

Hidden Histories: Introduction

Introduction

On Holocaust Memorial Day 2011 we're asking everyone to consider **Untold Stories**. We each live and create a story every day, through the way in which we behave, our beliefs and values and how we think. The stories we're encountering on HMD 2011 are not fiction. They are the stories of individuals, of communities and events which happened to real people. Sometimes the stories are hard to find, they are hidden in old photographs, special objects or buried in archives. These stories, once uncovered, can be told in many different ways. They can be watched in films, read in testimonies or shared in story telling sessions. This project explores **hidden histories** and asks young people to think about the stories behind seemingly ordinary or not very valuable possessions.

If this project takes place in a school, we recommend that educators run a 1.5 hour session. If you are working within a youth organisation, we would advise that you spend a whole session on this activity.

Setting the scene

We provide guidance on how to introduce this project to your groups/schools, however, you know the young people you work with best and we ask that you take into consideration their ability to deal with sometimes difficult issues and their background knowledge of the areas covered by Holocaust Memorial Day.

Genocide may not be a comfortable subject to tackle but it is essential to recognise that it has taken place. We are not asking young people to imagine what life was like under the Nazi regime or during the genocide in Rwanda or to take part in role playing tasks. Some things are beyond imagination. We are asking them to look at what happened, to listen to the **Untold Stories** from that period, share them with others and apply the lessons from the stories to their lives today. Genocide is a poignant reminder of what can happen when discrimination and hatred is left unchecked. The young people in your care can challenge discrimination and hatred and play their part in creating a safer future for us all.

HMD 2011 is a chance to focus on positive action by reflecting on how we can make sure that **Untold Stories** survive and find a new audience to bear witness to the past so 27 January serves as a reminder to look to our own behaviour towards others.

We have discovered objects and stories, which you will find alongside this introduction, for you to use with your group. You can use one, more or all of these stories as you encourage young people to take part in these activities. Do make sure that you allow time for reflection and questions from your audience and that you do set the scene for them. We've

supplied downloadable information sheets about the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and subsequent genocides which will be able to provide suitable background reading for those thinking about the **hidden histories**.

Important note

We have selected a number of survivors and their objects for use in this activity. There are many reasons why we have not been able to provide stories from all of the groups affected during the Holocaust, Nazi persecution or in the subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and the ongoing atrocities in Darfur. When participating in this project, it's essential that you make it clear that often, stories cannot be told because an entire community or culture was destroyed through regimes of hatred or it may be that the persecution against particular groups was not recognised until too late, and those who had suffered have passed away before their stories have been heard. Please do visit the HMD website (<http://hmd.org.uk/genocides>), where you can find out about those who have been affected by the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and the genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

Outcomes

After considering the objects and possessions which are important to them, we'll be asking young people to consider how a seemingly ordinary object can tell so many extraordinary stories. We hope that you will find a creative way in which to take these stories further. We will be asking the Leaders of the participating groups to submit examples of the work that has been produced simply email all submissions to hiddenhistories@hmd.org.uk by 22 December 2010 along with your name, organisation address and phone number. Following review, all entrants will be entered into a draw for the opportunity for a survivor who has taken part in the **hidden histories** project to visit their school or group to talk about their experiences and to answer questions. Submissions to this project may also be published on the HMDT website. We therefore ask that you ensure that you adhere to any data protection policies which you adhere to before submitting photographs.

Suggested ideas

There's no right or wrong way to respond to the **Untold Stories** that you'll hear whilst unpacking the **hidden histories**. We've supplied some ideas below, but there is no limit to how these stories can be shared.

- create a poster series for use on HMD 2011
- write a blog or website entry telling the **Untold Stories** you have found

- use textiles and design to explore the stories you've heard. You could create a garment or design a piece of jewellery
- use the stories you unpack to inspire your own pieces of fiction
- record a podcast featuring reactions to **Untold Stories**
- create a sculpture together which remembers the lives which have been wasted in genocide

If you would like to discuss this project, please call the HMDT team on **0845 838 1883** or email hiddenhistories@hmd.org.uk