

# Hidden Histories: Introduction

## Introduction

On Holocaust Memorial Day 2011 we're asking everyone to consider **Untold Stories**. We each live a story every day, in the way in which we behave, the way we think and the things we believe in. 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. These stories can be told in many different ways. They can be watched in films, read in testimonies or shared in a story telling sessions. This project explores **hidden histories** and asks young people to think about the stories behind seemingly meaningless 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 those in your groups and classes, however, you know your members and students 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 you to imagine what life was like under the Nazi regime or during the genocide in Rwanda. We are asking you to look at what happened, to listen to the **Untold Stories** from that period, share them with others and apply their lessons to our lives today. Genocide is a poignant reminder of what can happen when discrimination and hatred is left unchecked.

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 and it serves as a reminder to look to our own behaviour towards others.

We have found objects and stories, which you will find alongside this introduction for you to use in your activities, you can use one, more or all of these stories as you 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**.

## Outcomes

After considering the objects and possessions which are important to them, we'll be asking young people to consider how a seemingly meaningless object can tell so many stories. We hope that you will find a creative way in which to share these stories further.

## 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