

Religious Education/Citizenship (Post 16 extension work)

Notes for Teachers: These ideas for discussion are linked to the Stolen Lives case study. <http://education.hmd.org.uk/case-studies/the-victims-of-t4/read> They can stand alone but for a more detailed study you may find it useful to work through the secondary Religious Education lesson <http://education.hmd.org.uk/resources/religious-education-upper-secondarypost-16> first, allowing Post 16 students more time to discuss the points raised. You can then use the following ideas as extension tasks for older students. You do not have to work through all the questions. Select those most suited to the academic and emotional maturity of your students.

Give students a copy of the case study. If you choose to work through the original Religious Education lesson then **move** straight on to the discussion section. If this document is your starting point then **allow** ten minutes for students to read through the case study.

Points to discuss

Why did the Nazis develop such a detailed policy on disabled people? Use the evidence found in the first three paragraphs of the case study to consider what they were hoping to achieve.

Use the Internet to find out more about present day Human Rights in Europe. How would present day European Human Rights Legislation prevent both drafting and applying the Nazi policy against disabled people today?

From the evidence found in the case study would you say that Nazi propaganda about the disabled in Germany was successful? If so why, if not why not?

In the propaganda film *Ich Klarge An* euthanasia was presented as mercy killing. In the transcript of the trial of the Hadamar staff the actions taken at Hadamar are described as murder. Is there a clear difference between mercy killing and murder? If so what is it and if not why do you think there should be no distinction between them?

After the war a number of medical staff involved in the T4 programme were put on trial. Most of these staff claimed to be obeying orders or doing their job. Do you think this defence is acceptable or were they guilty of murder?

The official T4 programme was eventually suspended due to the reaction of members of the public. Why do you think it took so long for there to be a challenge to this Nazi policy?

Bishop Clemens preached against the euthanasia programme. What risks do you think he took to make his feelings public? Why do you think he linked public acceptance of the programme with a dire future for humanity?

What religious teachings would be useful to cite in a sermon against Nazi policies of discrimination and hatred which led to murder?

Hospitals are usually regarded as places of safety and healing and the role of medical staff is to support life. Years ago doctors used to swear the Hippocratic Oath before they began to practice medicine. Look up the content of the Oath using the Internet or reference books; in what ways might this Oath have some validity today?

How could an examination of the life of disabled achievers such as Paralympic champion Ellie Simmonds or the author Stephen Hawkins be used in an argument to prove that Nazi propaganda was wrong?

Euthanasia is a controversial issue today. Research two sides of the modern euthanasia debate. One might be the views of the disabled peer Lady Campbell, as reported in *The Guardian* on 7 July 2009.

‘Those of us who know what it is to live with a terminal condition are fearful the tide has already turned against us. If I should ever seek death – and there have been times when my progressive condition challenges me – I want to guarantee that you are with me, supporting my continued life and its value...I tick every box of Lord Falconer's [criteria] to die...I could go tomorrow and, believe me, I would have no trouble in persuading two doctors. Three years ago two doctors persuaded me it was time for me to go on my way.’ She said assisted dying was not supported by disabled people, apart from a small number. Assisted dying was ‘to abandon hope and to ignore the majority of disabled and terminally ill people.’

Another view is that writer Martin Amis, as stated in an interview for *The Times* in January 2010 to which there was huge, mostly negative, reaction. Amis was talking about old age:

How is society going to support this silver tsunami? There'll be a population of demented very old people, like an invasion of terrible immigrants, stinking out

the restaurants and cafes and shops. I can imagine a sort of civil war between the old and the young in 10 or 15 years' time.

Amis's solution is extreme: mass euthanasia. He said in *The Times* on 24 January 2010 'There should be a booth on every corner where you could get a Martini and a medal,' he explained that he was considering issues surrounding euthanasia when his stepfather died 'very horribly'. 'He thought he was going to get better. But he didn't. I think the denial of death is a great curse. We all wanted to assist him.'

What are the fears and hopes of both speakers? What type of language does each one use to express their views? Remember that Lady Campbell was responding to a bill about assisted dying, with the consent of doctors AND the patient or patient's representative and that Martin Amis was talking about his fears of old age. Neither were passing comments on the T4 programme.

Euthanasia is illegal in the UK but debates surrounding this controversial issue are widely reported and fiercely contested. In what ways could the story of the Hadamar victims encourage people to revisit their arguments for and against euthanasia?