

Eyebright

This is a project created in partnership by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the art group arthur+martha for Art and English (Secondary and post 16) based on the badges of classification found in the Mosaic of Victims case study (<http://education.hmd.org.uk/case-studies/a-mosaic-of-victims>).

Eyebright is a mixed poetry/art project devised to involve young people in the **Legacy of Hope** (<http://www.hmd.org.uk/assets/downloads/1242395385-277.pdf>) for Holocaust Memorial Day 2010. It is divided into eight units, available to download as separate PDFs. These units are linked with different case studies from the **Legacy of Hope** education materials (<http://education.hmd.org.uk>). Although some groups will work through each unit in turn, you may find it easier to select one unit and concentrate on it in more depth. You should **share** at least two sections of the Mosaic of Victims case study (<http://education.hmd.org.uk/case-studies/a-mosaic-of-victims>) with your students and then **select** one or more of the eight units. You do not need to work through the whole project but should **select** the tasks which best suit your students. **Remember** that each task becomes part of the **Legacy of Hope** because it reverses the negative message of the Nazis by celebrating individuality, diversity and creativity. **Tell** your students that their work is their **Legacy of Hope for HMD 2010**.

Notes for Teachers

(please read these before selecting a unit of study)

The Nazis made their prisoners wear triangular identification badges.

<http://education.hmd.org.uk/case-studies/a-mosaic-of-victims>

These *Winkel* badges were used to categorise people in an attempt to crush individual identity. In contrast in this project you will **encourage** young people to write poetic pieces exploring difference, exclusion and acceptance onto triangular badges which will become positive expressions of individuality. They may be worn alone or linked in large-scale group artworks. Your students might wish to exchange their badges with others in another school. You could create a photographic record and inspire others to join **The Legacy of Hope**. If you wish you may upload these images to the HMDT website (<http://www.hmd.org.uk/events/share-images>).

On Holocaust Memorial Day we remember the victims and survivors of the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and more subsequent genocides. Gregory H. Stanton, the President of Genocide Watch, asserts that there are eight steps leading to genocide. He says it begins with small actions and words and he believes that genocide is preventable. The Eyebright

workshops take these eight steps as starting points for creating poetry and there is one unit of study linked with each stage. The stages are:

- Classification
- Symbolisation
- Organisation
- Polarisation
- Preparation
- Extermination
- Denial

You will find these eight stages of genocide described on the HMD website.

<http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/>

Poetry and the Holocaust

It is impossible to fully understand the devastating events that we call the Holocaust. We are not suggesting that you ask your students to imagine what it was like to live through that terror. We are, however, asking you to **help** them express their feelings about discrimination and exclusion and to think about working together for a better future.

Words are not enough to fully describe the Holocaust and the final poems which students will create are designed to have pieces missing. This is because absence, missing pieces, silence and empty spaces are also descriptions. The missing pieces become a metaphor for those who were murdered.

The poets quoted in this project are have experimented with new and intriguing ways to create poems. Many are interested in the visual appearance of a poem as well as the words it contains. Students should enjoy mixing visual art and language, the looseness and experimentation is challenging but exciting.

Paul Celan is one of the most well-known Holocaust poets. Paul was a camp survivor and his poems try to re-construct the meaning of his experience. His poems are full of spaces, questions and absences. Here is an extract from Jerome Rothenberg's translation of his poem *Death Fugue*:

Black milk of morning we drink you at dusktime
we drink you at noontime and dawntime we drink you at night
we drink and drink
we scoop out a grave in the sky where it's roomy to lie

In his poem *Todtnauberg* (named after a town in Germany) Paul uses the word *Eyebright* the common name for Arnica, a star-like flower, to refer to the yellow identification stars

which the Nazis forced Jewish people to wear and this is reflected in the name of this project.

Many of the badges, created by your students, will look like fragments of letters. In the process of creating poems students will also partly erase them, leaving memory space for all the people who were murdered in the Holocaust and more recent genocides. This memory space becomes part of the **Legacy of Hope**. People can never be fully known, not even to ourselves.

A vital thing to **remember**, when working with Eyebright ideas, is that every student or teacher taking part is able to make individual statements, which will not be judged as right or wrong. This freedom of expression will remind everyone that poets and artists who challenged the Nazis were outlawed. Their work was banned because it represented freedom. By taking part in Eyebright, your students will create statements against discrimination, prejudice and exclusion, another vital contribution to the **Legacy of Hope**.

The subject matter developed through Eyebright is, by its very nature, powerful and challenging. As the teacher who knows the students' needs, you may wish to conduct additional individual, group or whole class tasks before or after the unit workshops. Some suggestions for discussion are provided and you may also create your own.

Resources you will need:

- Thick white A4 card
- Dipping pens with spare nibs
- Rulers
- Safety pins
- Sellotape
- Pencils
- Tracing paper
- Charcoal
- Black ink (Indian ink, or similar, preferably washable)
- Aprons
- Cardboard triangle templates (12x12 centimetres) for the participants to draw around (a template is provided)
- Newspapers to protect tables/work surfaces
- Art room or similar space with tables or similar work surfaces
- Digital camera/s and operators.

Eyebright involves writing onto card, which is then cut into triangular badges and worn by the maker. The badge creators may then be photographed wearing their badges. It would be good to have a close-up photograph of each person with badge but **remember** that you need to **ask for permission**. Responsibility for obtaining parental permission for photography rests wholly with the school. You can use the photographs as part of a display

in school or join in a larger art project either by sharing your photographs with another school or asking your local community to display them at their own HMD 2010 event.

The exercises require **concentration** and the opportunity for **discussion and thought**. **Keep** group sizes as small as possible. Before the activities **explain** that there are rules for all participants. Students all over the UK will be taking part in the same activity and everyone should follow the same guidelines therefore the work can be seen as a collaborative effort - a joint contribution to **The Legacy of Hope**

- All pens/crayons/paints should be black. All card should be white.
- Dipping pens and black ink seem unusual but will boost creativity, because we're not used to using them.
- Aim to cover the whole card with writing.
- Don't cut the card until the leader/teacher says that the time is right.
- When the cards are cut do not worry if some of the words are lost. This is a deliberate part of the project.

Work through one or more of the units with your students. Where possible, join in too. The tasks help us to think of the stages of genocide and how small actions by individuals sometimes make it easier for terrible things to happen. However, in each activity students will be making positive statements for **The Legacy of Hope** by reversing Nazi messages of exclusion.