

Eyebright

Unit Eight - Denial

This is the final unit in a series of eight, created for HMD 2010, in partnership with the art and poetry group arthur+martha. You should download and read the project guidelines (http://education.hmd.org.uk/assets/downloads/guidance_notes.pdf) before working through the unit. The work is based on the stages of genocide (<http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides>) as defined by Gregory Stanton. The eighth stage is Denial and you need to **make sure** your students understand what happens in this stage. **Discuss** the summary below, as an introduction to the unit. You should not attempt to work through the exercises before you have done this.

Summary and Discussion

The perpetrators of genocide often try to hide their crimes by digging up mass graves or burning evidence. Perpetrators often try to blame the victims for the events which led to the murders and deny that they committed any crimes. They try to block investigations. They flee, hide and remain safe unless they are found, arrested and tried in an international court. As we commemorate HMD 2010 there are trials of alleged perpetrators taking place in Germany, Cambodia and at the international court at The Hague. Today Holocaust survivors like Ben Helfgott (<http://education.hmd.org.uk/case-studies/ben-helfgott/read>) and survivors of subsequent genocides like Denise (<http://education.hmd.org.uk/case-studies/denise-affonco/read>) share their stories with us to challenge this denial and the people of the Warsaw Ghetto buried their secret archive (<http://education.hmd.org.uk/case-studies/the-secret-archive/read>) to bear witness to atrocity. By listening to these stories and sharing them with others we too can challenge denial and contribute to **The Legacy of Hope**.

Explore with students how people try to dodge blame and responsibility by lying. **Ask** when we might do this ourselves.

Challenge students to be honest, **ask** them to think of answers to questions such as. What have we lied about? What is responsibility? **Do not compel** students to speak out loud here, some things are private and they may wish to think quietly.

The last stage of Stanton's steps to genocide is Denial. **Tell** everyone that in the following writing exercise we directly acknowledge the historical fact of the Holocaust and the human beings who were killed or incarcerated.

Writing exercise

This exercise is one of the most important for participants to try. However, you should judge whether your own students are able to cope with the concept of mourning before you set them this challenge. Give the students a list of names which you have downloaded do not send students younger than post 16 direct to the Yad Vashem site.

Steps

1. **Go onto the HMD website** (<http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/victims-names>) which has lists of the names of Holocaust and victims of subsequent genocides
2. **Find** a name matching your own initials.
3. **Write it out** on a triangle badge: the name of the individual you have chosen, their birth date, their age when murdered and the place where they were last known to be alive.
4. **Glue a piece of tissue** over the surface of this badge, so that it lightly veils the name. PVA glue works best. When the badge is dry, **tear** the edge of the tissue to the shape of the original triangle. This tissue is a mark of mourning. It is also a means to separate this badge (which contains the name of a real person who was affected by genocide) from the other badges created in the other units.

Finally - tell students that this activity challenges the activities of Holocaust deniers and their claims of a 'tissue of lies' and it becomes a statement of truth and part of **The Legacy of Hope**.