinger, who, as early as November 1940, zealously advocated systematic starvation to promote 'a rapid dying out of the Jews'. Biebow wanted to prevent starvation by making the ghetto self-sustaining. But when in the autumn of 1941 he received signals (not orders!) from above that solving the 'Jewish question' would now mean systematic mass murder, he actively took part in shipping the Jews from Lodz to the Chelmno death camp. Browning reconstructed a similar process in all three case studies. They all accepted the notion that there was a Jewish question to be solved. At least in Rademacher's and Turner's case this clearly meant a need to get rid of them one way or the other. Browning emphasised that none of them 'initiated mass murder from below, neither did they receive explicit orders from above'. But all cooperated in genocide once it had begun. Browning concludes:

The personal adjustment that each had to make flowed so naturally out of the logic of his past conception of the Jewish question, and dovetailed so completely with his own career

self-interest, that there was no sudden crisis of conscience, no traumatic agonizing, no consciousness of crossing an abyss, virtually no foot-dragging, and only occasional attempts to escape personal involvement, provided of course that it could be done without damage to career.²⁰

Browning's essay can be used for conceptualising a lesson or a series of lessons on Nazi perpetrators. It demonstrates that we might miss the point if we focus on the moment when a 'normal' bureaucrat became a mass murderer. Rather than looking at the decision taken in this very moment, Browning suggests analysing the 'logic' of the conceptions and interests of the perpetrators.

Problematising simple lessons from history

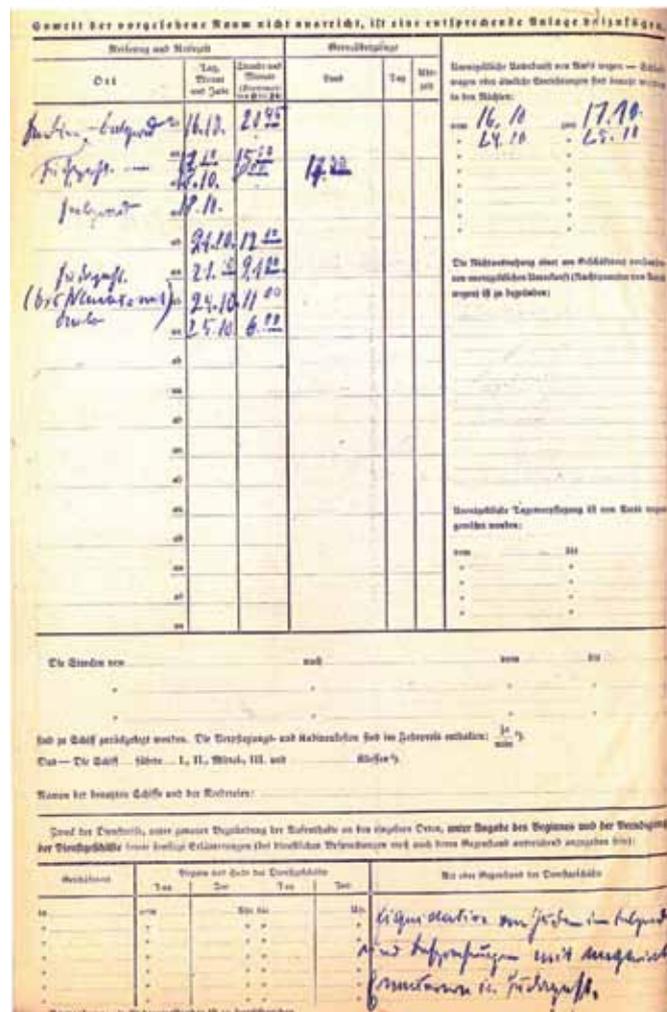
It is legitimate to choose historical events for studying human behaviour. But the examples must not be isolated from the historical context. Studying the history of the Nazi perpetrators can contribute to the ability to assess political, social and cultural developments from a democratic point of view, heightening awareness of present dangers, and motivating people to look for alternative options. But we should not try to deduce from historical examples a set of rules of conduct that are universally applicable.

If we expect learning from history, there is a specific difficulty when Nazi atrocities are made the subject of study: the enormous differences between the historical topic, the learning situation and 'real life'. We should not try to compensate for these differences by simulations. Such experiments imply the risk either of being inadequate to the seriousness of the historical event or of damaging the self-confidence of students as moral personalities. And they will not provide any proof that a lesson learnt from the Holocaust under normal conditions will be applied in an extreme situation. We have to admit that we do not know whether our educational efforts will have the desired effects on behaviour in the future. We can observe reflections and see how students deal with important questions. We may hope that they will see warning signs based on the historical experience. But they themselves will have to find their own way in the actual situation. History encourages reflection, but it does not provide signposts for the right way to go in a quickly changing world.

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Polgehroneon

Adolf Eichmann: the making of a 'genocidaire'

— Professor David Cesarani

Almost 60 years ago Adolf Eichmann went on trial for crimes committed against the Jews while he was in the service of the Nazi regime. His capture by the Israeli secret service and his abduction from Argentina triggered a number of journalistic books that portrayed him as a pathological monster – sadistic, brutal, corrupt and lascivious. This characterisation was pre-set by psychologists – such as Erich Fromm and Wilhelm Reich – who had analysed the 'Nazi mind' during the Second World War. They believed that the Nazis were recruited from the losers in German society, people with a grudge who were desperate to follow a strong leader who promised them 'pay back' against their perceived enemies, most of whom were imaginary – like the Jews.

Yet the man who appeared in the bullet-proof glass box in the courtroom in Jerusalem in May 1961 looked more like an accountant than a raving beast. His demeanour, which was part of his defence strategy, fooled many observers into thinking that he was a banal little man who was, as he repeated ad nauseam, a cog in a bureaucratic machine and just a faithful civil servant obeying orders. Some experts, like Gustav Gilbert, a psychologist who had studied the defendants at Nuremberg in 1945-6, concluded that he was a passionless robot. The American scholar Hannah Arendt preferred to see Eichmann as an unthinking drone, the product of a totalitarian society that poisoned peoples' minds until being a 'good citizen' entailed doing things that in other contexts would be deemed inhuman. Arendt's analysis seemed to gain scientific validity from the near-contemporaneous 'experiments' by the Harvard psychologist Stanley Milgram whose tests appeared to show that ordinary people in modern, hierarchical societies had a proclivity to obey authority figures even if told to inflict pain on unknown, innocent victims. Later experiments by another psychologist, Philip Zimbardo, apparently confirmed that obedience to authority and peer pressure could turn normal citizens into sadistic thugs.

Eichmann's biography, and his own statements made in freedom and in prison, however, reveal that he does not fit these patterns. Eichmann was a thinking person who consistently made choices. He voluntarily decided how to further his career, to adopt an ideology that both appealed to him and offered advancement, to use his own initiative to please his superiors and, ultimately, to pursue goals that he had internalised even when the situation dictated it was folly to do so.

These changing interpretations reflected the state of knowledge at particular moments, but also approaches to dealing with Nazi war criminals. In 1945 the victorious allies tried the surviving Nazi leaders. The prosecution case revolved around a conspiracy by a clique of fanatics, several allegedly deranged, who had seized power and then dragged Germany into war and genocide. According to this 'top down' legal approach the middle- and lower-ranking perpetrators were either taking orders or acting under compulsion in a police state ruled by thugs. It was hard to believe that 'civilised' and rational people could have committed such atrocities in other circumstances.

More sophisticated historical research in the 1960s, especially the work of Raul Hilberg, laid bare the workings of the Nazi state and the elaborate bureaucracy responsible for the 'Final Solution'. It appeared at just the time Eichmann was caught and had a deep influence on Hannah Arendt. She coined the term 'banality of evil' to characterise Eichmann and the unthinking bureaucrats who she believed carried out the policies of mass murder. However, her interpretation was challenged by studies of the killers at work. In the 1990s, Christopher Browning and Daniel Goldhagen showed that they always had choices, although the two historians differed in their interpretation of how and why those choices were made. Their work drew on legal investigations, mainly in Germany, and illustrates the continuing importance of the judicial process in informing historical understanding.

Eichmann was born in the Rhineland in 1906. He had a normal childhood despite the disruption caused by the First World War, his family's move to Austria and the death of his mother when he was only ten. He was a typical youth, lazy at school and rather indolent. Eventually, though, he found a career as a salesman working for a petroleum products company and did quite well. He was certainly socialised and politicised in right-wing, German nationalist circles that were anti-communist and antisemitic. However, he displayed no signs of antisemitism and worked in a company managed by Jews. He spurned the local Nazi Party until he was invited to join the Austrian SS by a much-respected family friend.

Eichmann went through the regular training for the SS in Germany, but ended up working in an office. Out of boredom in 1935 he joined the Security Service of the SS (the SD). In time the SD under Reinhard Heydrich would become a powerful agency,

but then it was small and under-funded. It did not have any role in making or executing anti-Jewish policy. When Heydrich ordered the creation of a Jewish office Eichmann was invited to join it; however, his new boss was not a rabid Jew-hater. On the contrary, Edler von Mildenstein instructed Eichmann in Jewish history and scorned those who espoused violent antisemitism. Von Mildenstein saw Jews as an unwanted alien presence in Germany, but envisaged orderly emigration as the way to remove them. Heydrich agreed: it was necessary to be ruthless, but rational.

After the annexation of Austria in 1938 Eichmann was sent to Vienna to monitor the Jewish community. When he saw Jews clamouring to emigrate he worked with Jewish leaders, acting under duress, to set up an emigration office. He cynically harnessed terror to propel the emigration of plundered, destitute Jews. In 1939, the 'Vienna model' was adopted for all Germany. As a result, the fate of the Jews was placed in the hands of the most ideologically committed arm of the Nazi state, the SS-SD apparatus.

During 1940-41, Eichmann went from engineering forced emigration to organising expulsion and deportation. Initially, his main victims were Poles who were ethnically cleansed from territory annexed to Germany. He had little to do with

the mass murder of Jews by the mobile killing units that trailed the German army into the Soviet Union in June 1941. At this stage Eichmann and his unit, experts on emigration not extermination, could have become redundant. However, he was next tasked with the deportation of German and Austrian Jews to ghettos in eastern Europe where tens of thousands of local Jews were slaughtered to 'make room'.

From the spring of 1942, after the Nazi leadership had decided to annihilate all the Jews of Europe, Eichmann's office was charged with the logistics. As he later said, he 'delivered them to the butcher'. Although he did the research for what became 'the Final Solution' he had limited involvement with the death camps themselves. Nevertheless, by 1944 he identified totally with his murderous work and personally oversaw the transportation of 470,000 Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. Eichmann continued to round up Jews even after Himmler, head of the SS, decided it was expedient to end the genocide.

Just before the fall of Berlin, Eichmann told his men that he would gladly jump into his grave knowing that he had taken five million Jews with him. Yet this fanatical hater of Jews was made, not born, and he chose his genocidal vocation.

Designing enquiries to help pupils think about interpretations of perpetrators

As the case of Eichmann shows, there have been many changes in the ways in which the actions of perpetrators have been interpreted over time. We can contrast these interpretations using conceptual oppositions: on the one hand, the opposition between social or bureaucratic *structure* and individual *agency* and choice; and, on the other hand, the opposition between explanations that *pathologise* perpetrators and explanations that treat them as 'ordinary' people or that *'normalise'* them. These oppositions could be used to create a graphic organiser – such as a quadrant diagram – on which Key Stage 3 (11-14 year old) pupils could be asked to locate and thus contrast differing interpretations as they pursue the enquiry *How have interpretations of the actions of perpetrators changed over time?*

The history of these interpretations shows that stability and change in interpretation can be powerfully affected by new evidence: for example, by social psychological research findings, by historical research and by trials. Advanced level (16–19 year-old) students could be asked to explore the difference that particular kinds of evidence have made at different times – to explore the impact of the Eichmann trial or of the trials of 'ordinary' Germans such as the members of Police Battalion 101, for example – as they pursue the enquiry *Why have interpretations of the actions of perpetrators changed over time?*

The Editors

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This edition's Polychronicon was compiled by David Cesarani, Research Professor in History at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Polychronicon was a fourteenth-century chronicle that brought together much of the knowledge of its own age.

Our Polychronicon in *Teaching History* is a regular feature helping school history teachers to update their subject knowledge, with special emphasis on recent historiography and changing interpretation.



Finding a place for the victim:

building a rationale for educational visits to Holocaust-related sites

Kay Andrews, former history teacher and expert in Holocaust teacher education, relates how she found herself questioning the impact and purpose of overseas site visits for students. She raises questions about whether the typical eastern European destinations that dominate Holocaust-related travel are the most appropriate for student learning. She also explains the danger that site visits might merely reinforce a perpetrator narrative instead of challenging it. Offering a range of solutions to these difficulties, Andrews shows how students might be helped to use site visits in order to construct or explore other narratives, including those that represent the experience of Jewish people as individuals and those that examine the impact of the post-war period on the interpretation of place.

In 1997, at the end of my third year as a history teacher, I spent the summer holidays travelling through eastern Europe and visited Krakow and Auschwitz-Birkenau for the first time. Six months later I found myself in Poland again, this time not as a backpacker, but as part of a group of teachers travelling together with a Holocaust survivor on a journey led by Beth Shalom (now the Holocaust Centre). Each of these visits stands out in my memory, the first for logistical and spatial reasons – it was exceedingly hot and I struggled to find a train to take me to Oswiecim and, as with many who visit Birkenau for the first time, the size and scale overwhelmed me. The second was a different experience. I moved away from the mechanics of death and into the realm of life and then into the void that has been left across Europe as a result of the Holocaust. Auschwitz-Birkenau was almost incidental to the other sites we saw. These included the small courtyard where our guest survivor had lived before the war and the overgrown cemeteries where there were no descendants to tend the graves.

These experiences allude to some of the challenges involved in planning visits to Holocaust-related sites. How do we, as teachers leading such visits, develop sound pedagogical aims for an overseas tour, when we often have to use non-specialist tour companies? When it comes to choosing a destination, what guides us and should we be widening our horizons? How do we work with our groups to move beyond numbers and beyond the perpetrator narrative on to reflection on the lives of Jewish people as an essential part of the narrative?¹ Finally, when it comes to reflecting on a meaning for today, how do we articulate and demonstrate the void across Europe resulting from genocide?

Since 1997, formerly as Head of Education at the Holocaust Educational Trust and now as part of the team at the Institute of Education (IOE) working on the Holocaust Education Development Programme, the issue of educational visits to Holocaust-related sites has become my professional concern. Both personally and in conversation with teachers and experts, I have found myself questioning the impact and purpose of overseas site visits and reflecting on whether eastern European destinations that dominate Holocaust-related travel are necessarily the most appropriate for students.

The challenge of designing an educational overseas visit

Many history teachers have commented that history learning outside the classroom can add an extra dimension to students' knowledge and understanding of the past.² In England, such is the consensus about their importance in providing additional curriculum opportunities that visits are even enshrined in the current National Curriculum for history: pupils should 'appreciate and evaluate... the role of museums, galleries, archives and historic sites in preserving, presenting and influencing people's attitudes towards the past'.³ When it comes to visiting Holocaust-related sites, how do we ensure that the programme strikes a balance between reflecting on the past, commemoration and providing a wider historical narrative, without turning a tour into a macabre horror visit to sites of mass murder? Indeed, given the risks of voyeurism and the fact that sites such as Auschwitz-Birkenau are identified as being on the extreme end of the 'dark tourism' scale, are there some places that school visits should avoid?⁴

Kay Andrews

Kay Andrews is National Outreach Co-ordinator on the Institute of Education (IOE), University of London's Holocaust Education Development Programme.

Planning any school visit requires decisions about a mixture of practicalities, content and outcome. As a teacher, I led a number of visits and although my aims were grounded in history and learning there was always a tension between such aims and my students' understandable excitement in participating in an overseas trip with their friends. This tension increased on visits to Holocaust-related sites, an issue articulated by Keil as 'pleasurable in one sense, ... and on the other, as serious, revelatory or transcendental'.⁵ The challenge is to construct a programme underpinned by sound educational principles, ensuring a balance across a range of issues: the experience of travel, learning about history, the complexity of a number of narratives and perhaps, too, the need, for some, to build in an element of commemoration. This juggling of needs and educational principles raises the question of whether short visits of a few days or less *should* take in places such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, when the resulting learning experience may be limited to the dehumanisation of the victims and the mechanics of genocide.

Figure 1: Memorial to the Jews deported from Tromsø



Figure 2: Detail on the Tromsø memorial.



Figures 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 6
 © Kay Andrews
 Figure 2
 © Paul Salmons

Figure 3: Page of Testimony for Solly Caplan – Yad Vashem

YAD VASHEM דאף-עד דף-עד Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority A Page of Testimony		ידי ושם P.O.B. 84 Jerusalem, Israel
תפקידו של יד ושם הוא לאסוף את המידע על אלה שנהרגו בשל אהבת ישראל או בשל התנגדותם לנאצים, ולפרסם את שמותיהם, ולקיים את חובת הזיכרון וההנצחה להם.		
THE MARTYRS' AND HEROES' REMEMBRANCE LAW, 5713 – 1953 determines in Article No. 2 that The task of YAD VASHEM is to gather into the homeland material regarding all those members of the Jewish people who laid down their lives, who fought and rebelled against the Nazi enemy and his collaborators, and to perpetuate their memory and that of the communities, organizations, and institutions which were destroyed because they were Jewish.		
	1. שם המשפחה CAPLAN	
	2. השם הפרטי SOLLY	
	3. שם האב DANIEL CAPLAN	4. שם האם ANNA SARA CAPLAN
	5. תאריך הלידה JUNE 12, 1908	6. מקום ונאץ הלידה MANCHESTER, ENGLAND
	Residence before the war TROMSØ, NORWAY	
Residence during the war TROMSØ, NORWAY		
Place and date of death Auschwitz DATE ?		
Circumstances of death		
Name of wife	Maiden name	Name of husband
Children deceased under the age of 18		
I, the undersigned HARRY CAPLAN residing at 114 Cottage St. Chelsea, Mass. 0250 U.S.A. relationship to deceased Nephew hereby declare that this testimony is correct to the best of my knowledge.		
Signature [Signature]		Place and date Chelsea Mass USA 5/2/78
Signature of Registrar		

Holocaust is concerned, narrowing the focus to a handful of sites. In eastern Europe the fall of communism and the advent of budget airlines have led to new school itineraries which can easily be found in a quick trawl of UK school travel brochures. A number of travel companies sell Holocaust-related visits which, in the main, focus on Poland. Few, if any, consider destinations in western, northern or southern Europe for their Holocaust trips, the exception being a handful of visits to Amsterdam and Berlin. This is, I think, problematic. How can a trans-European genocide, where the victims came from the width and breadth of Europe, be represented in destinations focusing on a handful of places? One of the biggest challenges is therefore choosing where to visit. How can a visit do justice to a complex historical narrative when encompassing just one or two sites?

Teachers who participate in the IOE's continuing professional development programme have often commented on the challenge of communicating the geographic scale of the Holocaust to students. This becomes more of a challenge when choosing a site.⁷ While visiting Tromso, Norway, I stumbled upon a memorial to the 17 Jewish individuals who were deported and murdered by the Nazis, and their local collaborators (see Figure 1). Looking at this memorial, on a bitterly cold December day, I was reminded of the regime's policy that would stop at nothing to track down every Jewish man, woman and child, even those living inside the Arctic Circle. The case of the Jews of Tromso helps students to reflect on the unprecedented nature of the Holocaust – other genocides have been geographically limited, but in the case of the Holocaust the regime planned to murder every Jewish person, with an ultimate, ideologically-driven intent to murder every Jewish person on the planet.⁸ By studying the case of Tromso, students may be able to grasp the totality of the Nazis' genocidal vision.

A variety of guidelines have been published for teachers and these provide a useful starting point for planning such a visit. For example, one starting point could be the teaching guidelines agreed to by the 27 member states of the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF).⁶ The ITF has produced a number of pieces of guidance, including those for the classroom and others for site visits. When so many of us in the United Kingdom rely on guidance from commercial tour companies, some of which may not have Holocaust education experts advising, the onus often falls on the teacher-organiser to develop a programme that is both age-appropriate and tailored carefully to the kind of historical thinking and learning the history teacher wants to nurture.

Where to visit?

International school travel relating to the history curriculum has developed dramatically over the last 20 years, on the one hand opening up new destinations, on the other, where the

One detail of the story of the Jews of Tromso also raises issues about which narratives we select from the past and choose to remember. Along with the majority of Norwegian Jews, the 17 from Tromso were taken either to Germany or to Denmark by boat and then by train to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The ship *Monte Rosa* was used to deport eight of those people from Tromso. After the war, this ship was claimed by the British and it became the famous *Empire Windrush*, now an iconic name in the story of post-war immigration from the West Indies to the United Kingdom. This ship's history gives an interesting glimpse into the complexity of the past. The focus is usually on the 1950s and the new immigrants who came to Britain but perhaps it is also important to reflect on the previous use of this ship and why this other narrative is far less known.

Holocaust education experts have long advocated the inclusion of the victim's voice, either through a survivor

visiting a school or, as in the IOE's continuing professional development programme, through the inclusion of visual history testimony and other sources in classroom activities.⁹ Often in school text-books, the history of the Holocaust is presented through materials created by the perpetrators, but the view of many Holocaust education experts is that the victim's voice should be woven into study of the period.¹⁰ If this is desirable in classrooms, then it applies equally to site visits. In the case of the Tromso memorial, for example, it is possible to see those victims in the context of their lives, rather than through the method of their murder. By using Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims it is also possible to research the individuals named on the memorial (see Figures 2 and 3).¹¹ For example, one man, Solly Caplan, was born in Manchester, lived in Tromso and died in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Further investigation of other names on the memorial reveals Solly's father and brother, who also perished. In my experience of working with teachers and students, I have found that classroom investigation such as this allows students to engage on a more personal level with the victims. It moves them away from a solely perpetrator narrative. It can therefore be a powerful classroom tool prior to an overseas visit, and, in this particular instance, provides an unexpected link to Britain.

While most schools will not choose to visit Tromso as part of a Holocaust-related visit, the town can nevertheless feed into a reflective classroom activity. By making use of school travel brochures, students can map the Holocaust-related sites included on the different tours and, alongside this, create a counter map, marking the location of memorials to the deported. The Topography of Terror Museum in Berlin has developed a website showing many such memorials, as has the University of Minnesota's Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies – Virtual Museum.¹² Mapping memorials to those deported is markedly different to mapping the sites of murder. Students are encouraged to see Jewish individuals in the context of where they lived their lives, rather than where they met their deaths. Further analysis of travel brochures by students could lead to a valuable discussion about the limited destinations travel companies choose, what influences these decisions, and how our impressions of the past are shaped by such choices. Students might then

Figure 4: Michael Lee, Holocaust survivor, outside his former home in Lodz, 1998.



Figure 5: Train ticket from Krakow to Oswiecim



Figure 6: Hidden synagogue in Krakow, taken through a locked gate.



go on to create their own itinerary designed to visit the neglected themes of the Holocaust and to explain which other narratives of the past would emerge from such a tour.

Studying the main educational travel brochures, it soon becomes clear that most Holocaust-related visits for British schools focus primarily on Poland. Far fewer focus on western Europe, the exceptions being tours to Amsterdam and Berlin. I could find none to southern Europe. Similarly, reflection could be fostered on the lack of tours to Greece, with the oldest European Jewish community of which between 60,000 and 70,000 (81%) perished during the Holocaust.¹³ France, despite its proximity to Britain, is not visited as part of any Holocaust-related tour. In Paris and across France it is possible to visit sites and memorials relating to the Jewish communities as well as other sites connected with the events of the Holocaust. There were over 35 concentration, transit and work camps across France and almost a quarter of the pre-war Jewish population died during the Holocaust, many murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau.¹⁴

Grappling with the question of how the Holocaust happened in the heart of Paris opens questions that are different from those which arise when visiting a site more commonly associated with the Holocaust. Thus we can challenge

students' perception of what the Holocaust was. It is possible to hypothesise reasons why we choose *not* to visit France on a Holocaust-related tour. For example, perhaps by travelling farther afield we are making the events of the Holocaust more physically remote from ourselves as western Europeans and therefore find it easier to compartmentalise the events as foreign, or away from us. Of course, it could be suggested that by visiting Poland we are taking students to the heart of the largest pre-war Jewish community but, if that is the case, then, arguably, such a visit should have Jewish history at its core, taking precedence over any Holocaust-related site.

It is worth reflecting on why so many visits focus on Poland. Is it simply the case that tour companies choose visits to Poland or is it the expectation of schools that Poland is on the itinerary? In my experience, the emotional response many have to a site such as Auschwitz-Birkenau – especially on a short visit – leads some students to focus more on commemoration than on historical understanding. This is not to negate the importance of commemoration, but to raise the question of how we ensure students develop an understanding of the events as well as being able to memorialise.

Auschwitz-Birkenau has become a symbol of the Holocaust and is used more widely as a motif for genocide. Images of the watchtower at Birkenau are used as a universal symbol of the Holocaust. Perhaps this is another reason why Auschwitz-Birkenau features so prominently on school itineraries? Of the five death camps, Auschwitz-Birkenau is the one that sits most prominently in people's minds. Perhaps it is worth reflecting on the reasons why this is: several thousand people survived Birkenau, generating many pieces of post-war testimony. A little more than 100 survived all of the other four death camps combined. Moreover, the other death camps were all dismantled by the Nazis, whereas artefacts and buildings at Birkenau survived the war. Interestingly Auschwitz-Birkenau also features highly on many teachers' Holocaust-related schemes of work. As part of the IOE survey, 35 possible topics that could be included for study were listed and teachers were asked to state how likely they were to include them in their teaching about the Holocaust. Teaching about Auschwitz-Birkenau was the second most likely topic to be included, with *Operation Reinhard* and its related death camps coming second from bottom.¹⁵ Of course, it is difficult to know whether Auschwitz-Birkenau features more highly in schemes of work because teachers have visited the former camp, or whether it is because of the place held by Auschwitz-Birkenau in the popular imagination and in text-books.

Focusing a visit – seeing Jewish people as individuals

A fundamental point outlined in the ITF guidelines is the need to teach about Jewish life before the Second World War. This applies equally to overseas visits and to the classroom, yet often seems to be missing from the former or, in some instances, is served by an all too brief visit to a tourist-astute destination such as Krakow. It is only by teaching about Jewish people as individuals and by recognising the diversity and complexity of what it was to be Jewish before the war

Figure 7: Space for a mezuzah, photo taken in 1997 in Kazimierz, Krakow.



Figure 8: Space for a mezuzah, photograph taken in 2005.



that we move away from seeing Jews as objects as defined by the Nazi regime. Added to this is the use of language; use of phrases such as ‘the Jews’ can be problematic as it appears to imply a homogeneous group in the same way we might speak of a flock of sheep. Some might consider such comments over-sensitive but nuances of language are important. At the very least, a focus on language can engage students in debate about the terms we use and why.

Over a number of years of delivering workshops in schools, I have noticed how young people grapple with understanding the difference between reflecting on Jewish history and understanding religious practice and secular Judaism today. On overseas site visits this can be further complicated if students attend a synagogue service. It may further compartmentalise Jewish people or define Jewish history only in terms of religious observance. It is challenging to create a balance between reflecting on pre-war religious practice, non-observance and diversity. One way to learn more about Jewish religious observance in general might be to visit one of the 409 synagogues where services are held in Britain.¹⁶ Equally challenging is helping students to avoid always seeing Jewish communities in terms of conflict. Jewish history was not marked, on a daily basis, by attacks. There were long periods of history where Christians co-existed

with their Jewish neighbours and where peaceful cultural, social and economic interchange between communities was common. Our route into examining pogroms and antisemitic attacks might be better located in a visit or unit of study that reflected on Christian European society and its treatment of minorities, rather than on the minority itself.

Among the school tours focusing on Poland, pre-war Jewish life is often encapsulated in a visit to Kazimierz, an area of Krakow. This can cause difficulties as such a visit might, unintentionally, compartmentalise pre-war Jewish life into the ‘heritage industry’ representation we find there today and could reinforce stereotypes of European Jewry. It is only by reflecting on Jewish life across Krakow in 1939 that we gain a broader historical understanding of the situation for those who lived in Kazimierz. By 1939 Kazimierz had become a rundown neighbourhood, inhabited by poorer families and the Orthodox community. Many who were wealthier and, in some instances, embraced the reform strands of Judaism or who were not practising at all, had moved away from Kazimierz. Evidence of this can be found close to the Rynek (main town square) where it is possible to see the remains of a small synagogue built in an apartment block courtyard, not far from the cloth hall (see Figure 6). In my experience, tours often focus on the Jewish heritage of Kazimierz and

Figure 9: The Jewish cemetery, Oswiecim showing the ohel (tent) marking the grave of Shimshon Kluger.



do not put it into the wider context of Krakow, thus creating a 'ghettoised' view of Jewish life in the city before the war.

Krakow today – making sense of what we see

Particular challenges arise for pupils' historical learning when little evidence remains of the people or places. It is possible to connect this issue with another educational challenge – that of how we teach students about the legacy of the Holocaust. The architect Daniel Liebeskind sums this up as 'the embodiment of absence', that is, how we reflect not only on those who were murdered but also on the loss of subsequent generations who, as a result of the genocide, were never born.¹⁷ It can be a challenging concept for students to understand this void as it is subtly different to commemorating those who perished.

A visitor to Krakow is always faced with the challenge of reflecting on the changes that have taken place over time. Whether in the classroom or at the sites themselves I have found that it is helpful for students' historical thinking if they consider the changes that have taken place between the end of the war and today, in relation both to the Jewish people and to the district of Kazimierz.

While preparing for visits, one useful classroom activity is to focus on the language used to define Kazimierz, both in travel brochures and more widely. It is usually referred to as a 'Jewish area', even though there are hardly any Jewish inhabitants, it is largely devoid of kosher butchers, bakeries or mikvehs and only has one regularly used synagogue. The term 'Jewish restaurants' is also widely used. Again this could be viewed as meaningless given that the restaurants are not kosher; nor are they owned or run by Jewish people. The food served may have been traditional in eastern Europe, sometimes for Jews and non-Jews alike, but this was not the food of the Jewish people of Berlin or Greece or France. Perhaps this use of language also plays into the stereotyping of 'the Jews' rather than recognising the diversity of German Jews, Greek Jews and so on, and their similarities

and differences in culture and practice. By examining the language and representation used to depict or interpret the past in modern Krakow, students might raise questions about what they are going to see and how the past is being represented.

The changes in Kazimierz have been palpable over the past 13 years (the length of time I have been visiting the city). They can be seen in microcosm in one building. In 1997 parts of Kazimierz were semi-derelict. On one unused building I found the space for a mezuzah, located at an angle on the right-hand side of the doorframe (see Figure 7). The mezuzah is a small box containing the words of the She'ma, written on parchment. The She'ma is part prayer, part declaration of faith and found in the book of Deuteronomy. It is a commandment of Judaism to have the She'ma on the doorframe, unless placing it there would create danger for the household. On this particular doorframe the space where the mezuzah had been was partially covered with a piece of metal. We can only conjecture why. Perhaps a post-war occupant had wanted a flat door frame to paint, or wanted to hide the Jewish heritage of the building. In 2005, I revisited the street and found that the economic revival of Kazimierz had reached this building. The change was stark – from derelict building to boutique hotel, complete with a new doorframe made of stone. One feature of the former building remained: the part of the doorframe with the indentation for the mezuzah (see Figure 8). The formerly hidden feature, now preserved, had become an open statement of the previous Jewish heritage of the building. This development no doubt suits the tourism industry of Krakow.

In comparison to the Krakow doorframe is another on a residential building in the city of Tarnow, located 45 miles east of Krakow. Before the war, 45% (25,000) of the town's inhabitants were Jewish. The space for a mezuzah on this Tarnow doorframe was also clearly visible but, on my return in 2005, the entire doorframe had been replaced and this small piece of historical evidence of a Jewish household had disappeared. Although tourists do visit Tarnow, they are far fewer than in Krakow and many of the buildings used by the former Jewish community are now in new business

or residential ownership, unrelated to that past. These two examples are not used to commend one town over another but to raise the question of how visitors interpret what they see and how we make sense of what might not be visible.

I have often used both of these incidents with teachers in order to promote an interesting discussion on how we interpret what we see on site visits, my point being that we should neither compartmentalise Jewish history into one area of Krakow nor accept one version as being more truthful than the other, but rather recognise the developments in both places and consider how these interweave with the post-war period. Many similar issues are raised through the photographs on display at the Galicia Museum in Krakow where school groups can engage with the permanent exhibition *Traces of Memory* and take part in specific workshops.¹⁸ For those unable to visit, it is possible to use the photos from the exhibition catalogue in the classroom to promote discussion and understanding.

Auschwitz-centric?

The ease of visiting Krakow and its environs, including the State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau at Oswiecim, appears to be one reason why so many groups visit. Krakow is easy to reach by plane and an attractive city to stay in, most groups preferring to do this than to stay in Oswiecim. Perhaps, however, this separation and choosing to stay in hotels in Krakow rather than in Oswiecim might inadvertently create problems?

For many school visits to Poland there is little time to move beyond compartmentalising the history of the Jewish people into Krakow and the historical events of the Holocaust into Auschwitz-Birkenau. Yet on the journey from Krakow to Oswiecim, visitors pass through a number of towns that had substantial Jewish populations and the connection could be made between these places, the people who lived there and the events of the Holocaust. Some of these towns, including Oswiecim, Kety and Trzebinia, have buildings that were previously used as synagogues or prayer houses.¹⁹ Others, including Zator, Skawina and Chrzanow, still have remnants of Jewish cemeteries. By visiting towns such as these, students might begin to reflect not only on the lives of individuals before the war and the events of the Holocaust but also on understanding a community after genocide has taken place, recognising the void that now exists. Further activities could encourage students to consider which were more important to the Nazis, the towns with Jewish communities or Birkenau? Many students will presume the answer is Birkenau, but Birkenau was only created in order to change, radically, the population of these towns and hundreds of others across Europe.

Instead of defining this area in terms of 'Auschwitz-Birkenau', the Nazi names for the camps, it might be more appropriate to use the Polish names of Oswiecim and Brezinka and so move away from an occupier name to recognising the long pre-war history, particularly of Oswiecim. The Auschwitz Jewish Centre reflects the fact that, before the war, over half the population of the town was Jewish. Although it is important to reflect on this pre-war population, the Centre provides an opportunity to reflect, also, on the post-war

period. It was a place to which few survivors returned, and where only one, Shimson Kluger, remained until his death in 2000. The void is not only created by the passing of the survivor generation, but also by those subsequent generations who were not born into this pre-war vibrant community.

Conclusion

Planning student visits to sites connected to genocide takes a great deal of time and thought. From a pedagogic perspective, perhaps there is a need to spend more time critically appraising the motivations and expected outcomes of such a visit. Although the immediate draw may be to visit the site of a death camp, there are other destinations to be considered. For many young people, being able to visit something as familiar as a cemetery, such as the Jewish cemetery in Oswiecim, and being able to understand why the named graves are no longer being visited and why large trees grow among the graves, can create deeper layers of meaning than visiting Birkenau (See Figure 9). At the very heart of this issue is how those of us who are history teachers see our role: do we seek to elicit a purely emotional response, or do we want our students to have a deeper level of understanding of the events they are studying and the places they are visiting? At the very core of the rationale for any visit are precisely those continuing arguments and counter-arguments that relate to the nature of all history and history teaching.

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Limited lessons from the Holocaust?

Critically considering the 'anti-racist' and citizenship potential

Previous issues of *Teaching History* have seen extensive debate about the appropriateness of approaching Holocaust education with explicitly social or moral – as opposed to historical – aims. Rather than taking sides, Alice Pettigrew first acknowledges the range of aims that history teachers bring to their teaching of the subject, including those deeply rooted in a commitment to citizenship education. Her argument then, is that even if such aims are accepted as valid, they simply cannot be achieved by divorcing the 'lessons' of the Holocaust from an understanding of its specific historical context. To treat the Holocaust as a universal cautionary tale is to deprive students of genuine understanding and, all too often, allows important misconceptions to go unchecked. Properly contextualised historical study, Pettigrew argues, will equip them far better to relate the Holocaust in meaningful ways to discussions about other genocides and ongoing crimes against humanity.

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Regular readers of *Teaching History* will recognise that previous contributions concerning the Holocaust have often been framed by an apparent tension between exclusively 'historical' and otherwise 'social', 'moral' and/or 'civic' teaching aims.¹ In this paper – which draws on responses given by almost 600 secondary history teachers as part of the Institute of Education's (IOE's) Holocaust Education Development Programme 2009 research, described in further detail in the Nutshell on page 56 – I return to this familiar territory but attempt to offer an alternative perspective.² As a social scientist and educational researcher rather than historian or history teacher, I do not intend to offer a final answer to the question of appropriate or inappropriate teaching aims for the history classroom. Instead, I want to highlight the commitment to teaching about the Holocaust expressed by a clear majority of teachers who took part in the IOE's study and emphasise the importance that many placed upon the subject as an opportunity to explore citizenship-related, and in particular, 'anti-racist' concerns. However, I also want to use the same data to consider critically some of the limitations of this approach. I argue that over-simplified understandings of 'racism' and 'anti-racism', and a failure to attend adequately to the contingent historical context of the Nazi genocide, risks resulting in not only 'bad history' but also ineffective education for citizenship.

Commitment to teaching about the Holocaust

I always say to them [my students] if you never ever remember anything else that we are teaching you in this classroom – in this school – I want you to learn the lesson we are teaching you today.

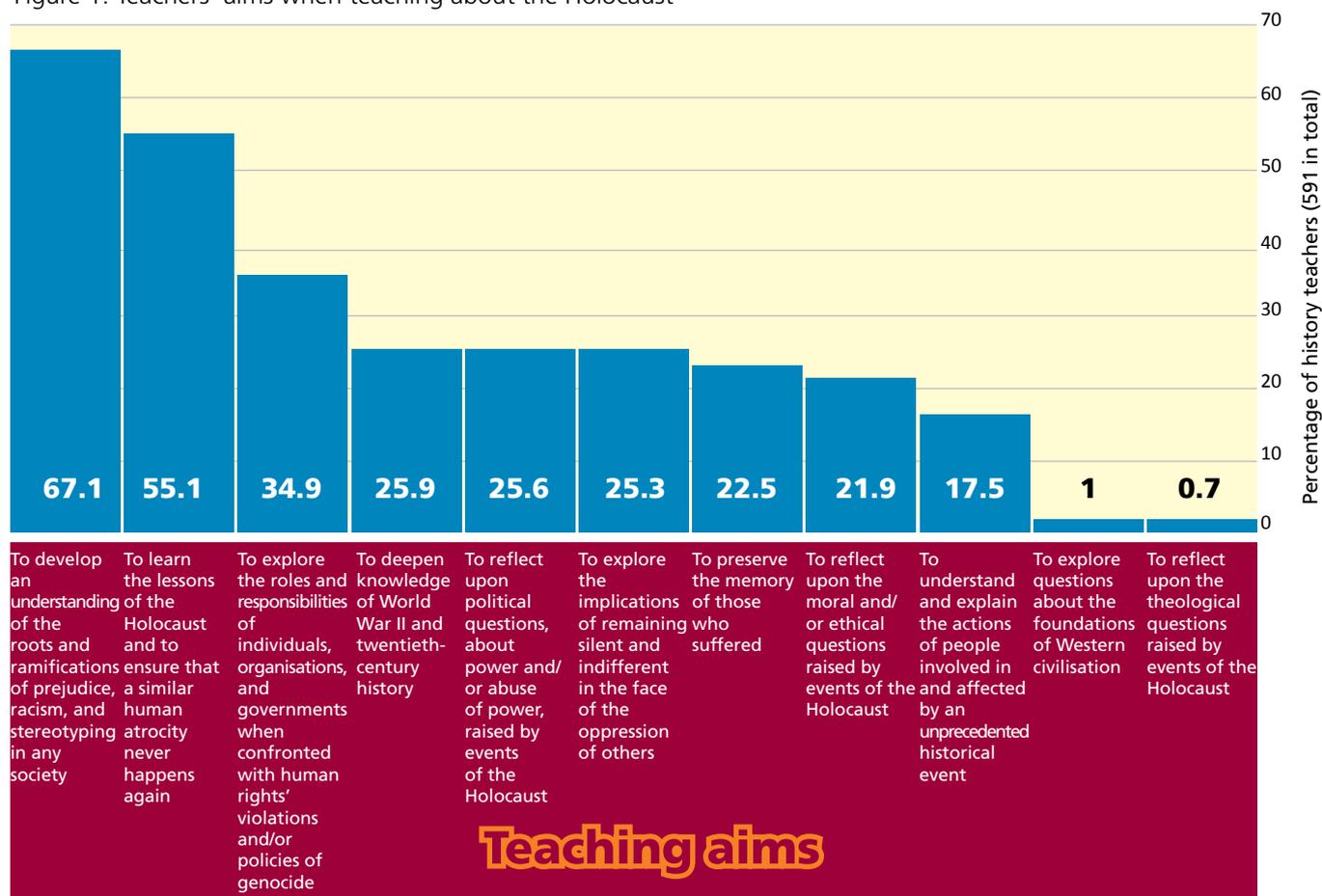
History and integrated humanities teacher

The on-line survey completed by teachers who took part in the IOE study asked respondents to what extent they agreed with the statement, 'I think it will always be important to teach about the Holocaust'. Ninety-five per cent of those who principally taught about the Holocaust within history classrooms indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed. In follow-up interviews, individuals commonly expressed sentiments similar to those cited above: they framed the Holocaust as a distinctly significant component of their teaching through which they believed especially salient 'lessons' could be learned.

The survey also asked teachers to consider *why* there was value in teaching about the Holocaust. One question presented a list of 11 possible teaching aims and asked respondents to indicate the three that they considered most important (see Figure 1). A free-text box accompanied the question in case any teachers wanted to add their own unlisted suggestions or provide any further explanation or commentary.

Again by a clear majority, the most commonly prioritised teaching aims were, 'to develop an understanding of the roots and ramifications of prejudice, racism and stereotyping in any society' and, 'to learn the lessons of the Holocaust and to ensure that a similar human atrocity never happens again'. These were chosen by 67% and 55% of history teachers respectively. Ostensibly more clearly 'historical' aims, such as, 'to deepen knowledge of World War II and twentieth-century history' and 'to understand and explain the actions of people involved in and affected by an unprecedented historical event' appeared to be awarded considerably less importance, prioritised by only 26% and 17.5% of teachers respectively.

Figure 1: Teachers' aims when teaching about the Holocaust



During interview, teachers were given greater freedom to articulate their own teaching aims. While a small number spoke in terms of helping their students develop specific historical understandings, more teachers suggested that, 'with the Holocaust... there have to be deeper aims' (emphasis added). 'Deeper' aims appeared to transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries and were oriented towards overarching, ambitious social, moral and/or civic concerns. This finding echoes previous research conducted by Russell, Hector and others.³ Many teachers spoke of hoping they could help facilitate the 'moral development' of their pupils, contribute to 'changing society' or promote ideas of 'tolerance', 'understanding diversity' and 'respecting one another and each other's views'. Others spoke directly of their concern that students should finish their study of the Holocaust 'with a sense of hopefulness' or sought to encourage and empower their students with the belief that their actions mattered in the world. One teacher reported that she wanted her students to achieve, 'an understanding of how, when it's [left] unchecked, the human race is capable of unspeakable atrocities'. Moreover, she wanted to encourage her students to consider it their 'duty', 'as human beings' to be vigilant against such evils.

Of course, these teachers are not alone in their aspirations. The critical theorist Theodor Adorno famously expressed an apparently very similar sentiment in his 1966 radio lecture, *Education After Auschwitz*, when he insisted that, '[t]he premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again'.⁴ In the UK context, Geoffrey Short reminds us that analogous arguments were made to first secure the place of the Holocaust within the National Curriculum for history:

...as far back as 1989, Ronnie Landau was urging the government to include the Holocaust... on the grounds that it 'can civilise and humanise our students and... has the power to sensitise them to the dangers of indifference, intolerance, racism and the dehumanisation of others'. In Landau's view, these qualities constitute 'the ideal educational formula for creating... responsible citizens in a multi-cultural society'.⁵

More recently, the previous government also clearly allied teaching and learning about the Holocaust with twenty-first century social and political concerns such as 'managing diversity', 'community cohesion' and 'multicultural citizenship'.⁶

However, among my colleagues at the Institute of Education, both the survey data and interview responses were viewed as a potential cause for some concern. Elsewhere within the academic discipline of history, a number of theorists and researchers have warned against 'practical' or 'present-oriented', instrumental uses of the past.⁷ From these perspectives, the past informs and shapes the present and the future in more subtle and complex ways than the notion of identifiable and neatly packaged 'lessons from the past' suggests. Or, as one of a small number of dissenting teacher voices among the survey 'free-text' responses argued:

My problem with the above aims is that they are using history for other purposes, which I believe to be an abuse. I would argue that the Holocaust should be taught in itself as one of the more significant events in the twentieth century, and that young people should expect to know

about it and draw their own conclusions – including that the Holocaust is not alone as such an atrocity, albeit probably the most systematic version of it.

History teacher

Again, in this paper it is not my intention to arbitrate or distinguish between appropriate ‘historical’ or ‘non-historical’ teaching aims. On the contrary, I consider that insisting that there is a clear dichotomy between ‘historical’

reward they had experienced on specific occasions when, for example, they saw students drawing their own connections between the Holocaust and contemporary issues, both on a national scale (such as the British reaction to recent asylum-seekers and economic migrants) or within their personal lives (such as in response to school-based bullying). Others, however, used a tentative language of what they ‘hoped’ or were ‘trying’ to help their students achieve but were unable to reflect on any tangible evidence of this. Observing a similar

‘Racism’, ‘prejudice’ and/or ‘intolerance’ are not fixed and consistent phenomena that can be used to explain events such as the Holocaust, but rather, there are different racisms and expressions of prejudice and intolerance in need of explanation and investigation themselves.

and ‘civic’ or ‘social’ understandings is not always helpful.⁸ I do not want to argue either with or against Nicholas Kinloch when he suggests ‘well-meaning teachers’ should *not* attempt to promote specific behaviours among students, nor concern themselves with moral development: teaching about the Holocaust should ‘start and end with what happened and why; with the Shoah as history’, nor with his critics who claim his position ‘lacks ambition’ and is ‘unduly pessimistic’.⁹ Rather, using the accounts given by teachers within the IOE study, I want to identify some existing obstacles to the potential effectiveness of current practice in promoting ‘responsible multicultural citizenship’.¹⁰

Making progress?

I think [attainment targets] are a nonsense when it comes to the Holocaust. I think that’s a paper exercise that I regard as completely meaningless here and I think our progress is much more on a personal level with those individual students . . . where you can see them maturing in their thought. And you can’t quantify this can you? That’s the problem . . . I don’t think you can quantify it until they’ve left school, until they’re old enough to reflect back on their experiences.

History teacher

Like the teacher quoted above, a number of those who took part in interview for the IOE study suggested that, unless they were teaching older students as part of an A-level or GCSE examination syllabus, the Holocaust was an area of study in which they considered it was either impossible or inappropriate for learning to be formally assessed. This was one way in which the Holocaust was distinguished from most other components of Key Stage 3 history. Unlike ‘evaluating source materials’ or ‘developing chronology skills’, aims such as ‘tackling racism and prejudice’, ‘transforming society’ or even ‘testing students’ humanity’ were, with some justification, considered by teachers to be especially difficult to measure meaningfully or observe.

In the absence of quantifiable measures for these aspects of students’ progress, many teachers suggested that the impact of their teaching would only be observable at an unspecified point in the future, if at all. Some recounted the feeling of

language used by history and RE teachers in her own study, Jane Clements describes teachers’ ‘hope’ or ‘belief’ in the ‘deferred benefits’ of their work with students in schools.¹¹

It would be unhelpful to suggest that all valuable learning outcomes must be quantifiable or easy to observe. It is nonetheless a potential challenge if teachers are unclear as to how to judge, or more importantly to plan for, student progress or are unable to gauge the effectiveness of their pedagogical approach. Those history teachers who are seriously committed to making cross-curricular links with citizenship through the Holocaust might want to consider cautions recently sounded by Peter Brett. In a 2004 paper, *Teaching Citizenship Through History: What is good practice?*, Brett highlighted that, although it had become statutory for schools to report on the achievements and progress of students in citizenship by the end of Key Stage 3, ‘assessed citizenship activities and outcomes from across the curriculum, including history, have generally been notable by their absence’. Referencing a *Teaching History* editorial from March 2002 he also drew attention to limited cross-curricular planning and constructive coordination between departments:

There is often a lack of clarity in relation to who is responsible for assessing pupils’ citizenship work across the curriculum and few developed models and mechanisms for doing this effectively. Too often the cross-curricular approach begins and ends with a Citizenship audit with little subsequent exploration of the implications of ticking a particular box. The audit should constitute the beginning of a journey of enhancing learning not the end-product of a perhaps managerially satisfying but ultimately impoverishing paper chase. As Christine Counsell (2002) reminds us, ‘cross-referencing an extra column in a workscheme cannot take the place of serious theorising and creative reflection. Mere coincidence of content is not a cross-curricular link’.¹²

For Brett, a common consequence of this neglect is that ‘the citizenship learning that could be gained from touching upon areas [such as the Holocaust] in history lessons is likely to remain superficial and implicit’. Without clear and considered citizenship learning objectives, ‘high-flown, if honourable, aspirations’, such as those outlined by many teachers within the IOE study, ‘are likely to remain vague and

unconsolidated in pupils' minds.¹³ Teachers may therefore want to consider more specific, clearly defined learning objectives or aspirations for their students if 'learning the lessons from the Holocaust to ensure a similar atrocity never happens again' is to become an effective teaching aim. Consultation with colleagues and engagement with the professional literature that supports citizenship educators could be helpful here.¹⁴

On the other hand, history teachers may want to reflect instead upon what 'making progress' in learning about the Holocaust might look like from a historical perspective. Lee and Shemilt's recent article exploring the development of students' understandings of historical explanation and causal reasoning is instructive in this respect.¹⁵ For, as I will go on now to argue, the development of detailed, nuanced and complex understandings, which attempt at least to explain rather than simply describe the horrors of Nazi-occupied Europe, is itself an important precondition if really meaningful citizenship 'lessons' are to be learned.

Displacing context? – 'It's racism what dunnit'¹⁶

Inquiry must be made into the specific, historically objective conditions of the persecutions.¹⁷

Theodor Adorno

It's trying to make them realise that it is not something which is one country or one particular set of circumstances – that actually maybe it is something deeper about the human condition. It's something that actually exists within all of us.

History teacher

I think it's about tolerance, about understanding diversity, about them respecting one another and each other's views and . . . that actually without that something as drastic as that could happen again.

History and citizenship teacher

It's kind of, get them to understand that it's not just . . . an isolated experience. And it's certainly not something that just happened in history and will never happen again: that they've actually got to take some active role in that.

Geography teacher

Although they share an important sentiment in wanting to educate to help prevent future human rights atrocities, it is instructive to critically contrast the instruction given by Theodor Adorno with the perspectives offered by the three teachers quoted above. Adorno emphasises that the 'specific, historically objective conditions' of the Holocaust must be understood, but precisely these contingent conditions are displaced or undermined where teachers argue that '[the Holocaust] is *not* something which is one country or one particular set of circumstances' (emphasis added). Here, as in a number of other teacher interviews, the Holocaust appears to take the form of a universal cautionary tale: a dramatic example of an always extant danger, intrinsic in human nature. Inadequate attention is drawn to the specific social, political and economic circumstances in which that danger has been historically realised.

One teacher explained that she purposefully did not want to locate her students' study and understanding too specifically within Nazi Germany in case doing so encouraged 'anti-German sentiment'. Another expressed concern not to 'just package [the Holocaust] away' within a particular place and time. Many agreed that it was important to make the message appear relevant to students' contemporary lives. 'Racism', 'prejudice' and 'intolerance' were therefore regularly cast as the catalysts for danger: without 'tolerance', 'respect' and 'understanding [of] diversity', 'something as drastic as [the Holocaust] could happen again.'

Teachers also often suggested that they wanted to encourage students to identify their own responsibilities for safeguarding a tolerant society. Some went as far as to suggest to students that 'a slippery slope' exists 'from bullying to genocide'. From an active citizenship perspective, it is important that students are offered a framework from which they can act and arguably the micro-level of school-based bullying offers an instructive and empowering opportunity for students to feel able to 'make a difference'. But there are of course very significant differences between bullying and genocide. Perhaps the lesson that 'it all starts with bullying', as one history teacher emphasised, fails adequately to engage with all the many times throughout history that expressions of prejudice and discrimination *have not* led to extreme, state-sponsored violence or genocide. More importantly, it detracts from the particular social, economic and political context of Nazi Germany, and the wider context of a modern Europe and its long and convoluted histories of antisemitism and racialisation, in which the Holocaust did in fact take place.

Likewise, making students aware of 'the dangers of racism' might appear a fairly uncontentious teaching aim. However, wider research in the field of anti-racist education warns that 'racism', 'prejudice' and 'discrimination' can be vehemently rhetorically rejected without ever being adequately understood.¹⁸ This research again emphasises the importance of understanding context. 'Racism', 'prejudice' and/or 'intolerance' are not fixed and consistent phenomena that can be used to explain events such as the Holocaust; rather, there are different racisms and expressions of prejudice and intolerance in need of explanation and investigation themselves. The Nazis victimised and targeted different groups – the Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals and political opponents, for example – for different reasons and in different ways, but this was not always recognised, or at least not given emphasis, in many teachers' accounts.¹⁹ Failure to award attention to complexity and contingency is unhelpful from a citizenship education point of view. For as British sociologist Phil Cohen argues, 'To deny racism its history is to surrender to a kind of fatalism': if 'Racism, like the poor, is always with us' what are individual students to do?²⁰ But nor is an exclusive focus on the untrammelled responsibility of individuals, as reflected in many teachers' attention to the action or inaction of perpetrators, collaborators and bystanders, entirely helpful. Here 'racism' and 'prejudice' can be mistakenly explained away in terms of the personal (intellectual, psychological or ideological) 'failings' or 'bad choices' of individuals. A sound sociological understanding of racism, and of anti-racism, would emphasise critical consideration of the multiple – and historicised – manners in which individuals'

actions have been, and continue to be, circumscribed.²¹ As my colleagues and I argued in the IOE report:

*...students are likely to have deeper and more valuable understandings about the human condition, about society and about the world around them if their reflections take account of the complexity of the past. Indeed, if students are able to properly contextualise a study of the Holocaust within secure knowledge and understanding of the events of that time they are likely to be better able to relate the Holocaust in meaningful ways to discussions about other genocides and ongoing crimes against humanity.*²²

Unfortunately, the IOE research also suggested that, while some demonstrate very detailed specialist subject knowledge, not all teachers have an entirely accurate understanding of this past. The Holocaust is clearly a very complex area of historical enquiry but it is also a subject around which many popularly held misconceptions exist. Such misconceptions could lead to potentially rather spurious citizenship 'lessons' being learned. To illustrate, one question included within the research survey asked,

If a member of the German occupying forces refused an instruction to kill Jewish people, the most likely outcome for that individual would be . . .

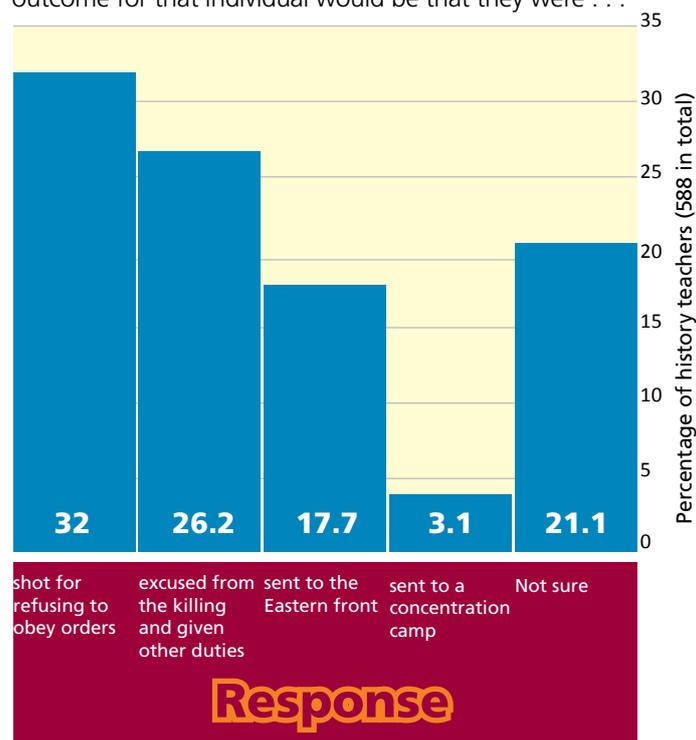
- shot for refusing to obey orders
- sent to a concentration camp
- excused from the killing and given other duties
- sent to the eastern front
- not sure

As the commentary provided in the IOE report goes on to explain,

*Although explored as a possible line of defence during the Nuremberg trials, no record has ever been found that a German soldier was killed or sent to a concentration camp for refusing such an order. Most historians today (Browning 1992; Friedlander 1998; Goldhagen 1996) suggest that the most likely consequence was that a soldier would be excused from the killing and given other duties.*²³

However, as illustrated in Figure 2, the answer widely accepted among academic historians was chosen by only 26% of respondents with experience of teaching about the Holocaust within history. Thirty-two per cent considered that the most likely outcome was the individual would be shot for refusing to obey orders. In a 1999 article on anti-racist education and the Holocaust, Geoffrey Short urged that teachers and students should engage with the extensive historical and social science literature exploring perpetrator, bystander and collaborator actions and motivations such as Christopher Browning's examination of the choices made by 'ordinary men' carrying out orders as members of police battalion 101.²⁴ The results of the IOE survey would appear to suggest that many teachers remain unfamiliar with this research.

Figure 2: Survey question, 'If a member of the German occupying forces refused an instruction to kill Jewish people, the most likely outcome for that individual would be that they were . . .



However, the IOE study also suggested that a clear majority of practising history teachers believed they would find it useful to receive additional support and/or training to teach about the Holocaust more effectively. Less than a third had already received any specialist training in this area during their initial teacher training programme or since working in schools: 86.5% considered themselves self-taught. Early evaluation of the IOE's Holocaust education CPD programme indicates that many of those who have attended especially value the opportunity to consider critically, extend and develop their own substantive knowledge and understanding.

Denying difficulty and containing complexity

A further consequence of framing teaching around seemingly uncontentious 'lessons' such as, 'racism is dangerous', or, 'prejudice is wrong', is that both teachers and their students may be encouraged to distance themselves from or deny the inevitable and ongoing challenges and potential tensions that twenty-first-century multicultural democracy necessarily entails.

Critically, the notion that a lesson – or series of lessons – has been *learned* from the Holocaust suggests that such tensions and challenges have been (or can be) finally resolved. As has been recognised by previous contributors to these pages, 'identity', 'diversity', 'equality', 'democracy' and 'humanity' are all important but complex and contested terms. I would argue that they are – and should remain – difficult to think with and through but they risk becoming platitudinous in the versions of citizenship and anti-racist education that some of those teaching about the Holocaust appear to employ.²⁵

At one point during the IOE survey, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement, 'I find

that having students from diverse cultural backgrounds influences the way I teach about the Holocaust'. They were also invited to explain their response further. As the following examples illustrate, it became immediately evident from the contributions made that there is no single agreed-upon answer as to how best to respond to cultural diversity within the classroom, let alone within wider society.

The ethnic mix of a class should have absolutely no bearing on how the Holocaust is taught and nor does it affect my teaching in any way – it doesn't alter the facts in any way.

History teacher

The prime consideration when teaching any topic is for it to be meaningful. As a teacher I have to take into account the audience and teach to their specific needs and background.

History teacher

It does not make sense to me to teach the Holocaust by showing my students – who are mainly black African – 'dead white Jews'. It makes MUCH more sense to teach about the Holocaust through survivors of Darfur and Rwanda, because they can relate to these faces, these people.

Religious Education teacher

Regardless of culture the Holocaust is relevant and deferring from the teaching to accommodate cultures detracts from the impact of the topic. It is not a pretty thing to teach, but an absolute necessity.

History teacher

While some teachers insisted firmly that diversity in the classroom should have absolutely no bearing on the content or delivery of teaching, for others, making lessons 'relevant' and 'accessible' to different students on the basis of prior experience and/or 'cultural background' was crucially important. These competing perspectives reflect wider and ongoing socio-cultural arguments over the status given to and assumptions made on the basis of real and perceived cultural differences and group identities.²⁶ For me, the teacher responses at this point of the survey and later comments made in interview also raised a series of questions which I hope may stimulate discussion or reflection when considering the arguments I have presented here and in planning a unit of work on the Holocaust:

- What does it mean to belong to or be identified as a member of a particular 'ethnic', 'religious' or 'racial' group?
- Who can or should determine an individual's 'specific needs' and relevant 'background'?
- When might our understandings of 'fairness', 'equality' and/or 'justice' fail?
- How far do our responsibilities to each other – and to which 'others' – extend?
- How best can we understand the relationships between individuals and wider social structures and/or forces?

- What should be the roles or responsibilities of individuals, governments, and national or international organisations when confronted with human rights abuse?
- Whose history is the Holocaust?

Perhaps, instead of approaching the Holocaust as a unit of study through which teachers intend that specific lessons should be learned, teachers and their students could encounter the Holocaust within their curriculum as a space in which these and other key questions for citizenship, social, moral and historical education can be explored.

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The Institute of Education's Holocaust Education Development Programme (HEDP)



In a **Nutshell**

Why has the Institute of Education in London set up their 'Holocaust Education Development Programme': isn't there already an awful lot of attention given to the Holocaust in schools?

It is true that the Holocaust has become 'probably the most talked about and oft-represented event of the twentieth century' and that it is a compulsory topic at Key Stage 3.¹ Being 'well known' and being 'well understood' are different things, however: the IOE's programme was set up in response to concerns that popular attention was not always translated into effective teaching practice in schools.

So, what is new about the IOE's approach?

A distinguishing feature of the programme is the extent to which it is directly research informed. In April 2007, Pears Foundation – a UK based charitable foundation – and the DCSF (DfE), announced that they would jointly commit to a total of £1.5 million to provide professional development support for teachers who teach about the Holocaust in England's secondary schools. It was considered vital to first find out exactly what was already going on in schools and an early priority was to conduct a detailed and extensive investigation of teachers' perspectives, experience and expertise.

Who did the HEDP team talk to and what did they ask?

Between November 2008 and April 2009 over 2000 teachers responded to a 54-question, online survey and 68 teachers at 24 schools took part in follow-up small group interviews. Teachers from a representative range of backgrounds, experiences and school types participated. The survey was open to teachers from any school subject, however, during interview, the main focus was teachers of history. Teachers were asked about a range of issues including: understandings of the Holocaust, teaching aims and pedagogical choices, previous professional training and support, and whether or not they encountered any particular challenges when teaching about the Holocaust.

What did the research reveal?

The IOE research report is available at www.hedp.org.uk. It revealed that, although there was enormous support for and commitment to teaching about the Holocaust, very few teachers had received any professional support or prior training in this area. While some teachers demonstrated detailed specialist subject knowledge and understanding, for many others knowledge was often drawn largely from popular rather than academic sources. The most commonly reported challenge among teachers was managing limited curriculum time and many declared that they found it difficult to know how to judge what content to include. Teachers wanted to be able to address topic complexity with

students but also to achieve coherence and they were not always at all sure about how to achieve this aim. This challenge appeared to be exacerbated where teachers were unclear why the Holocaust was part of the curriculum and what they hoped to achieve when teaching the subject.

Why might any of that matter?

Selecting content for any time-bounded unit of study always involves decisions about what to include and leave out, however, historians and specialist educators in this field could interpret the IOE research findings with concern. For example, a number of teachers appeared to focus on perpetrator-oriented narratives rather than explore victims' responses to persecution and genocide. The pre-war lives and post-war responses of Jewish people and communities were regularly neglected dimensions of classroom study, yet it is arguable that it is impossible for students to understand the devastating impact of the Holocaust unless they have an awareness of what was lost and destroyed.

And so what is the IOE going to do about it?

The full research findings have been interpreted by a team of history teacher educators and specialist Holocaust educators and used to design a five-part CPD programme. This includes two full days of workshop activities supported by preparation, interim and reflection materials accessed through a web-based virtual learning environment (or VLE).

Not all teachers can or want to become Holocaust specialists, of course, but this CPD programme provides opportunities for all teachers to clarify subject knowledge and access the latest historical and pedagogical developments in this field. Hands-on activities focus on airing and challenging misconceptions and provide a clear, but nuanced, understanding of historical events. Through developing specialist knowledge, providing high quality teaching and learning resources, and by modelling age-appropriate activities, the programme encourages teachers to consider new approaches and content. The programme also fosters reflection on topic inclusion and on developing a coherent course of study within curriculum time constraints.

How could I get involved?

If you are teaching in a state-maintained secondary school in England then your CPD place is already paid for. The CPD will be held in a town near you at one of various venues across the country. Places are also provided at a heavily subsidised rate for teachers from independent schools. Full details including dates, content, and venues are provided at www.hedp.org.uk.

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Universal meaning or historical understanding?

The Holocaust in history and history in the curriculum

In this powerfully argued article Paul Salmons focuses directly on the distinctive contribution that a historical approach to the study of the Holocaust makes to young people's education. Not only does he question the adequacy of objectives focused on eliciting purely emotional responses; he issues a strong warning that turning to the Holocaust in search of universal moral lessons – 'lessons' that merely confirm what we already believe – risks serious distortion of the past. Citing widespread use of the Holocaust as a rhetorical device, Salmons' contention is that failure to engage with its historical and highly complex reality in fact leaves young people open to manipulation and coercion from those who would use the past to push their own social or political agendas. What he offers here is not merely a justification for the Holocaust's position as a compulsory element of the school history curriculum – but a fundamental defence of the place of history in school.

Paul Salmons

Paul Salmons is Head of Curriculum and Development on the Institute of Education (IOE), University of London's Holocaust Education Development Programme.

A group of students huddle together in Auschwitz-Birkenau, participating in a memorial service by which they are visibly moved. They light candles, listen attentively as the words of survivors are read out and join in sincere declarations of 'Never again'. Some say prayers. Some cry silently. A few hold on to each other for mutual support. Now they move away from the ruins of the crematoria and the gas chambers, slowly, with their teachers, down the ramp where, two generations earlier, hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children from all over Europe climbed out of cattle trucks and railway carriages, and walked to their deaths. As they leave, some shake their heads and wonder aloud, 'I just don't understand how this was possible. I can't imagine how anyone could do this.'

Nearby, another teacher stands with his own group of students and overhears these conversations. Some months later he relates the story, and ruefully remarks that this must count as a somewhat unusual educational activity: we generally do not take our students out of school, and travel such long distances, for them *not* to understand something.¹

This is not, of course, to suggest that students should stop visiting Auschwitz. Clearly such visits can be enormously powerful, and provide rich educational experiences. It is, however, to point out that going on such a visit does not mean that you have understood why or how Auschwitz-Birkenau was built in modern Europe or how it relates to the broader history of the Holocaust. It is also to question whether an emotional experience, *when shorn of historical understanding* – no matter how powerful, memorable and engaging, and regardless of whether it takes place at an authentic site, a film or theatre performance or in the school classroom – can really be said to constitute *learning about the Holocaust* at all.

Shaping the Past?

*Holocaust education must first be about exploring and attempting to understand and explain the historical context of the Holocaust. To be meaningful, it is vital that the past is not shaped to serve the needs of any moral, political, social or ideological agenda.*²

European Agency for Fundamental Human Rights

Strikingly, the research report of the Institute of Education (IOE), University of London into current teaching about the Holocaust reveals that, for many teachers in schools across England, historical understanding is not a major aim when teaching about this period.³

In a survey of more than 2,100 teachers, and interviews with a further 68 teachers across the country, the universal aims 'to develop an understanding of the roots and ramifications of prejudice, racism and stereotyping in any society' and 'to learn the lessons of the Holocaust to ensure that a similar human atrocity never happens again' were, even among history teachers, far more popular than historical aims such as 'to understand and explain the actions of people involved in and affected by an unprecedented historical event' or 'to deepen knowledge of World War II and twentieth century history'.⁴ This emphasis on broad, trans-disciplinary aims may partly account for the difficulty many teachers found in trying to articulate why the Holocaust should be a mandatory element within the history curriculum. In interview, some argued strongly that history had an important role, but many others struggled to say what was distinctive about exploring the past in the history classroom.⁵

Why is the study of the Holocaust *as history* afforded a relatively low status even among many history teachers? Why is it difficult to articulate the distinctive contribution of the history classroom to learning about this subject? Does this reflect a lack of confidence in the value of disciplinary understandings following years of PLTS (Personal Learning and Thinking Skills) and the advocacy of a 'competencies curriculum'?⁶ And if we struggle to make the case for teaching such a significant historical event in the history classroom, what does this mean for our ability to demonstrate the importance and relevance of history in the broader curriculum?

It may be that the power of the Holocaust as a universal warning, as a rhetorical device to advocate a broad array of social aims, coupled with the challenge of conveying the complexity of this history in limited curriculum time, has overwhelmed fundamental historical questions of why and how it happened, explanations of motivation and intent, examinations of different interpretations and an understanding of how narratives and meanings are constructed. In this article, however, I wish to argue that a study of the Holocaust which ignores such an explicitly *historical* approach not only risks distorting the past in the service of presentist aims and misses deeper and more complex meanings, but also leaves young people open to manipulation and coercion from those who use the past to push their own social, political or other agendas. Furthermore, I will argue that the study of the Holocaust *in the history classroom* should be an essential part of young people's educational literacy, and that historical forms of knowledge based upon a sound disciplinary approach can provide our students with powerful ways of knowing the world. This article is intended, then, not only as a rationale for why the study of the Holocaust is mandatory in England's national curriculum for history, but also as a contribution to ongoing discussions about what school history is for, how it should be taught and why history should occupy a central place within the broader school curriculum.⁷

The Holocaust as a rhetorical device

I suppose anyone can excavate from the rubble of mass murder a piece of testimony to support his or her

*philosophy or system of belief or critical point of view. Many of us who explore the terrain of atrocity are occasionally guilty of that. But not at the price, one hopes, of distorting the truth.*⁸

Lawrence Langer

For Langer, many representations of the Holocaust appear less about efforts to confront and to understand the depths and the significance of this history, and more about attempts to appropriate the Holocaust for private moral agendas. The power of the Holocaust as a motif, a metaphor or a rhetorical device, is used to advocate a bewildering array of special interests, social and political agendas. We do not have to search very far on the internet to find examples:⁹

- The Holocaust has been used by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) to campaign against the meat industry. The 'Holocaust on your plate' campaign equated the murder of human beings in the death camps with the slaughter of animals in abattoirs. Matt Prescott, the originator of the campaign stated, 'The fact is all animals feel pain, fear and loneliness. We're asking people to recognise that what Jews and others went through in the Holocaust is what animals go through every day in factory farms.'¹⁰
- According to the *Chicago Tribune*, in 2005 Pope John Paul II wrote that 'abortion is today's Holocaust.'¹¹
- Elsewhere, a website compares the Nazi policies during the Holocaust to the British policies in Ireland during the potato blight: 'As no Jewish person would ever refer to the "Jewish Oxygen Famine of 1939–1945", so no Irish person ought ever refer to the Irish Holocaust as a famine.'¹²

The Holocaust, then, has become 'a ruling symbol in our culture' used to strengthen almost any political, moral or social position we care to argue.¹³

Remembering to forget?

*...by using the term 'myth' I do not suggest – as the so-called revisionists and Holocaust deniers do – that six million Jews were not murdered during the course of the Second World War, many of them by gassing. The historical reality is that around six million Jews were murdered in Second World War Europe... The term myth of the 'Holocaust' – for all its problematic connotations – is useful for distinguishing between the historical event – the Holocaust – and the representation of that event.*¹⁴

Tim Cole

In a media-driven world that can at times seem saturated by what Cole refers to as the myth of the 'Holocaust' (and which he carefully distinguishes from the reality of the historical Holocaust) – in a world where not a week goes by without references to Hitler and Auschwitz in feature films, documentary series, newspapers and literature – it may seem perverse to speak about a 'struggle for memory'. But what is at stake is not *whether* the Holocaust is remembered, but what we choose to remember from this past – what kinds of stories do we tell about the Holocaust, and how far do we seek to incorporate Cole's *historical* Holocaust into our collective memory?

Each day on my way between St Pancras railway station and my office at the Institute of Education, I take a short cut through the courtyard of the British Library, and walk past a small tree, shown in Figure 1, that was planted there in 1998. A plaque nearby reads: 'To commemorate Anne Frank and all the children killed in wars and conflict in this century.'

Few would argue with the importance of public acts of remembrance for the innocent victims of war. But what does such a memorial tell us about the child in whose name it was dedicated? Anne Frank was killed during wartime, of course, but not as a casualty of either war or conflict. Anne Frank was a victim of genocide: she was not one of the 'collateral' deaths of modern warfare – but rather she was specifically targeted for death because she was a Jew, in an unprecedented programme to murder all people of this group everywhere that the perpetrators could reach them. The universal message contained in this dedication includes no mention of this historical reality and conveys a quite different understanding of the circumstances of her death. As such it could be said that it has become another of Cole's 'Holocaust' myths. To reiterate, the term myth is not used here to imply that the story told on the plaque is false, but rather that it is employed as 'a story that evokes strong sentiments, and transmits and reinforces basic societal values'.¹⁵

The problem, of course, is not with the 'basic societal values' themselves, but that in the pursuit of such universal meanings we risk distorting the past. After all, why stop with the deaths of children in wartime? If we choose to universalise even further, Anne Frank died of typhus in Bergen-Belsen, so on this reckoning those remembered on this plaque could be extended to include 'all children who have died of disease': an equal tragedy surely, and a tragedy not only of greater number than children killed in war but arguably one that is more preventable. The cause in both cases – drawing attention to the tragedy of young lives cut short by war or by disease – is unmistakably and unreservedly good; but the 'lessons' in each case have little to do with Anne Frank or the Holocaust.

If the cause is good, why does this matter? By universalising this young girl's murder, we dissolve it of meaning. By decontextualising Anne Frank's death, we fail to confront the historical reality that 90% of all Jewish children in German-occupied Europe were intentionally murdered. Not 'killed in war and conflict' but sought out and murdered as part of a state-led plan to kill every Jewish man, woman and child everywhere that the Nazis and their collaborators could reach them. Surely, this difference matters. But whatever 'lessons' this may hold for our society, they are 'pre-empted' (in Langer's phrase) by a rendering of the past that makes the Holocaust itself more manageable, more palatable, more comfortable: locating it within a frame of reference – 'war is bad', 'racism is wrong', 'evil should be confronted' – upon which there is already broad consensus.

When we go to the past to confirm our pre-existing ideas and world view, what *learning* has actually taken place? The Holocaust is frequently invoked in the classroom to teach universal lessons about the dangers of man's inhumanity to man, the evils of racism and the need for a more tolerant society.¹⁶ The sentiments are noble and important, but do we

Figure 1: A tree planted in the memory of Anne Frank, in the plaza of the British Library, London



really need the Holocaust to demonstrate their value? Racism is wrong not because of the gas chambers of Treblinka, but – intellectually – for its weak and faulty view of human beings, and – morally – for the widespread injustice and suffering it causes in the contemporary world on a daily basis.

In resorting to such universal lessons we risk missing other important insights that come from deeper understandings of the specific historical event. While it is clearly the case that without the Nazis' racist ideology and radical antisemitism the Holocaust could not have happened, still to reduce the Holocaust to a lesson in anti-racism is an oversimplification which:

...does not reveal the complexities of historical process to the student. It leads to the assumption that there was a straight path from racist ideology to the extinction of a people. It overlooks the possibility that there was a 'twisted road to Auschwitz'.¹⁷

Franklin Bialystok

The role of the history classroom

The presence of the Holocaust in our collective memory, in mass media and public discourse, and the use of Holocaust imagery and motifs in the service of diverse political and social agendas, make it essential for young people's educational literacy that they understand this central event of our time and are able to evaluate critically the diverse claims made about it. The many sources and forms of information about the past to which young people are exposed, and the meanings and messages they are used to convey, raise the question of whether all opinions, all interpretations, all representations of the past are equally valid. If not, how do we distinguish between them? These are important ideas for young people to grapple with. What is the status of knowledge? How do we know what we know? How do we weigh different truth claims? They are also essential questions for the history classroom.

Figure 2: How do we read an image that is unreadable? What is the relative importance of the information a source contains and the context in which it is produced when using it as historical evidence? *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, www.auschwitz.org.pl*



If one is to argue that some kinds of emplotment are admissible and others are not, then one must propose some criteria in order to make that judgement. Those can be criteria belonging to the realm of truth or to the realm of morality (and they are not mutually exclusive). But if one argues that all historical representation is relative, then one would be hard put to apply such criteria. Nor is it clear why certain modes of emplotment would be unacceptable, especially if we do not make a distinction between facts and interpretation, truth and lies, reality and image.¹⁸

Omer Bartov

The history classroom has a vital role to play in providing such criteria on the basis of evidential enquiry and disciplinary understandings. Alberto Rosa argues:

...special attention should be paid not only to the events portrayed... but also to the way they are plotted together and the values they convey... there is an unavoidable need to teach the rules of the trade of historiography as a safeguard against the manipulation of the past.¹⁹

Restoring complexity to the past

An activity developed for the IOE's Holocaust Education Development Programme begins by exploring students' presuppositional knowledge of the past – asking how they account for the actions of those who took part or collaborated in the killing, those who tried to prevent the genocide or who rescued people and those who did not take any active role.²⁰

Typically, a view emerges of killers as evil, psychopathic Nazis or else people who had no choice – if they did not kill, they would be killed themselves; of rescuers as heroic, good and noble; and of the rest: ordinary people who did not know what was happening, didn't care or were too powerless or frightened to do anything about it.

Students then test their ideas against a wide range of historical case studies, placing the individuals that they investigate along a continuum on the classroom wall that displays the categories of 'Perpetrators' through 'Collaborators' and 'Bystanders' to 'Rescuers and Resisters'. Through the examination of these detailed accounts, photographs and associated documents, they also search for motivation and intent, writing on post-it notes their *researched* explanations of the decisions and choices made by real people, and then sticking these interpretations on to the case studies which are now displayed across the classroom wall.

The picture of the past that is revealed is far more complex – and far more unsettling – than anticipated. Students discover that there is no record of anyone being killed or sent to a concentration camp for refusing to murder Jewish people, while there are records of people refusing to murder who were simply given other duties or even sent back home. They learn that, while Nazi antisemitic ideology was the driving motivation of many decision-makers and killers, others participated in mass shootings because of peer pressure, ambition or a warped sense of duty. They find examples of rescuers who were antisemitic but who still risked their lives to save Jewish people, while others with more enlightened views did nothing. In a picturesque Austrian town they discover local women, elderly men and teenage boys joining in the hunt for escaped Soviet prisoners of war and murdering them; in a village in Burgenland they find people deporting the extended family of their Roma blacksmith but keeping the blacksmith himself rather than losing his skills. And students uncover the widespread acquiescence of people who enriched themselves through the despoliation of the Jewish people, affirming their support for the regime's persecutory policies by flocking to public auctions where they bought the possessions of their deported neighbours. The past reveals a shocking truth: you do not need to hate anyone to be complicit in genocide.

It is in the cognitive dissonance between how we perceive the world to be and how it is revealed to us when we explore the complexity of the past that we open a space for real learning: not simply taking in new information but having to reorder our categories and our understandings.

Essentially the moral lessons that the Holocaust is often used to teach reflect much the same values that were being taught in schools *before* the Holocaust, and yet – in themselves – were evidently insufficient to prevent the genocide. Notions of tolerance and of human rights have been advocated since the Enlightenment; belief in the intrinsic value of human life, the 'golden rule' of treating others as you would have them treat you, ideas of kindness, courage, charity and goodwill to those in need are all part of the ethical and moral teaching that have underpinned the values of Western society for centuries. And yet it was from that same society that the Holocaust sprang.

The implications are deeply unsettling:

[As] educators we must acknowledge that to educate after, in spite of and because of Auschwitz, we also have to face the very worst dilemmas. There is no way out... Auschwitz meant the collapse of all faith in the capacity of civilized society to instil humane values. Educators have to come to terms with the enormous significance of Auschwitz for our ideals of education.²¹

Matthias Heyl

If we do not face Auschwitz, if we simply turn it into a metaphor for the 'lessons' we wish young people to learn, then we deprive them of the opportunity to ask the challenging and difficult questions that come from the specificity of the event itself. How was it possible that not long ago, and not far from where we live, people collaborated in the murder of their Jewish neighbours? Why didn't people do more to save them? How does the genocide of European Jewry relate to the other atrocities committed by the Nazis: the genocide of the Roma and Sinti (or Gypsies); the mass murder of disabled people; the genocide of the Poles and Slavs; the persecution and murder of political opponents, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals and others? How did the victims respond to, and how far did they resist, the unfolding genocide?

There are no simple answers, and the process of enquiry will be challenging and unsettling, but as Paddy Walsh has argued: 'history is made easier at the price of making it less significant.'²²

The struggle for memory

Returning to the young students referred to at the start of this article, standing in Birkenau, deeply moved but unable to understand and left flailing at the limits of their imagination, we may reflect upon Bialystok's contention:

The weakest curricula... resist the mandate to teach. Their approach is grounded in asking the student 'How do you feel?' rather than demanding 'What do you know?' The key to learning about the Holocaust is knowledge, as it is about any other topic.²³

In the case of genocide, such knowledge is especially precious, and especially fragile. Surveying the countless examples of human atrocity, one might conclude that – until the Holocaust – the story of genocide has largely been a history of forgetting. Mass murder has been perpetrated across the world, at all times, but few such crimes have been incorporated into our national narratives and collective memories, into the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. Hitler's now famed question on the eve of the Holocaust, 'Who today remembers the Armenians?' still resonates. For centuries, communities have written out of the historical record their deliberate destruction of other human groups. Until 1944, when the Polish Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin first coined the term 'genocide', we did not even have a name for such crimes. This selective forgetting of our past has occurred largely because the victims do not survive to tell their stories. Only the perpetrators remain to choose the stories that they tell about themselves.

Figure 3: A clandestine photograph taken by the Jewish *Sonderkommando* in Auschwitz-Birkenau in the summer of 1944, showing the burning of bodies in open pits. *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, www.auschwitz.org.pl*



In the light of this, we may ask our students to consider the rarely-published, and shadowy photograph in Figure 2 (p. 60) and to try to discern its content and its meaning. What does this photograph show? What is happening? What is its significance? All are questions that are common enough in our history classrooms. We will return to this particular image shortly.

Had the Nazis won the Second World War, their crimes would have been hidden from history. In October 1943, in a speech at Poznan, Heinrich Himmler congratulated his SS officers on their role in 'the extermination of the Jewish people', a 'page of glory,' he said, that would never be written:

I am referring here to the evacuation of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish people. This is one of the things that is easily said: 'The Jewish people are going to be exterminated,' that's what every Party member says, 'sure, it's in our programme, elimination of the Jews, extermination – it'll be done.'

Figure 4: Documents written by Zalman Gradowski, member of the Jewish *Sonderkommando* working at the gas chambers and crematoria in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Discovered buried in the soil of Birkenau, after the war. *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, www.auschwitz.org.pl*



And then they all come along, the 80 million worthy Germans, and each one has his one decent Jew. Of course the others are swine, but this one, he is a first-rate Jew.

Of all those who talk like that, not one has seen it happen, not one has had to go through with it. Most of you men know what it is like to see 100 corpses side by side, or 500, or 1000.

To have stood fast through this and – except for cases of human weakness – to have stayed decent, that has made us hard. This is an unwritten and never-to-be-written page of glory in our history.²⁴

Some fourteen months earlier, Himmler appointed SS officer Paul Blobel to lead *Aktion 1005*, a plan to destroy all forensic evidence of the mass murder of European Jewry. At the mass graves of Chelmno, bodies were dug up and burned. The sites of the graves were flattened, ploughed and replanted to hide all trace of what had happened there. Later such scenes were repeated at the death camps of Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka. When Himmler spoke of his ‘page of glory’, prisoners had already reopened the mass graves at Babi Yar, a ravine on the outskirts of Kiev, and burned the bodies of some 33,000 Jewish men, women and children who had lain buried there for almost two years.

The destruction of mass graves under *Aktion 1005* continued at sites across the occupied Soviet Union, Poland, Belorussia, the Baltic states, and Yugoslavia. According to Gregory Stanton, attempts to hide material traces of mass atrocities always accompany such crimes, and constitute for him the final stage of genocide.²⁵

In this context, the disciplinary question – how do we know what we know? – takes on new meaning. First, we have the huge amount of written evidence that the perpetrators failed to destroy – a surviving copy of the Wannsee Protocol; written orders and directives; reports by the *Einsatzgruppen*

giving detailed accounts of their mass shootings; and millions of pages of other captured documents. Then there are the confessions of the perpetrators themselves, the reports of eyewitnesses, the archaeological evidence that remains despite the attempts to remove all traces, the blueprints for the construction of the crematoria and the photographs of mass murder. In short, the defeat of the Nazi regime ensured that vast amounts of material did survive. So much, indeed, that the Holocaust is without doubt the most documented genocide in human history, and – consequently – the most studied and best understood.

And yet, this material, essential as it is for understanding why and how the genocide was perpetrated, leaves us with a partial narrative of the Holocaust: one that – according to the IOE research – still dominates much of our teaching and learning and overly reflects the perspective of the perpetrator.²⁶ A perpetrator-oriented narrative (unwittingly) casts the Jewish people as passive objects of persecution, appearing on the stage of history only to be brutalised, humiliated and murdered, rather than as subjects with agency and lives before the persecution: real people in extraordinary circumstances, who responded to the unfolding genocidal process as best they could. But when the Nazis’ explicit aim was to destroy utterly all trace of the Jewish people – except for a planned museum to a ‘vanished race’ that would be exhibited in Prague after the war – how can we discover the voice of the victims and incorporate it into the classroom?

In the history classroom we continually seek to engage students in more sophisticated readings of evidence that draw together text – information that a source contains – with context – the circumstances in which it was produced. But at times it is hard to move them beyond a simple comprehension exercise and a formulaic ‘who produced this source, why, and for what audience?’ or – worse – ‘is it biased?’ It may be that a source such as the photograph in Figure 2, in which the ‘text’ is so obscure as to be unreadable, can help move our students to a fuller realisation of the importance of context in making meaning. This blurry image is a photograph taken in secret by members of the Jewish *Sonderkommando* in Auschwitz-Birkenau. A little questioning may help students to understand its meaning: given that the *Sonderkommando* were forced to work in the gas chambers and crematoria of the death camp, what do students think they were trying to photograph and why? Most will deduce that the image is trying to capture the killing process; the image itself should also reveal something about the danger involved in this attempt, trying to record evidence of mass murder while standing among the perpetrators who were committing these crimes. And the more we reflect on that context, the more starkly the image resolves itself – we glimpse in its shadows something of the perspective of the victims. Not what they were actually trying to show, but – in their very failure to capture a clear image – a sense of the extraordinarily dangerous risk they were running in attempting to do so.

But what if this were the only such image to have been taken? It is of such poor quality that it would hardly count as evidence at all. In fact, it is one of four photographs (of which Figure 3 is another example) that were taken and smuggled out of the camp in September 1944 by two political prisoners, with a note for the outside world:

We send you photographs from Birkenau – people who have been gassed. The photograph shows a heap of bodies piled outdoors. Bodies were burned outdoors when the crematorium could not keep pace with the number of bodies to be burned.

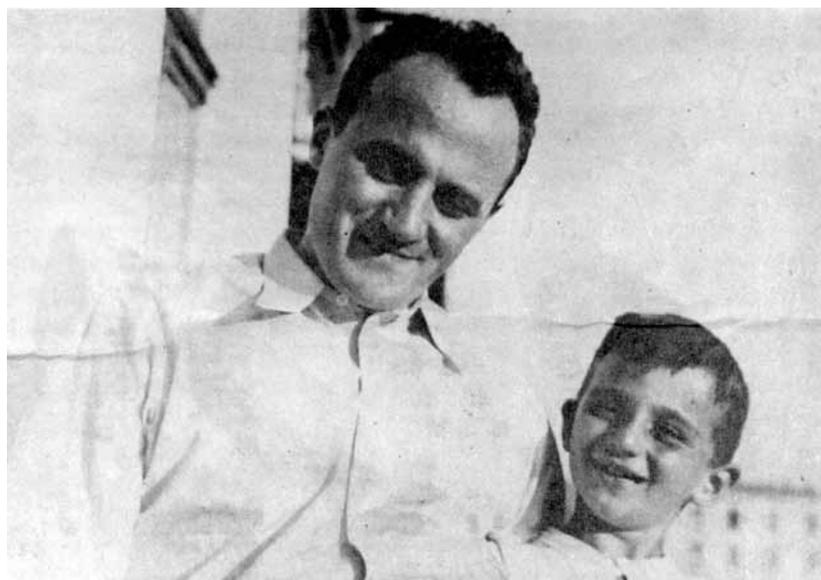
Since the end of the war, a number of documents written by members of the Jewish *Sonderkommando* have been discovered buried in the very soil of Auschwitz-Birkenau. One, a note by Zalman Gradowski written on 6 September 1944, was hidden in an aluminium flask (see Figure 4). It reads:

*Dear Finder
Search everywhere, in every inch of soil. Tens of documents are buried under it – mine and those of other persons – which will throw light on everything that was happening here. Great quantities of teeth are also buried here. It was we, the *Sonderkommando*, who expressly have strewn them all over the terrain, as many as we could, so that the world should find material traces of the millions of murdered people. We ourselves have lost hope of being able to live to see the moment of liberation.*

Elsewhere, the historian Emanuel Ringelblum, whose picture can be seen in Figure 5, led an effort to document daily life inside the Warsaw ghetto. The *Oneg Shabbat* archive was buried in tins and milk churns and only discovered after the war. The documents contained in this secret archive preserve the memory of the victims and give an invaluable insight into the responses of the people of the ghetto to the persecution by the Nazis.

Ringelblum, his wife and their young son were all shot in the ruins of the ghetto in 1944. Zalman Gradowski was killed leading a revolt of the *Sonderkommando* that resulted in the destruction of one of the crematoria buildings. These people, and many others like them, resorted to history as their means of defiance, determined that the crimes perpetrated against them would not disappear without trace. They risked their lives to document and record their experience of persecution and to cry out to subsequent generations to know what happened to them. I have argued that the complexity of the past defies easy packaging into neat moral lessons, and that the history of the Holocaust may raise profoundly unsettling questions about our society and about the human condition. Many educators may be rightly concerned about the impact that such a study could have upon the young people in their care, the distress and disorientation that it may cause. But it seems to me there is another imperative, and that is our ethical responsibility to the people whose lives and deaths we study. Our students are not able to change what they find, but neither are they altogether powerless. When studying the Holocaust, in the very act of historical enquiry, in struggling to learn and to understand, they make common cause with the people in the past and join with them in an act of resistance against the desecration of memory. Those who privilege presentist aims perhaps miss the sense in which – in this case at least – the pursuit of historical knowledge is itself an ethical and moral endeavour, given attempts by the perpetrators to destroy the evidence and the risks taken by the victims to document and preserve it.

Figure 5: Emanuel Ringelblum, with his young son, Uri Yad Vashem



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move me On

The problem page for history mentors

This feature of *Teaching History* is designed to build critical, informed debate about the character of teacher-training, teacher education and professional development. It is also designed to offer practical help to all involved in training new history teachers. Each issue presents a situation in initial teacher education/training with an emphasis upon a particular, history-specific issue.

Mentors or others involved in the training of student history teachers are invited to be the agony aunts.

This issue's problem:

Marion Hartog is wondering how to approach teaching the Holocaust, especially with her 'difficult' Year 9.

Marion, a recent graduate who came straight into teaching after completing a joint degree in history and politics, is now half way through her second placement. She has a strong commitment to citizenship education, to which she believes history has a vital contribution to make. She has generally been very enthusiastic about her teaching, concerned to motivate and engage students, although she struggled somewhat in the early stages of the course to tie her ideas to clearly defined objectives and to look critically at what the students were actually learning.

Marion's current Year 9 group came with a reputation for being 'difficult', and she was advised early on to work with them in very tightly structured ways. Although this seems to have been successful, Marion feels that she is now in something of a rut. The regular pattern of short activities that she adopted has allowed her to create a reasonably focused classroom environment, but she has been frustrated by the lack of scope for discussion and is aware that many of the students are getting restless (especially since half the students have opted to drop history at the end of the year). The next enquiry that she will be teaching to them focuses on the Holocaust and she is committed to making the issues that it raises as meaningful as she can. She is determined to capture their attention, to ensure that these young people – who may never study history again – learn the lessons about resisting prejudice and intolerance that she believes a study of this topic should convey.

She has therefore suggested that she would like to experiment now with rather more active teaching methods – perhaps involving role-play as one strategy for securing greater engagement. Her initial ideas have also focused on the use of images as a starting point, believing that the horror they convey will prompt students to ask their own questions about how such events could possibly have happened – thus setting up the following lessons as a genuine enquiry. The strength of her conviction about the importance of this topic means that she is approaching it in quite an emotionally charged way, feeling an acute sense of responsibility for what the students take from it. While her mentor, Marcus, shares the class teacher's concern about the appropriateness of her suggested methods for teaching about the Holocaust, he fully understands Marion's sense of frustration about the group's lack of engagement, and wants to help her to develop a more diverse repertoire of effective teaching strategies for working with disengaged and potentially disruptive learners.

Email from Marion to her mentor

Hi Marcus

I know we were planning to spend tomorrow's meeting comparing our marking of the Year 12 timed essays – but I wondered if we could spend some time talking about ways forward with my Year 9 group instead. I've found it quite difficult planning for them – as you know! – and Amy has always advised me to keep things short, simple and clearly contained so they always know what they're doing and have no excuse for going off task. I'm becoming quite frustrated – feeling that it is all about control. Even if they are behaving, I'm not sure they're learning anything important. We're coming up to the Holocaust enquiry and I think that might give me the chance to turn things around. If I can really capture their interest from the start with a powerful collection of images showing just how badly humans are capable of behaving, I hope that might get them hooked in. I know Amy is sceptical about group work with them, but I wondered if a collection with some quite shocking images would enable them to generate their own questions – working in small groups (3s or 4s). They might feel they had some stake in the lessons then.

I was also wondering about using role-play – perhaps a series of decision-making exercises at different points in time. I want to try to get across the idea that we all face choices about standing up for what we know to be right, sometimes at great personal cost – and that we can each make a difference. This is such an important topic that I can't bear the idea of Year 9 just plodding their way through it with no real attention to the questions. But I know I would find it equally difficult to bear if they took the role-play or the group work as a chance to mess about. So I'd really value some advice about whether you think it's worth trying and how I might structure them to minimise the risks.

Thanks, Marion.

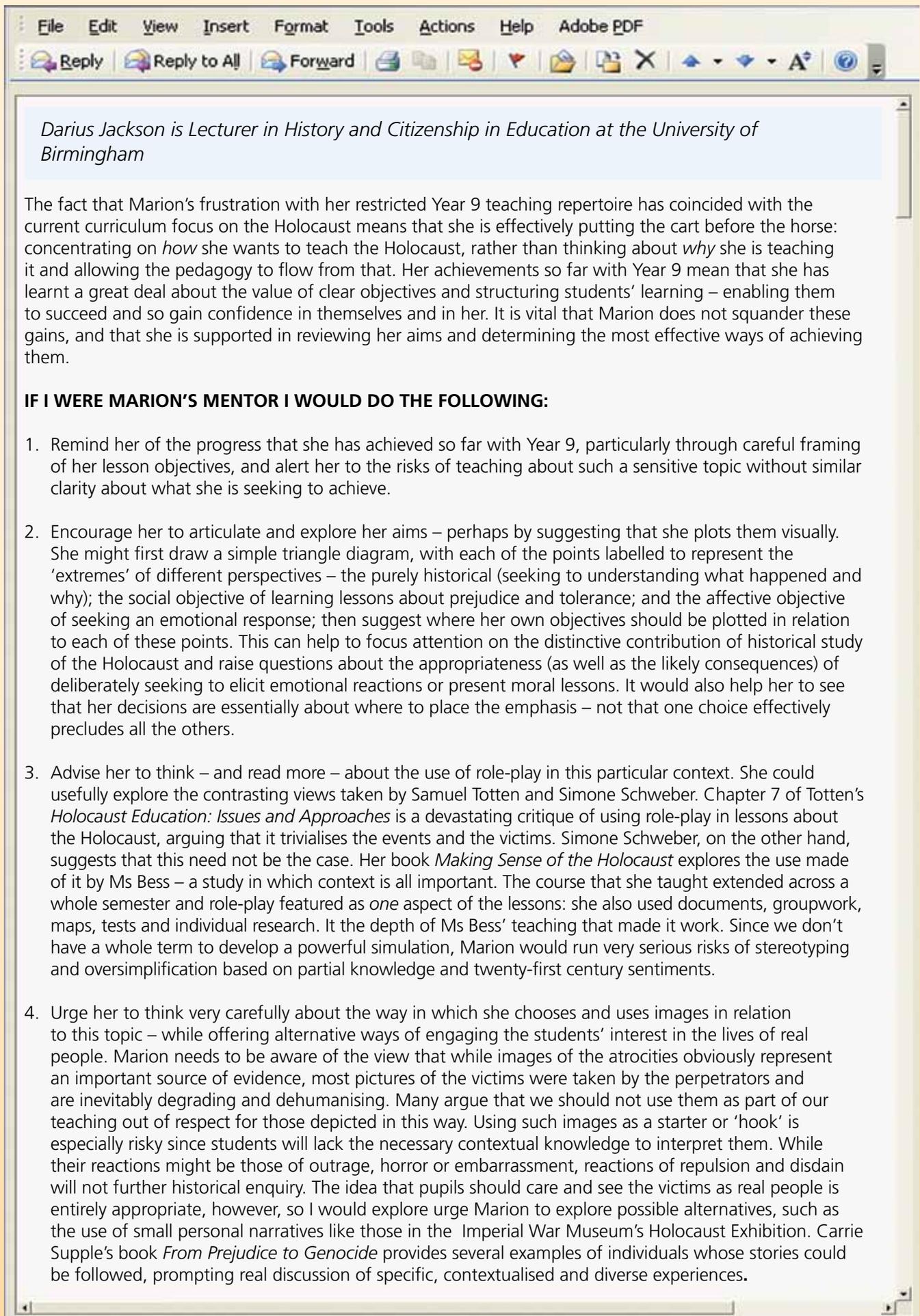
Email from Amy (Year 9 class teacher) to Marion's mentor, Marcus

Marcus – can we have a quick word about Marion before you see her tomorrow? We started talking about the Holocaust enquiry and I think she has misunderstood some of my concerns, but I had to dash off to see a parent so didn't get a chance to talk it through. She's quite excited about teaching the Holocaust – hoping that it really will get the group engaged – but I'm worried that she may end up out of her depth. There are two problems and they're getting mixed up in her head. One is working out how to manage genuine discussion with Year 9 – enabling them to share ideas with each other and with the whole class while keeping a tight rein on behaviour. But the other is the appropriateness of the actual discussion and role-play tasks that she's got in mind.

I've got serious reservations about the kind of images that she's suggested – shocking and dehumanising – inappropriate both for the students and for the victims of the Holocaust. Also real worries that a role-play scenario may end up either trivialising what happened (very likely given some of those students) or, by putting students in certain roles, might appear to condone the Nazis' actions. My general worries about role-play (so difficult for kids to really grasp the historical context of events and too easy to slip into 'imagine you were there' rather than actually understanding people at the time) are just multiplied here.

I fear that Marion didn't really pick up on any of those issues. She knows I'm not a fan of role-play and has assumed that my worries are all about the techniques in themselves – and my general caution with that group – rather than there being any issue about their appropriateness for this particular topic. I've said I'll see her again on Friday, but I think you probably need a general discussion about handling this kind of issue (regardless of the particular teaching group) before then.

Thanks, Amy.



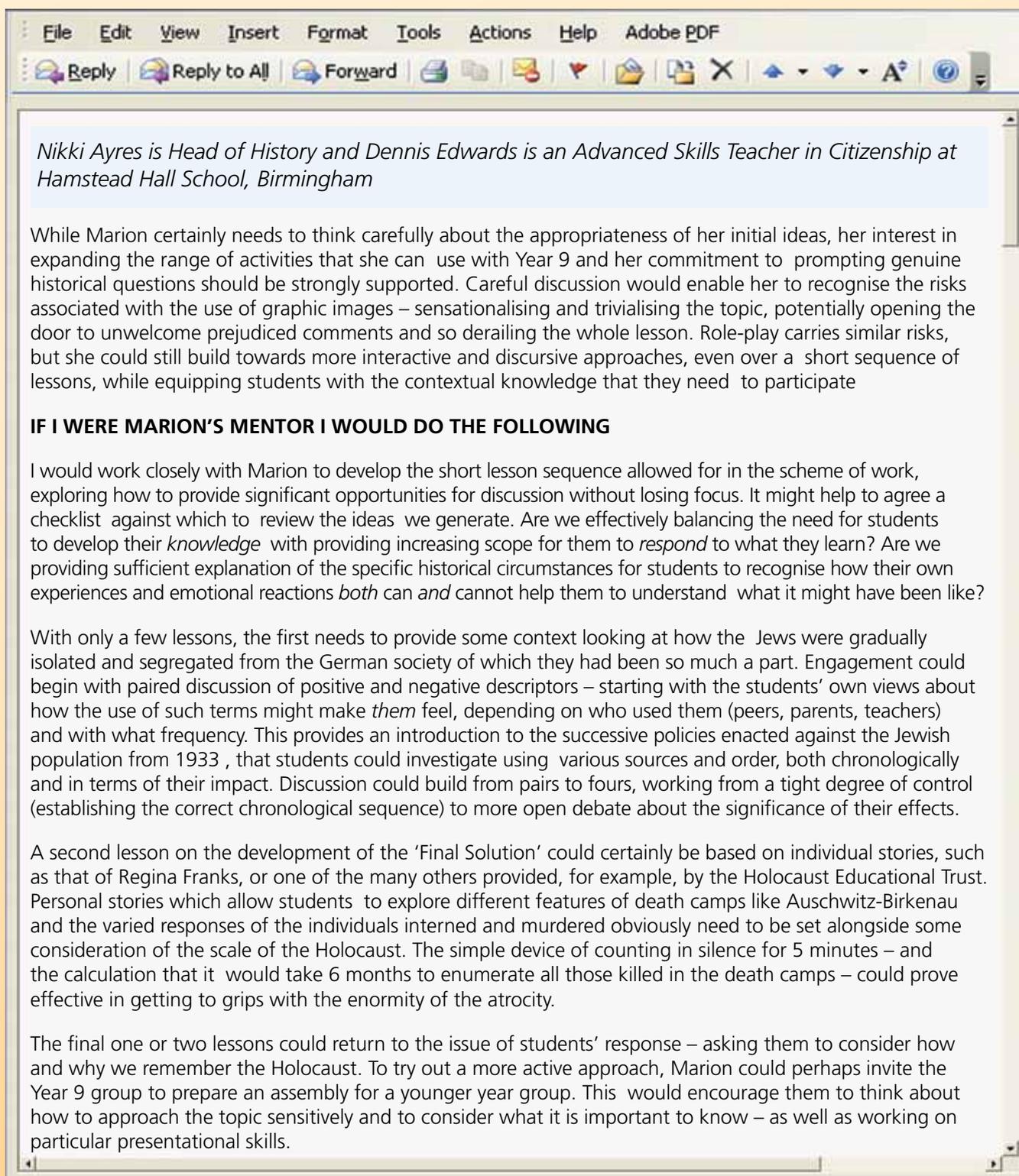
The screenshot shows an email client interface. At the top, there is a menu bar with 'File', 'Edit', 'View', 'Insert', 'Format', 'Tools', 'Actions', and 'Help', followed by 'Adobe PDF'. Below the menu is a toolbar with icons for 'Reply', 'Reply to All', 'Forward', and other functions. The main content area displays an email from Darius Jackson, a lecturer in History and Citizenship in Education at the University of Birmingham. The email text discusses Marion's teaching of the Holocaust and provides a list of four suggestions for a mentor.

Darius Jackson is Lecturer in History and Citizenship in Education at the University of Birmingham

The fact that Marion's frustration with her restricted Year 9 teaching repertoire has coincided with the current curriculum focus on the Holocaust means that she is effectively putting the cart before the horse: concentrating on *how* she wants to teach the Holocaust, rather than thinking about *why* she is teaching it and allowing the pedagogy to flow from that. Her achievements so far with Year 9 mean that she has learnt a great deal about the value of clear objectives and structuring students' learning – enabling them to succeed and so gain confidence in themselves and in her. It is vital that Marion does not squander these gains, and that she is supported in reviewing her aims and determining the most effective ways of achieving them.

IF I WERE MARION'S MENTOR I WOULD DO THE FOLLOWING:

1. Remind her of the progress that she has achieved so far with Year 9, particularly through careful framing of her lesson objectives, and alert her to the risks of teaching about such a sensitive topic without similar clarity about what she is seeking to achieve.
2. Encourage her to articulate and explore her aims – perhaps by suggesting that she plots them visually. She might first draw a simple triangle diagram, with each of the points labelled to represent the 'extremes' of different perspectives – the purely historical (seeking to understand what happened and why); the social objective of learning lessons about prejudice and tolerance; and the affective objective of seeking an emotional response; then suggest where her own objectives should be plotted in relation to each of these points. This can help to focus attention on the distinctive contribution of historical study of the Holocaust and raise questions about the appropriateness (as well as the likely consequences) of deliberately seeking to elicit emotional reactions or present moral lessons. It would also help her to see that her decisions are essentially about where to place the emphasis – not that one choice effectively precludes all the others.
3. Advise her to think – and read more – about the use of role-play in this particular context. She could usefully explore the contrasting views taken by Samuel Totten and Simone Schweber. Chapter 7 of Totten's *Holocaust Education: Issues and Approaches* is a devastating critique of using role-play in lessons about the Holocaust, arguing that it trivialises the events and the victims. Simone Schweber, on the other hand, suggests that this need not be the case. Her book *Making Sense of the Holocaust* explores the use made of it by Ms Bess – a study in which context is all important. The course that she taught extended across a whole semester and role-play featured as *one* aspect of the lessons: she also used documents, groupwork, maps, tests and individual research. It the depth of Ms Bess' teaching that made it work. Since we don't have a whole term to develop a powerful simulation, Marion would run very serious risks of stereotyping and oversimplification based on partial knowledge and twenty-first century sentiments.
4. Urge her to think very carefully about the way in which she chooses and uses images in relation to this topic – while offering alternative ways of engaging the students' interest in the lives of real people. Marion needs to be aware of the view that while images of the atrocities obviously represent an important source of evidence, most pictures of the victims were taken by the perpetrators and are inevitably degrading and dehumanising. Many argue that we should not use them as part of our teaching out of respect for those depicted in this way. Using such images as a starter or 'hook' is especially risky since students will lack the necessary contextual knowledge to interpret them. While their reactions might be those of outrage, horror or embarrassment, reactions of repulsion and disdain will not further historical enquiry. The idea that pupils should care and see the victims as real people is entirely appropriate, however, so I would explore urge Marion to explore possible alternatives, such as the use of small personal narratives like those in the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition. Carrie Supple's book *From Prejudice to Genocide* provides several examples of individuals whose stories could be followed, prompting real discussion of specific, contextualised and diverse experiences.



Next issue's problem:

Rob Collingwood keeps just making assumptions about his students' thinking.

For details of Rob's mentor's problem, contact:

Martin Hoare, Historical Association, 59a Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4JH.

E-mail: martin.hoare@history.org.uk

Responses are invited from mentors and trainers of trainee history teachers.

Responses for the September edition must be received by 31 January 2011.

Marion and Rob are both fictional characters. Thanks to Katharine Burn, Institute of Education, London, for devising the Move Me On problem.



Mummy, Mummy, what's a Sten House?

Not now dear, Mummy's fascinated by the White Paper. It seems to have come from some parallel universe in a timewarp. Apparently everyone learns to teach best in the classroom and teacher training should take place in schools. Quite so. That'll be why everyone does that already then. Mummy's racking her brains to think of a single ITE course that spends less than three-quarters of its time in schools. It really is most confusing. What can it all mean?

But Mummy, what is it? Is it a house with a stair lift? Apparently it's all about doing the climbing yourself rather than being lifted straight to the view from the top floor.

Ah, I think you must be talking about Lawrence Stenhouse (1926-1982) and his arguments for a process curriculum rather than a curriculum where pupils are fed the knowledge product all ready made and packaged for them. In his *Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development* (1975) he builds the idea of pupils engaging in 'inquiry'.

So is that what people mean when they say we should get rid of subjects and focus on generic skills and competences?

Definitely not. That would be quite a misreading of Stenhouse! For Stenhouse the process or inquiry that pupils must experience can only come from the structure (or 'syntax') of the discipline. So subjects are key. He makes the point that disciplinary knowledge can never be adequately expressed as a set of knowledge bites. That would be the discipline's *product*. If pupils are to make meaning out of that end product, it is not enough just to feed it to them in that form and then test them to see if they have it. Stenhouse says that they need to understand the particular ways in which that discipline works. So in history, for example, teachers need to find ways of helping pupils understand what it means for historians to build, support or challenge a claim about the past.

So is that why Stenhouse said that there could be no curriculum development without teacher development?

Exactly so. It's one thing to work out what constitutes a valid truth claim in a particular discipline, what kinds of questions its academic practitioners ask, what forms of truth it seeks or what kinds of material it admits as evidence. It's quite another thing to transfer all that to the classroom. Pupils can't replicate it all *exactly*. What kinds of learning situations should pupils have which embody those principles? What balance do they need between seeing finished product and engaging in process? As teachers, we need to think very hard about subjects, what they are and what they are trying to do if we are to do all this sensibly.

Daddy says it could all go horribly wrong?

Well Daddy is (for once) quite right. But he's also 30 years out of date. In history, we've had our experiences of it all going horribly wrong. For example, the odd little reductive exercises on 'bias' or obsession with source reliability which missed the whole point about how evidence is constituted or little gobbets taken out of context or a loss of emphasis on enjoying and creating stories and frameworks. There was a lot of that about by the 1980s. The journey of the 1990s and 2000s, however, has seen many history teachers noticing all this and reshaping the balance of process and product in all sorts of ways. Whatever has been going on in policy circles or in examination circles (GCSE certainly seems strangely stuck in the 1980s), you could say that history teachers themselves (or quite a lot of them) have been 'developing' the curriculum. And they've been doing it in the only place a curriculum can be developed – in the classroom. They've been learning from earlier mistakes, experimenting practically and debating with each other about what a focus on process or inquiry can or should mean. There now, you've got me going and it's time for bed! Run along now ...

Mummy, has the effort to secure inclusion moved closer to or further away from the Bernsteinian idea of universalistic and particularistic codes