

An assembly of **Untold Stories** (Secondary)

Preparation

The 4 students participating in the assembly will need a set of picture postcards. On each postcard you should write the name of a place mentioned in the featured **Untold Stories**. They should look like the cards people post from a holiday destination. You will also need to project or pin a large world map on the wall or screen behind you. You will point out the postcard locations as the assembly unfolds. Timings are crucial in this assembly and you will need to rehearse the presentation with students A, B, C, and D and make sure that everyone knows where to find their locations on the map. Students A, B and C play themselves whilst student D sits slightly apart from them and becomes the voice of the refugees. The four students should be in place before everyone comes into the hall. A B and C are chatting together and looking at images on mobile phones. D sits alone, in silence facing the screen or wall. As you take your place and prepare to start the assembly A B and C raise their voices and begin to laugh at a shared joke. The audience can now hear their conversation. D remains silent. Please note that the words in italics are stage directions and should not be spoken. Students may wish to improvise their own introductory conversation about social networks and friendship. The opening here is simply an example.

The Assembly

Leader: Good morning everyone if I can have your attention, please. (*Turn purposefully towards students ABC and stand looking at them. AB and C continue their conversation as though unaware of you. Their conversation is now clearly audible*)

Student A: And it was so funny, we couldn't stop laughing.

Student B: But we filmed it – just look at this.

Student C: Oh that's mean (*Laughing and looking at phone*) let me have another look. Can you identify who it is? Oh no. That is so embarrassing! How many people have seen it?

Student A: Oh not many.

Student B: Yet!

Student A: Just a few friends.

Student C: Well that's OK then. You don't have that many friends.

Student A: I do on Facebook!

Student B: I've put your video on YouTube.

Student C: That is so mean. That means hundreds of people know my Dad thinks he can dance.

Leader (*Interrupting*): What on earth are you three chattering about?

Student B: Funny stories and our friends.

Leader: Your friends?

Student C (*Proudly*): Yes we have lots of friends. (Insert name of Student A) has 353 on Facebook and I have 401.

Student A: How many friends do you have (insert name of Leader)?

Leader: Well actually I don't have friends. I have followers on Twitter. I tweet.

Student D (*Who has been listening quietly without moving speaks in a loud clear voice*): I don't have any friends.

(*Leader A B and C turn towards D and stare*)

Student D: I don't have any friends at all. My family is frightened. No one will listen. No one will help. My story is untold. It is 1939.

Leader: It is 1939.

Student A: 1939

Student B : 1939

Student C: May 1939. It is springtime.

Leader: May 1939 and a ship is leaving Hamburg in Germany. (*Student A goes to the map and places a postcard marker on Hamburg*) It is sailing across the Atlantic to Cuba.

Student D: I was born in Germany in 1926 and I am now 13 years old. I am a passenger on the ship, travelling with my Mum and Dad, my brother, and two sisters. We are all frightened.

Leader: The Nazis rule Germany.

Student D: We are Jewish.

Leader: The Nazis don't like Jewish people. It is dangerous to be Jewish in Germany in 1939.

Student A: Why is it dangerous?

Student D: Mum and Dad owned a grocery shop. One night, a few months ago, the Nazis came and broke all the windows. People painted horrible words of hatred all over the door. There was looting and there was a fire. It was very frightening. You may have heard of that night. It was called 'The Night of Broken Glass' *Kristallnacht*. We lost almost everything. My Dad was sent to a camp and spent two months as a prisoner of the Nazis. After that we knew it wasn't safe to stay. So we are on a ship escaping to a new life.

Leader: Now the ship has arrived in Cuba (*Student A goes to the map and puts a marker on Cuba*) but the Cubans don't want refugees and asylum seekers to stay in Cuba. They won't allow the ship to dock. It stays in the harbour with nowhere to go.

Student A: What will you do?

Student D: I don't know. My mum doesn't know either and my little sister is scared.

Leader: The ship sails from Cuba to America.

Student C: That's cool. America is a good place to visit.

Leader: But the American Government won't let the ship dock either. They say they have taken in too many refugees from Germany. There is a waiting list. These passengers can't jump the queue.

Student B: Well what about Canada? That's close by.

Leader: There is too much unemployment and no room for refugees.

Student D: We have no friends, we are refugees. Our stories are untold.

Student A: There are millions of **Untold Stories**. Between 1933 and 1945, over six million people, of all ages, were systematically murdered by the Nazis and their allies because they were Jewish. Jews were rounded up from across most of Europe, not only in Germany but also in many surrounding countries for example Holland, Poland, Greece, France, Hungary, Lithuania. (*Student C places postcard markers on these locations*) Jews were separated from their non-Jewish neighbours and their basic Human Rights were taken away.

Student B: They were used as slave labour, imprisoned in concentration camps, shot in mass killings and sent to death camps where specially constructed gas chambers had been built to murder them. These events have become known as the Holocaust.

Student C: During the Holocaust those people the Nazis thought to be 'abnormal' and unlike the rest of society were also rounded up. They have **Untold Stories** too. These people included the disabled, Roma and Sinti or Gypsies, Gay men, those with strong religious beliefs like Jehovah's Witnesses, people who had different political ideas and those who opposed the Nazis. These people were also imprisoned and many of them perished alongside the Jews of Europe.

Leader: There are **Untold Stories** from this period in history from many parts of the world.

Student D (*Student C marks Thessaloniki Greece on the map during this speech*):

Thessaloniki Greece, July 1942. The Nazis have taken over my city. I fear for the safety of my young wife. Yesterday all Jewish men were ordered to assemble in the main square. We had to obey. Our neighbours watched as soldiers made us perform pointless tasks. They ordered us to jump around like frogs and would not let us stop. Everyone was laughing at us. It was so hot and some of my friends fainted. The soldiers beat them. They told us to report to the square again tomorrow. I am determined to disobey. I think they might have worse in store for us.

Leader: The next day comes.

Student D: I hid from the soldiers today but many men were too scared to disobey. They went to the square and the Nazis have taken them away.

Leader: The men have been taken to work camps. Now they are slaves.

Student A: Will they come back?

Leader: It is unlikely, slave labourers seldom do.

Student D: It's 1943 and we have lived as prisoners in a closed ghetto for several months. We are cut off from the outside world. I am so worried about my wife. She is eight months pregnant and has not had enough food to keep her healthy. Now they have separated us. I don't know where they have taken her. Nobody stopped them. They made us travel thousands of miles. Why do they hate us so much? They have taken away my name and given me a number. I stand in this bleak camp waiting and watching for my wife. I am worried about her and our unborn child.

Student B: Where is his wife?

Leader: 2,500 Jewish people left Thessaloniki on the same transport as Jacob. 1,685 of them were murdered as soon as they arrived at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Camp. He will never see his wife again and his child will not be born.

Student C: Will Jacob survive?

Leader: He might, Jacob is a skilled musician. He plays the violin. The Nazis want a violinist for the camp's orchestra.

Student D: I will survive and tell my story but there are millions of **Untold Stories** because millions of people were murdered and there is no-one left to speak for them.

Student B: I learned about the Second World War in history. Everyone knows the story of the war. It ended in 1945. The allies won. The Nazis were defeated. The Holocaust ended.

Leader: *(Students A and C mark places on the map during this speech)* World War Two ended but the nightmare of Nazi persecution lives on in the memory of survivors. Although we know a lot about what happened there are still millions of **Untold Stories**. Whole communities disappeared right across Europe as lives were destroyed as Nazi power grew in places like Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary, Greece and the Greek Islands, France, The Netherlands.

Student B: That's a lot of places. My friends at the map can hardly keep up! I recognise these places as holiday destinations. I wonder if they know what happened there. Are there **Untold Stories** from all of them?

Leader: From these places and from many more. When the war ended and some of the stories were told everyone was shocked by the terrible things which had taken place. People said that we should all work hard together to make the world safer. People were determined that events like the Holocaust should never happen again.

Student B: That's good to hear.

Student D: I am eight years old. I work as a slave in the fields of Cambodia. (*Student A marks Cambodia on the map*) I used to live in a big city. One day the soldiers came and forced us to leave our homes. We couldn't take anything with us. The soldiers hate people who live in cities. I have to pretend that I can't read. They shot my Dad because he wore glasses. You only need glasses to read so the soldiers say glasses mean you are clever. They hate people who are clever. It is 1975 but we have to call it Year Zero. Will anyone help us? Who will hear our **Untold Stories**?

Student A: So it did happen again.

Leader: More than once!

Student D: (*Student B marks Rwanda on the map*) Rwanda 1994. How can so many people be murdered in only 100 days? What made our friends turn against us? We went to the same school, played together, and grew up together. Hutu or Tutsi – it didn't matter. It does now! I don't really want to describe it. I can't describe it. My next door neighbour laughed as he raped my sister. I have no friends left. I just sit in the refugee camp and cry. I'm too scared to leave.

Student A: 1994? That's only 17 years ago!

Leader: Yes it's not that long ago and 16 years ago in Europe more **Untold Stories** were unfolding. (*Points to Bosnia and Herzegovina on the map*)

Student D: 1995, I will never forget this year. Yesterday my Dad and my brothers were finally freed from the camp. They look so thin and so sad. They don't want to talk about the things they have seen. Mum says they are the lucky ones; many Muslim families will never see their husbands and brothers again. The soldiers took hundreds of men away and shot them. Dad won't speak but I read the sadness in his eyes. I don't want to stay in Srebrenica. I am frightened.

Student C: It is hard to imagine that crimes such as this took place in Europe after all that people promised when the Nazis were defeated.

Student B: The 20th century sounds horrible. I am so glad we are growing up in the 21st! Times are much better now.

Student D: *(Student A points to Sudan on the map during this speech)* I struggle to tell my story. I don't have the right words to describe how I feel. I don't want to be sent back to Darfur. My teachers are trying to help me and I am working hard for them. I want to make new friends but mostly I sit in the classroom and stare at the wall. My mum cries too. Our village was destroyed. I feel safer here in the UK but some people think that I should be sent back home. I miss Darfur but how can you go back to a home which no longer exists? How can I make people understand? I am so lonely. Who pays attention to **Untold Stories** when everyone is worried about the economy, finding a job or getting a place at university? Who has time to listen to one small voice?

(During this speech students A B and C stand with their backs towards student D. At the end of the speech there is a short pause, D sits silent and still with bowed head and hands covering eyes as though crying. Slowly, one by one, A B and C turn towards D)

Student A: I will make time.

Student B: And so will I.

Student C: Me too.

Students A B and C together: We will listen. We will tell others. We care and will try to make a difference. *(A and B join hands C walks towards D and gently lowers D's hands. Then C and D walk towards A and B. AB and C welcome D into their circle of friendship.)*

Leader: *(Indicates the world map)* We have heard sad stories about our world today. If you look closely at the map you will recognise many of the places from our **Untold Stories**. It looks as though we were planning a world cruise. Lots of people take holidays in Florida, Cambodia, Europe and many of these other places.

Student A: But we don't think many people know about the **Untold Stories** from these places.

Student B: We want you to help us make a difference.

Student C: Today is Holocaust Memorial Day and here is a challenge for everyone.

Leader: We want you to look for **Untold Stories**, listen to them or read them and then pass them on to other people.

Student D: It is quite a challenge. I know because it was difficult telling you all those stories but I really want to pass them on to other people. I'm going to email everyone I know.

Student B: I'll talk about it at *(Names a youth group or sport's team training session or drama society or any group to which students belong)*

Student C: I'll tell my family tonight.

Student A: I'll tell all my Facebook friends

Leader: And I'll Tweet.

ABCD and Leader: We'll make sure these **Untold Stories** are heard. What will you do?