

Religious Education (Upper Secondary/Post 16)

This lesson is based on the Stolen Lives case study. <http://education.hmd.org.uk/case-studies/the-victims-of-t4/read> Please be aware that the content of this lesson is suitable for students between the ages 15-19 who are in the final years of their secondary education.

Starter

Set the context and **remind** students that religious believers often think about ethical issues. Many feel that they have a duty to speak out when something isn't right. Holocaust Memorial Day is a good time for students of Religious Education to think about how people of different faiths respond to prejudice and discrimination.

Ask students to tell you what they know about Nazi plans to create a master race. Try to **discover** whether they are aware of what happened to disabled people. **Explain** that many people do not know about the lives stolen from the disabled during this period in history.

Introduce the first part of the case study **Untold Stories** of Stolen Lives.

<http://education.hmd.org.uk/case-studies/the-victims-of-t4/read> **Try** to use your own words rather than reading from the text. **Cover** the information found in the first three paragraphs.

Explain that not everyone agreed with the Nazi theories you have outlined. **Ask** students to use their knowledge of religions they have studied to suggest arguments against prejudice and discrimination which would challenge the ideas put forward by the Nazi regime.

Discuss these suggestions and **note** them on the board. Suggestions might include religious teachings on equality, the treatment of neighbours and responsibility to care for all members of society.

Next **examine** the Nazi use of propaganda. **Remind** students many people disagreed with Nazi philosophy. **Describe** the propaganda tools used by the Nazis to persuade people to accept their views. **Discuss** these tools and **question** which ones were likely to be the most persuasive. **Ask** why people don't always recognise propaganda. **Encourage** students to give reasons for their answers.

The case study describes three different programmes aimed at the disabled community. Compulsory sterilisation, the murder of disabled children and the T4 euthanasia programme. **Divide** the class into three groups and **ask** each group to read about one of

these programmes. Remaining in these groups **encourage** everyone to discuss their reactions to the actions of the Nazis, their acts of murder and the lies they told, before **asking** for a summary of what happened.

Next **examine** in more detail the reaction of the Catholic Bishop, Clemens Von Galen. He spoke out against the euthanasia programme. He said it was 'plain murder'. **Ask** how this statement challenged the view put forward in the propaganda film described in paragraph 4.

Hitler ended the official T4 programme under pressure from public opinion. Christians, like Bishop Clemens, could find lots of Christian teachings to help them protest against the use of euthanasia. **Ask** students to work in pairs to research and then outline two of them. You could direct students to general Christian ideas such as the 'sanctity of life'; human beings 'playing God' by the wilful destruction of life, or to biblical teachings such as the commandment 'do not kill', the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 3 16-20) or Jesus teaching on the value of human life (Luke 12.6-7).

There were not many Muslims living in Germany in the 1930s but students who have studied Islam might want to research Islamic arguments and potential responses to the T4 programme. They could suggest teachings which may have been used against the T4 programme such as the belief that all human life is sacred because it is given by Allah or the belief that only Allah should decide how long a person will live. Human beings should not interfere with what Allah has planned.

Some students may prefer to examine Jewish teachings which forbid any action which would shorten life. They might discuss the argument used by Jews that human beings are made in the image of God thus making all life of infinite value. However if this option is chosen you must **remind** students of Nazi policy towards the Jewish people and **explain** why it would be impossible for Jewish voices to impact on the policies of the Third Reich.

To conclude **return** to the case study. **Remind** students of the **Untold Stories** of the disabled victims of Nazi prejudice and discrimination. **Explain** that we don't know all their names but it is important to remember them on Holocaust Memorial Day. In Westminster Abbey there is a tomb to an unknown soldier which honours and represents the anonymous victims of war. **Give** everyone a post-it note and **challenge** groups or individuals to think of a way we could honour and remember the anonymous disabled people murdered by the Nazis. **Leave** a notice board free and **invite** students to return and post their ideas on it throughout the day. The ideas could be viewed by other members of your school/college community as a way to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.

You will find additional ideas, discussion points and follow up work for post 16 students on our website. <http://education.hmd.org.uk/age-range/post-16>