

Eyebright

Unit Two - Symbolisation

This is the second 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 second stage is Symbolisation and you need to **make sure** your students understand what happens at 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

Groups are given names or other symbols to our classifications and apply symbols to members of these groups. It becomes very serious if these actions are combined with hatred and people are forced to wear symbols to mark them out as different. The Nazis made Jewish people wear yellow stars or armbands. This encouraged people to treat them unfairly. In the Mosaic of Victims case study (<http://education.hmd.org.uk/case-studies/a-mosaic-of-victims/read>) there are many examples of the groups who became targets for Nazi discrimination and hatred because they were deemed to be different.

Talk about two of the groups in this case study and **ask** why students think so many people obeyed the Nazis and acted unkindly towards them.

Discuss how symbols simplify things. Sometimes this is useful, but symbols can also be dangerous. **Ask** which symbols are helpful (e.g. road signs) and which are dangerous?

Explore how symbols may change over time. They can become positive or negative. The Nazi swastika, which is negative, is a mirror form of an ancient Hindu symbol, which is positive. The Nazis imprisoned Gay men and forced them to wear pink triangular badges but today the pink triangle has become a positive symbol of Gay pride, a **Legacy of Hope**.

Ask students to **work in groups**. **List** the ways we identify each other, through symbols, by the way we dress. Students could go on a symbol **hunt** around their school or college and draw or photograph what they find. How can identification make us feel part of a group? How can it divide us? **Ask** students to think of examples of each. **Investigate** the act of

making ourselves through words. This is a form of symbolism. We have individual names, but we are not just our names.

Writing exercise

1. **Ask** students to think of the initials of their own name, trying to merge the letters into an interconnected design. They might think of the methods used by graffiti artists to create tags, or designers to create logos.
2. **Challenge** them to experiment - hold their pen in unusual ways, perhaps using their 'wrong' hand, teeth or elbow or toes to grip the pen.
3. **Invite** students to use a triangle template. This should be 12cm by 12cm by 12 cm, they should select an area of writing they find interesting and place the triangle over it and draw round it. Then they should cut the triangle out and attach a safety pin to make a badge.

Finally tell everyone that by using positive symbols they have joined **The Legacy of Hope** by reversing the negative message of the Nazis.