

## English and Drama Lesson Plan (Secondary)

This lesson is based on the Oneg Shabbat case study.

**Aim:** To explore the use imagery within poetry as a response to the Holocaust and to create new poetry as a **Legacy of Hope**.

### Starter:

**Explain** that you are going to think about words as images. **Suggest** that students work in groups of 4 and ask them to find a space in which to work together. **Give** each group ten word cards in an envelope. One person selects a card and reads the word aloud. The other 3, working together, create a tableau or still image to show what the word means to them. This should be based on first reactions rather than a long discussion. **Change** readers after two words have been illustrated. Try to build an image for at least 4 of the words.

**Give** groups time to talk together, AFTER the task, about the images and what they wanted them to show. **Ask** which image provided the best illustration of a word?

### Sharing concepts

Each group should now demonstrate their two chosen images (without the words) to another group. Can the group identify the original words? See the next page for a list of words.

<b>Darkness</b>	<b>Help</b>
<b>Freedom</b>	<b>Gloomy</b>
<b>Fear</b>	<b>Posterity</b>
<b>Hope</b>	<b>Monument</b>
<b>Cage</b>	<b>Remembering</b>

### **Group discussion**

**Ask** the students whether it was easy to match the images to the words? Were some words harder to express? Were some types of words more difficult to show than others e.g. nouns (Monument) or verbs (Remembering)? Which words could have more than one meaning and therefore need more than one image? (e.g. “help”)

Is it easier to represent an image of something physical (Monument) or a concept (freedom)? Think of reasons for the answer.

### **Whole class work**

**Bring** all the groups together and **talk** about the use of words to create images. **Ask** whether some groups created similar images for the same words? What were the common features or gestures?

**Explain** that all the words on the cards have been taken from the writings of people imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto. **Use** the Oneg Shabbat case study and outline what happened there. **Tell** the students that whilst some people chose to write factual historical accounts others wrote poems about the events they were witnessing, expressing the emotions they were feeling at the time.

**Ask** the students to use evidence from the case study to explain why members of Oneg Shabbat made time to write poetry. Who did they intend to read it? Why did they bury their writing? Does a poem have less, as much or more impact on the reader than a purely factual report? The Oneg Shabbat archive contains examples of both. Will a reader today gain more understanding of events if s/he examines both types of writing?

### **Studying an archive poem**

**Explain** that many of the writers sent a message to the future. They asked readers they would never meet, people like us, to remember them. They left us a legacy - a gift from the past. They intended their writing to be a memorial. They knew they did not have long to live but they wanted the next generation to remember their lives and see them as individuals. We can become part of their **Legacy of Hope** when we read their words and explore their message: (See next page for examples)

**Give** everyone these extracts from a poem by Wladyslaw Szlengel. **Explain** he was a member of Oneg Shabbat and one of the people imprisoned in the Ghetto.

**Ask** someone to read part one to the rest of the class. Please note the punctuation marks are as written in the original.

### The Monument

For heroes-poems and rhapsodies!!!  
For heroes-the homage of posterity  
Their names etched in the plinths,  
For them a monument of marble.  
But who will tell you, the people of the future,  
Not about the bronze or mythic tales  
But that they took her-killed her,  
That she is no more.

**Ask** to whom is the writer trying to speak? How do we know?

**Tell** the students that the poet attempts to describe an ordinary woman. We don't know her name.

**Ask** someone to read the second extract

Was she good?  
Not really.  
She often quarrelled,  
She would slam the door,  
She would scold,  
But...she was.

And what?  
A human being?  
No – it's unimportant –  
No statistics will mention Her,  
For the world, for Europe  
She was less than a grain of dust.  
Big deal all her efforts!

**Discuss**, using evidence found in the poem, what sort of person the writer is describing. What do we know about her daily life? Is he writing about one single person or is he perhaps representing more than one person? What images does the writer use to give us a picture of ordinary life?

How important is the writer's use of the phrase "she was"? How does the phrase link with the title of the poem - The Memorial?

What does the writer mean by "she was less than a grain of dust"?

**Ask** a group of students to read the third extract. **Explain** that it tells us about the woman's achievements and helps us find out what happened to her. Each person should read one line each, until the pause, then you could read the lines which begin "and they took her" yourself.

But when you only neared the entrance  
before you'd held the door-handle,  
before you'd pushed the door  
something smelled in the air,  
perhaps a warm soup, or a white towel,  
a kind of warmth would have wrapped around you,  
so...  
She was...

(PAUSE/SILENCE)

And they took her,  
She left just as she was,  
Standing near the kitchen stove;  
She did not finish the soup.  
They took her, she went,  
She is no more, they have killed her.

### **Discuss**

From what they have learned from the Oneg Shabbat case study, how do the students think the woman died?

At the end of the poem the poet writes about the woman's family coming home. **Ask** the students to work in pairs. **Give** them copies of the final extract ask them to read it quietly.

Her husband will return from the workshop,

he will sit heavily on the stool,

his hands will drop on his lap,

he turns his head all around and looks.

No fire under the stove range –the dish-cloth fell on the floor,

a plate on the table – it's all dirty around.

He does not rise.

He leans. He thinks.

Too bad.

She is no longer.

He would eat the bread and soup from the workshop

The workshop food – alien to him and miserable.

He eats and looks:

on the shelf a silent,

cold and dead Her pot.

He will not return to the workshop,

the son will come back hungry from the city,

into the undone bed

he will throw himself with his mud-covered boots on.

He will not fall asleep.

He will look and will not forget...

There, it is Mother's cooled down pot –

Her Monument...

### **In pairs**

Discuss how her family will remember the un-named woman. Decide which words in this extract best describe the feelings of her husband and son.

Why do you think the poem is called The Monument? Which is the best monument for the woman, the empty cooking pot in the poem or the poem itself?

### **Conclusion**

Like the woman in his poem, the writer did not survive the Holocaust but his words give modern people some idea of how those imprisoned in the Ghetto suffered.

Many writers have tried to use poetry and drama to express their feelings about the Holocaust. They use words to create for us an impression of terrible times.

Survivors of the Holocaust, who built new lives for themselves in the UK, have written and spoken about their experiences. Some visit schools to talk to young people.

It is difficult to imagine such a horrible event and many think that the experiences of the survivors and their loved ones, who died, is beyond our imagination. They say that we cannot possibly understand how awful it was, BUT we can listen to their words today, acknowledge their grief and carry their stories into the future.

### **Individual work: A Legacy of Hope**

#### *Written responses*

Read the words on the page. Think about how the writer uses words to express feelings and emotions about life in the Warsaw Ghetto. Underline the words you think tell us the most about what the writer is feeling or about what the writer hopes the reader will feel.

What sort of words are they?

Does the writer use simple describing words or does he conjure up more complicated images from the words?

Explain whether you think the poem works best when read silently or aloud. Do you think the writer intended the words to be a) read by other people? b) read aloud or in silence? Try to give reasons for your answer.

This poem is called The Monument. A monument helps us to remember events and people. Use one of the HMD case studies and write a short poem which could be used on a monument or as a memorial for an individual or group of people found in the story. You could call your work **Legacy of Hope** because it is carrying memory into the future.

### **Homework or individual creative writing**

If you had to choose only three words from the whole piece, to sum up what the writer is saying, which words would they be and why?

Are words and images enough to preserve the memory of Holocaust events? Give reasons for your point of view.

Go back to the original words on the cards. Select at least four of them. Think about the story of Oneg Shabbat and **The Legacy of Hope**. Create a new poem for the people of the Warsaw Ghetto.