



HMD09 Short Film: The Hate Game

The short film for Holocaust Memorial Day 2009 looks at the consequences of hatred from the Holocaust to today. The film is styled on popular video games and tells, through a series of 6 short films, the stories of people who have faced hatred and the consequences of hatred. All of the stories are based on factual events and highlight how committing acts of hatred or being a bystander to hatred relies on individual choices.

The film is a mixture of animation and live action and is deliberately hard-hitting and thought-provoking. While the film may look and sound like a game we learn throughout it that the events depicted are not amusing nor are they games. At the end of each sequence the game begins to “break down” through glitches in the animation signalling that events we have seen are not actually part of a fictional game but are real-life events which have impacted on the lives of individuals.

Please note that due to a moderate element of strong language and one violent scene this film is not suitable for primary school pupils. Please ensure that you watch the film before showing in a school or community setting. Suitable questions for use in schools, youth groups or adult discussion groups are included in this guidance.

The DVD can either be viewed as one complete film or each level can be shown separately with the stories that have been featured discussed. You may find it helpful to view the film in shorter segments in order to maintain interest and to ensure that the individual stories are absorbed.

Level 1: Kristallnacht

The animated sequence shows a German woman leaving her house on the morning of 10 November 1938. Smoke is still rising from the ruins of the Synagogue, Jewish homes and businesses which have been destroyed. The woman approaches a young boy who is sweeping up outside a shop and who asks for help as his father has been taken away. The woman is offered the choice of helping or turning away.

This level is based on the events of Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass) – 9/10 November 1938 where Jewish shops, places of worship and homes across Germany and Austria were attacked in a co-ordinated campaign by the Nazis. More than 200 synagogues were destroyed and thousands of homes and businesses were ransacked. 92 Jews were murdered and approximately 30,000 were arrested and deported to concentration camps.

This is the only film which does not feature an end voiceover by an individual connected to the specific story.

Level 2: Robert Wagemann

The animated sequence shows a young disabled boy being taken by his mother to a doctor's surgery in the Third Reich. The mother hears the doctor threatening to send her son to sleep due to his disability – she chooses to take her child and run.

This level tells the story of Robert Wagemann a disabled boy who escaped the Nazi euthanasia programme. The T4 euthanasia programme targeted adults and children with mental and physical disabilities and ran from 1939 to 1941 when public outrage brought about the end of the programme. Physicians continued to kill the disabled after 1941 and it is estimated that over quarter of a million disabled people were murdered by the Nazis.

Robert Wagemann, the boy whose story is depicted, now lives in the United States and provides the final voiceover for this film.

Level 3: Racist Hate Crime

The animated film starts with two young men at a bus stop choosing which bus they must get to arrive home on time. In a shocking sequence which includes the use of hate language we see one of the young men being attacked by a gang of youths and being urged to run away by his friend. By the end of the film his heart monitor has very little life left and the screen has gone black.

The live action film shows Doreen Lawrence OBE explaining that this is the story of her son Stephen who was murdered in a racist attack in 1994.

Level 4: Homophobic Hatred

The animated film shows a confrontation between two men after one of the men has made homophobic remarks about the other. The gay character defends himself and asks why he is being abused for being gay.

Victim of homophobic abuse Lee Duncan explains in the live action sequence that he suffered abuse from a neighbour for 18 months before challenging it. He advises that anyone facing abuse or harassment should report it to the police.

Level 5: Islamophobia

The animation depicts an event at a school parents' evening where a Muslim mother wearing Islamic dress with full face veil was asked to leave for security reasons. Despite offering to prove her identity to a female member of staff the woman was refused entry to the school.

This is a depiction of a recent event in Lancashire when a Muslim mother encountered hostility and prejudice when she wanted to enrol her son at the local Roman Catholic Primary School; however the woman involved was keen to keep her anonymity. Anjum Anwar, Dialogue Development Officer of Blackburn Cathedral, expresses the sentiment that

failing to respect different religions and customs will lead to communities becoming isolated.

Level 6: Anti-semitic hate crime

We view this film from the point of view of an elderly woman walking along a street. She encounters two girls verbally and physically attacking a younger Jewish girl. The old lady is given the choice of intervening in the attack or not.

Gabriella Soffer, a young Jewish girl, was attacked in the street in summer 2008. Only one old lady intervened while other adults stood by. Gabriella calls on us all to reject racial and religious hatred.

Discussion Questions

Suggestions for follow up discussion with older secondary students

In each level of the film “players” have to make a decision based on two alternative choices. Examine the choices for each scene and ask:

1. Do you think the character made the right decision? Try to give reasons for your answer.
2. How do you think the scene might have ended had the character made the alternative choice?
3. The characters are offered two choices in each scene. What additional actions, if any, could be taken?

Level 1: Kristallnacht

1. What evidence is there that the woman was known to the boy and what do you think he hoped the woman would do?
2. Why do you think most people stood by and did nothing once the Nazi state began its campaign of hatred?

Level 2: Robert Wagemann

1. We overhear the nurse giving the doctor two possible reasons to end the child’s life, what are they?
2. How was it possible for people trained to save life to become involved in the T4 euthanasia programme?

Level 3: Racist Hate Crime

1. How can we tell that the attack on the young man springs from prejudice and hatred?
2. What does Doreen Lawrence believe led directly to her son's death. What does she ask all people to do?

Level 4: Homophobic Hatred

1. What led to the confrontation between the two men? What part does the young woman play in the scene?
2. How long did it take Lee Duncan to challenge his abuser and why do you think it took him so long to act?

Level 5: Islamophobia

1. Other than listening to what she says how can we tell that the teacher is hostile towards the Muslim woman? What excuses are offered for telling the woman to leave the school premises?
2. Anjum Anwar suggests that there are things everyone can do to create a better world. What advice does she give us?

Level 6: Anti-semitic hate crime

1. We witness a verbal and physical attack on a young girl. How can we tell that this has sprung from anti-semitism?
2. What surprised Gabriella when the old lady intervened and helped her? What is Gabriella's message to all of us on HMD09?

The key message of the film is that acts of hatred always involve a choice and that we all have the choice and the responsibility to Stand up to Hatred.

HMDT would like to thank the following for their participation in the production of this film and for sharing their stories with us:

Robert Wagemann
Doreen Lawrence OBE
Lee Duncan
Anjum Anwar MBE
Gabriella Soffer

