

Lesson Plan – Before Your Visit to the Sydney Jewish Museum

Introduction

Student age range: 14-18

Subject: History, Studies of Religion

Time required: 50 minutes

Overview:

This lesson will prepare students for their visit to the Sydney Jewish Museum and their talk with a Holocaust Survivor.

Essential questions:

- What should students expect to see at the Sydney Jewish Museum?
- What is the appropriate behaviour at the Sydney Jewish Museum?
- What is a Holocaust Survivor?
- How can students make the most out of their talk with a Holocaust Survivor?

Learning objectives:

- Students will understand the significance of the Holocaust.
- Students will develop questions to ask a Holocaust survivor.
- Students will be prepared, both emotionally and educationally, for their visit to the Sydney Jewish Museum.

Key issues/concepts:

- Significance

Materials:

- Post-it Notes
- Optional – print outs of the documents below. If you choose not to print, these documents should be made available to the students online.
 - [Worksheet – Phases of the Holocaust](#)
 - [Fact Sheet – Phases of the Holocaust](#)
 - [Handout – Four Brief Survivor Biographies](#)

Teaching notes:

Preparing school students emotionally before visiting a Holocaust museum is vital to help them navigate the intense and often distressing content with sensitivity and resilience. By fostering empathy and emotional awareness beforehand, educators can support students in processing the human suffering and moral complexity they will encounter. This preparation also encourages respectful engagement and deeper reflection on the historical and ethical lessons of the Holocaust.

Glossary:

- Holocaust
- Nuremburg Laws
- Ghetto
- Deportation
- Final Solution

Lesson Instructions

ONE – The Stages of the Holocaust (20 minutes)

Teacher establishes that the Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime. The Nazis also murdered 5 million other enemies of the state (including political enemies, Sinti and Roma people, disabled people, homosexuals and criminals). This occurred during the period of WW2, 1939-1945.

Teacher asks students: “When did the Holocaust begin?” Answers may include:

- in Biblical times,
- during the Middle Ages
- 1924, when Hitler wrote Mein Kampf
- 1933, when Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power
- 1939, with the invasion of Poland and the start of WW2

These are all legitimate responses. Discuss with the class.

Teacher shows the table, below. (Teachers may choose to print the [Worksheet – Phases of the Holocaust.](#))

Teacher explains that Stages 1 and 5 occurred before and after the main elements of the Holocaust, but it is necessary to include them to have the complete context. Students complete the table, either on the Worksheet, in their books or on their laptops, adding three explanatory dot points in each column.

Students can use the [Fact Sheet – Phases of the Holocaust](#) to complete the table. Alternatively, they can conduct research online.

<i>STAGE 1: Before the Holocaust</i>	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	<i>STAGE 5: After the Holocaust</i>
Long History	Laws	Ghettos	Final Solution	Liberation to Memorialisation

TWO – What is a Holocaust Survivor? (15 minutes)

Teacher writes this statement on the board: *The Holocaust isn't one thing, it is six million different things*

Discuss: what is meant by this?

Students read the [Handout – Four Brief Survivor Biographies](#).

Discuss: what are the different experiences revealed by these biographies?

Teacher emphasises the conclusion: Holocaust survivors all had different experiences of the Holocaust.

THREE – Questions for a Holocaust Survivor (10 minutes)

In small groups, students take 5 minutes think of questions to ask a survivor. They write their questions on post-it notes.

Students stick their questions on the wall/board.

Students spend 3 minutes reading through the other questions on the board.

FINISHING UP (5 minutes)

Teacher explains:

- behaviour expectations while at the museum (calm, respectful, contributive)
- there is support available if students find the visit emotionally difficult. This includes stepping out of the tour if necessary, or speaking to a member of the SJM staff for support.

Modifications:

For students with lower literacy levels, or if there are time constraints, students can read just two of the Brief Survivor Biographies. This will be sufficient for them to conclude that different victims had different experiences of the Holocaust.

Further Sydney Jewish Museum Resources

[Click here](#) to view video testimonies from Holocaust Survivors. These can be used in lieu of the biographies in Step Two, above.

Related lessons

Sydney Jewish Museum provides lesson plans to support a full unit of study on the Holocaust. [Click here](#) to see a suggested unit plan.

[Click here](#) to view a lesson plan for after your visit to the Sydney Jewish Museum.