

Learning Outside the Classroom

Annual Student Holocaust Study Week

A week to study life pre-Holocaust, 'the loss and the void'

What were we trying to achieve?

- to study the vibrancy of Jewish life and the culture before the Holocaust
- to investigate the enormity of the loss, the absence and the void, in preparation for a visit to a death camp

Cost: Approximately £560

Who went? How many?

41 students – predominantly Sixth Formers but also some Year 11 students. We include students of all ethnic origins.

Preparation:

All the students study the Holocaust in Year 9 in Religious Studies, using the Diary of Anne Frank. A very detailed booklet is prepared containing a variety of articles relating to the period and the places to be visited. We expect students to have read the booklet prior to the study tour.

How did we organise the learning?

We take with us laminated copies of Holocaust paintings and have used the work of Samuel Bak and Itzak Belfer together with photographs from Gitl Braun. Each evening the students look at and discuss their impressions of one of the paintings. They are told something about each work and then use Edward de Bono's Six Hat thinking to consider each painting more objectively. Following this, the students discuss each of the places we visit, in relation to the life of the people pre-war and the effect of the Holocaust on them. To broaden the students' knowledge, lectures are organised on related subjects, for example: Polish economy, Poland and communism, the dispersal of communities around Breslau, the build up to the Final Solution, and the Wannsee Conference.

The culmination of the week is a visit to a death camp, where students can witness for themselves the scale and mechanisation of the Holocaust.

What was the impact of the experience?

Each student completes an evaluation at the end of the trip. These demonstrate they have gained an enormous amount and learnt a great deal, as well as having a good time.

"The trip helped me decide that I definitely want to come back in my gap year and learn more."

"I learnt that those who don't learn from history end up repeating it!"

"More than anything else, I learnt about the huge scale of the devastation."

"I learnt how individual people can change the lives of many for good or bad."

Follow up:

Each student completed a 'What next?' card where they have to decide on one action they will take on their return. Some actions are quite simple, for example being nice to a girl in the class to undertaking work with deprived groups or going to work during a holiday in a country where there is prejudice and discrimination.

Contacts and links:

Travel agent used is NST - 01223 723456

Samuel Bak: http://www.puckergallery.com/samuel_bak.html

Itzak Belfer: <http://www.ibelfer.com/index.html>

Gitl Braun: http://www.gitlbraun.com/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=53