

Learning Outside the Classroom

Lessons from the Holocaust

An opportunity to reflect on the Holocaust and more recent genocides and consider the implications for society today

The Holocaust Centre, Beth Shalom, Laxton, Newark, Nottinghamshire

What are we trying to achieve?

- to gain a deeper understanding of the Holocaust and more recent genocides
- to explore how Jews have responded to the Holocaust
- to have the opportunity to listen to the testimony of a Holocaust survivor
- to further develop an attitude of respect, understanding and tolerance towards others
- time and space for reflection

Cost:

£6.50 per student, plus transport costs

Who is involved?

20 students (mostly Year 10 GCSE RS and a few sixth form) plus three staff

Preparation:

The visit came at the end of a series of lessons focused on what happened during the Holocaust and how Jews have responded to these events. This pre-knowledge was essential for the students to gain the most from the visit. We also discussed the aims and purpose of Beth Shalom itself and questions to ask the survivor that the students could prepare in advance.

How did we organise the learning?

The staff at Beth Shalom organised all the learning for the day. It began with an introductory film about the Holocaust and the Centre followed by a discussion on the relevance of these events to life today. Issues of memorial, tolerance, respect etc were considered. Then the students were able to listen to and ask questions of a survivor, who had come to Britain as part of the *Kindertransport* in 1939. After a lunch break, the students were given the opportunity to visit and reflect on the memorials in the grounds. The day finished with our group using a guided work book around the Holocaust exhibition.

What was the impact of the experience?

The main impact seems to have been from the testimony given by the survivor – most students appreciated how difficult it must have been for them to speak about their experiences and recognised how valuable it is to hear what happened from someone who was actually there. This emphasises the importance of such visits. The opportunity to go beyond what the text book or video offers and engage first hand with a survivor makes it clear that these events happened to real people. It allows the student to start putting faces to the victims, rather than just seeing them as numbers.

Follow up:

The experiences of the visit will feed directly into the students' GCSE studies. Those who took part in this visit now have a realisation of the lessons that can be learnt from the past and the importance of such things as respect and tolerance within society. It is hoped that examination questions on the Holocaust and Jewish responses will be answered with increased understanding.

Contacts and links:

The Holocaust Centre, Beth Shalom, Laxton, Newark, Notts NG22 OPA

Tel: 01623 836647

www.bethshalom.com

www.holocaustcentre.net