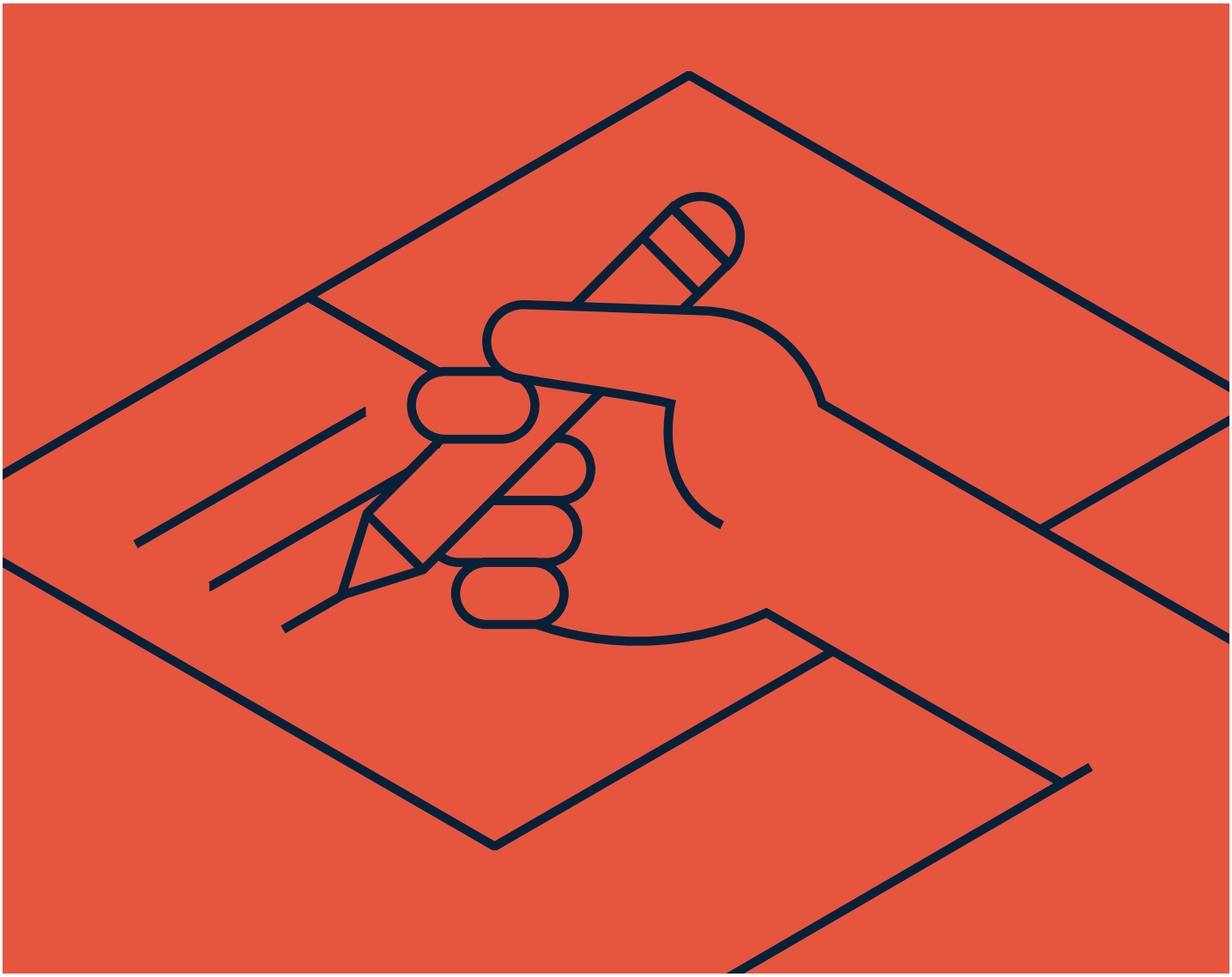
CU REMEMBER

Holocaust and Human Rights: A Guidebook for Educators

edited by Tullia Catalan and Matteo Perissinotto



Children's Universities, Open Schooling, and the Formation of Local MemoriaLinks for European Remembrance

CU Remember is a project coordinated by

universität wien
kinderbüro

in partnership with

universität wien

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI TRIESTE
Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici

GEDENKDIENST

SISSA Medialab

eucunet
European Children's Universities Network

CU Remember is supported by

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Index

Why a Handbook 3
by Tullia Catalan and Matteo Perissinotto

Introduction 4

The Memory of the Holocaust in Austria and Italy 5
by Roland Trabe and Tullia Catalan

Shaping Tomorrow's Society: The Importance of Democracy Education 7
by Thomas Troy and Chris Gary

If You Want Peace, Educate with Peace 9
by Elena Bergonzini

General Tools and Advice 11

The CU Remember Framework for Remembrance Education 12

Managing Emotions and Trauma in the Classroom 13
by Marco Ius

Online Material for Teaching about the Holocaust 15
by Matteo Perissinotto

Guidelines and Suggestions for Classroom Activities 17

6–12 Years of Age 18

"Cause grandpa told me something about it while playing chess": Remembering with Children – for Good Reason 19
by Julia Netter

Building a Community: From Myself to Us 21
by Thomas Troy and Chris Gary

An Example from the Practice of an Inclusive Primary School: Maintaining Democracy and Cooperation in the District 23
by Petra Feldhofer-Mahmoudian

12–18 Years of Age 25

Teaching Principles for Watching a Film about the Holocaust in Class 26
by Emiliano Perra

Teaching the Holocaust through Photographs 27
by Laura Fontana

Biographical Work on the Topic of Expulsion at Universities under National Socialism 29
by Veronika Schallhart and Thiemo Kronlechner

Ourstory?! The Stories of the Many: Enabling Participation in Our Migration Society 32
by Philipp Salzmann-Stöckl, Thomas Troy and Chris Gary

Multi-Day Remembrance Trips to Memorials Sites of Fascist and NS Crimes: Opportunities and Challenges for Upper-Secondary Teachers 34
by Sebastian Dallinger and Dino Perco

Credits 36

Why a Handbook

by Tullia Catalan and Matteo Perissinotto

This handbook is the result of a series of workshops dedicated to training teachers on the topic of the memory of Nazi-Fascist crimes and human rights. These courses took place in Vienna and Trieste during 2025 as part of the *CU Remember project* and involved experts on various topics, teachers and educators, mainly from Austria and Italy.

Beyond the training aspect, all the meetings were also characterised by stimulating discussions focusing mainly on the different teaching methods adopted in the two countries in addressing the history of World War Two (WWII) and its memories, reconnecting them to the themes of democratic citizenship and human rights in a perspective of peace education.

This handbook aims to respond to the needs that emerged during the dialogue with teachers, who in both Italy and Austria requested a practical handbook that they could consult for useful guidance for their lessons on these topics. The subject is vast, so a selection of topics was made, adopting a transnational perspective and asking individual experts to contribute.

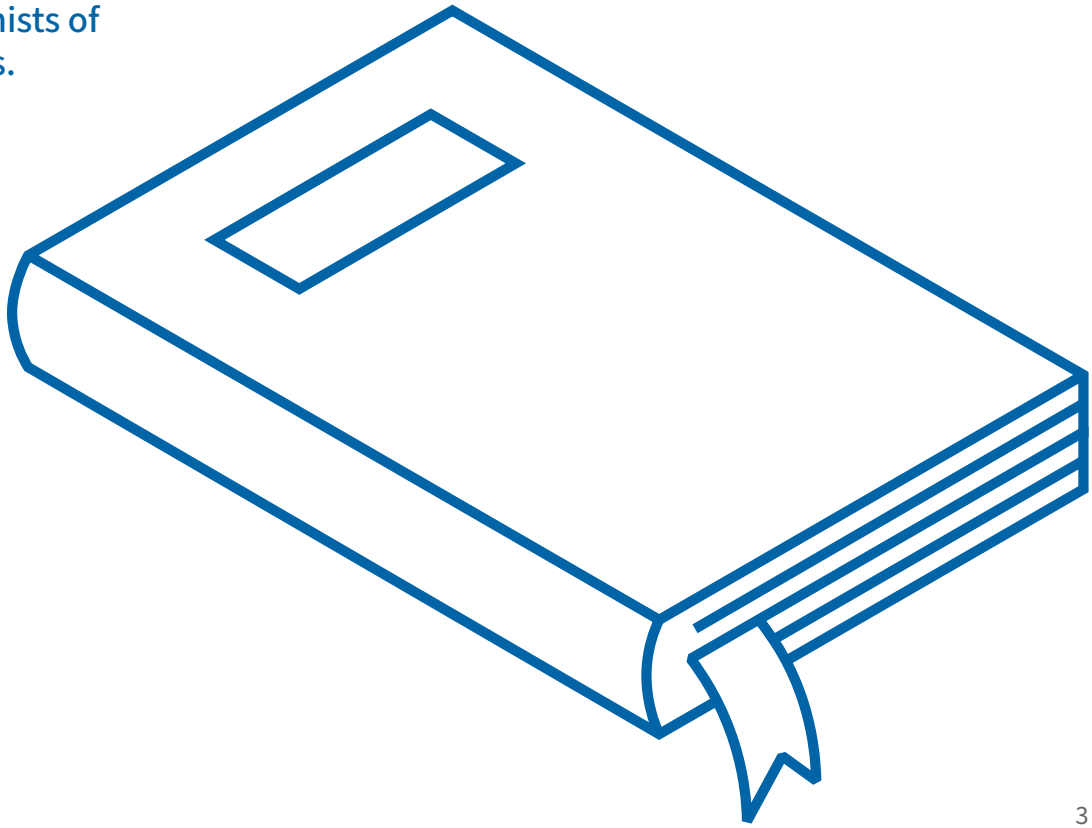
This handbook does not claim to be exhaustive, but we consider it a starting point for constructive dialogue between teachers in two countries that were protagonists of Nazi-Fascist crimes.

In this way, we are convinced that we are making an important contribution to the active construction of a common European citizenship characterised by acceptance, inclusion, and awareness of our past.

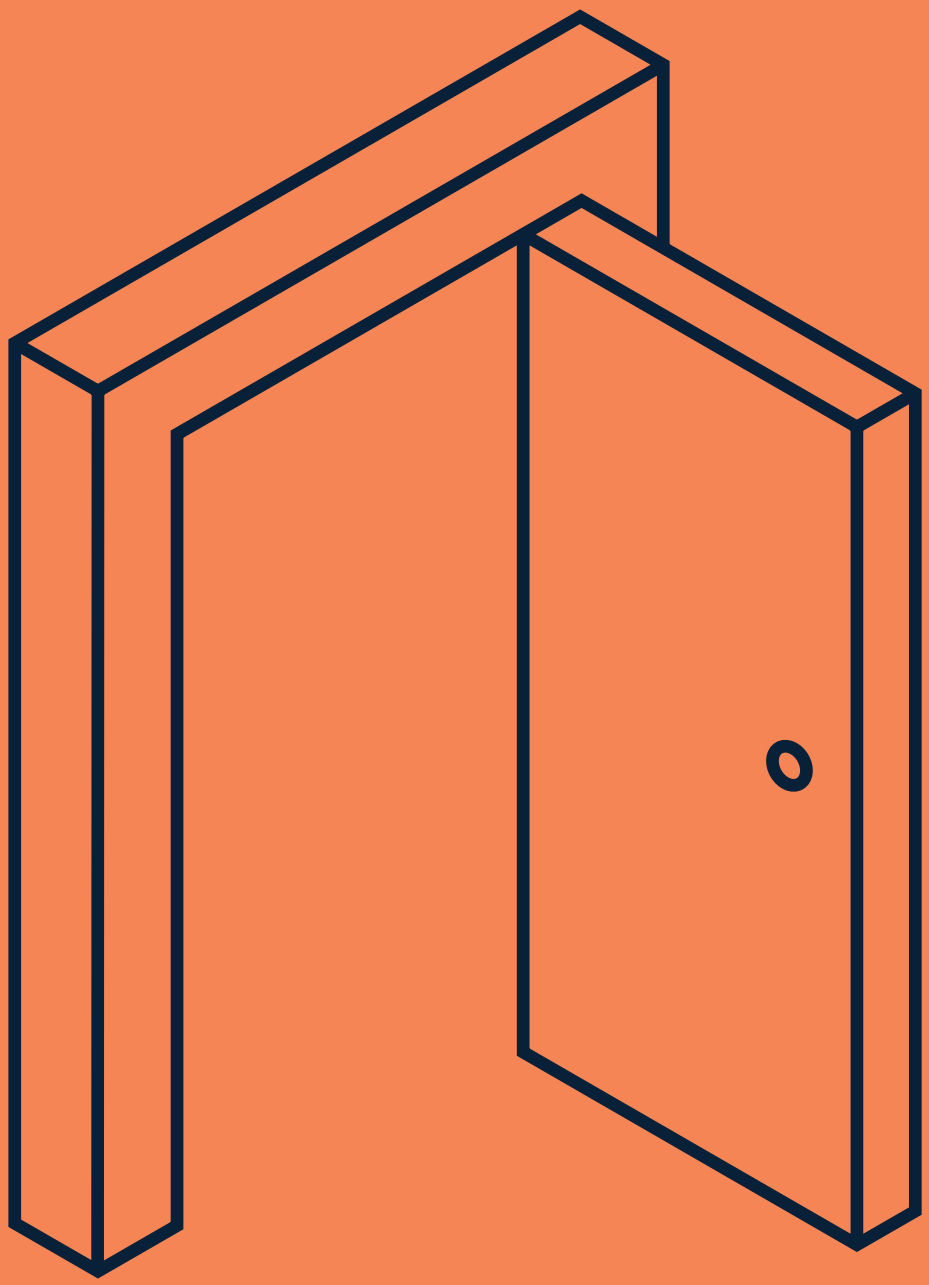
The handbook is structured as follows. The first part is an introduction dedicated to Holocaust remembrance policies in Austria and Italy and some reflections on educational paths to democracy and peace.

The second part provides general advice and tools; we have referred to the guidelines underlying the CU Remember project, but we have also focused on a theme that emerged repeatedly during all the meetings, concerning how to manage the strong emotional impact of these issues with students. Finally, we thought it would be useful to devote a section to illustrating the most important websites of institutions that deal with the history and memory of the Holocaust and offer educational material in different languages.

In the third and final part, we focused on the two age groups covered by our project, 6–12 and 12–18, proposing activities and workshops and providing useful teaching and methodological suggestions for classroom activities and visits to memorial sites.



Introduction



The Memory of the Holocaust in Austria and Italy

Austria

by Roland Trabe

Austria's Holocaust remembrance policies are comprehensive and multifaceted. After decades of denial and reliance on the *Opferthese*, a critical reappraisal began in the late 1980s, leading to the official recognition of historical responsibility in the 1990s and culminating in the development and implementation of the National Strategy Against Antisemitism in 2021[1]. This strategy provides a broad political framework and encompasses 41 measures across education, security, civil society, research and cultural heritage. Its goals include protecting Jewish life, supporting Jewish cultural institutions and countering antisemitism in all its forms, including Holocaust denial, secondary antisemitism, anti-Jewish hate speech and online antisemitism.

Since teaching about remembrance and the Holocaust is an integral part of democratic and civic education, it is now a mandatory component of the teacher education curriculum in history and political education (secondary level). It is furthermore embedded in school curricula and, additionally, a diverse portfolio of in-service teacher training courses (primary and secondary level) is offered nationwide, funded by the Austrian government and conducted by university colleges of teacher education and strategic partner institutions (erinnern.at, Zentrum *polis*). These programmes support educators by providing extensive resources such as lesson plans, digital learning modules, guided project work and opportunities to organise talks with survivors.

Educators in Austria are key factors in teaching about the Holocaust, and Holocaust remembrance is more important than ever.

This is necessary not only to honour the victims, but also to safeguard human dignity, uphold democratic values and foster active civic engagement since it helps learners grasp the historical consequences of antisemitism, racism and exclusion, and underscores their continuing relevance today.

1 Federal Chancellery. Republic of Austria. "Fight against antisemitism," *www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/en/topics/fight-against-antisemitism.html*; Federal Ministry of Education. Republic of Austria. "Combatting antisemitism," *www.bmb.gv.at/en/Topics/euint/ep/antisemitism.html*; IHRA International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, Austria, *holocaustremembrance.com/countries/austria*.

All links in this handbook were last accessed on 28 December 2025.

Italy

by Tullia Catalan

In the decades following WWII, Italy failed to address its role in persecuting and deporting Italian Jews. Even the collaboration between the population and Fascist institutions with the Nazi occupiers largely went unpunished after an initial attempt at purging by the Allied Military Government from 1945 to 1947. Although the Italian population was guilty of supporting the Fascist regime, it emerged from the war with a favorable judgment by the Allies. Until a few decades ago, the stereotypical narrative about the general attitude of Italians during the war was that of the 'good Italian', incapable of committing heinous crimes and always ready to help others and disobey the law to follow his conscience. However, as historical research has made clear, there were both good and bad Italians[2]. Nevertheless, the government in the 1930s and during the war did not hesitate to collaborate with its Nazi ally in persecuting various groups until the armistice in September 1943.

The collective guilt of Fascism was something that was removed from Italian society for decades. It was only in the early 1980s, thanks to the research of historians, that the crimes committed against Jews in Italy began to be discussed in public ceremonies and schools. We owe a great debt to the survivors of the Shoah (as the Holocaust is called in many countries, including Italy) and their invaluable testimonies. We also owe a debt to the historians who, in the 1990s, reconstructed the various stages of Italian racism. This racism was not only anti-Semitic, but also anti-Slavic and colonial.

Italy has officially acknowledged the Holocaust and racism since the 1990s. This led to the 1993 Mancino Law, which prohibited the incitement of hatred and racism[3].

In 2000, Italy established Remembrance Day on 27 January, placing it prominently in the country's civil calendar[4].

Schools of all levels, as well as central government representatives and municipal institutions, are mainly involved in the various commemorations throughout the country. This is an important educational moment because the topic of the extermination of the Jews is only covered in public school curricula in the third year of lower secondary school and again in the final year of upper secondary school, which is dedicated to the 20th century.

In recent years, the rise in antisemitism has prompted Italy to reevaluate how to address the Holocaust in the classroom. Shortly before Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2018, the Ministry of Education, Universities, and Research published the *National Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust in Schools*. Drafted by a group of experts from various institutions, the guidelines offer teachers useful information, teaching advice, and guidance on finding primary sources.

2 Filippo Focardi, *The bad German and the good Italian: Removing the guilt of the Second World War*, trans. by Paul Barnaby, 1st edition 2013 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023).

3 The Mancino Law of 25 June 1993, no. 205, punishes and condemns statements, gestures, actions and slogans intended to incite hatred, violence, discrimination and violence on racial, ethnic, religious or national grounds.

4 27 January marks *Memorial Day*, established by the Italian Parliament with Law no. 211, 20 July 2000. The date was chosen, as the law itself states, as the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, in memory of the Holocaust, the extermination and persecution of the Jewish people, in order to "preserve in Italy's future the memory of a tragic and dark period in the history of our country and Europe, and so that similar events may never happen again." *cultura.gov.it/comunicato/giornata-della-memoria*.

Shaping Tomorrow's Society: The Importance of Democracy Education

by Thomas Troy and Chris Gary

Across the globe, democratic values and human rights are under increasing pressure and, for the first time in decades, there are now fewer democracies than autocracies – and liberal democracies have become the rarest form of government[5]. Democracy stands for far more than elections: beyond human rights and the rule of law, respect for diversity and the right of every person to be heard are key elements. In increasingly multicultural societies, democracy education is essential for shaping societies, where cultural pluralism, mutual respect and inclusion are not just ideals but lived reality.

From Civic Education to Democracy Education

Civic education has been an important pillar of schools and societies for decades. It prepares young people for the responsibilities, roles and expectations within their communities. Because of its broad focus, civic education is part of every political system – whether democratic or autocratic – and in itself carries no normative objective. Democracy education, by contrast, builds on the foundations of civic education while adding a clearly normative dimension. It aims to cultivate democratic values, enable active participation and help shape democratic structures within society and the political system[6]. Following the concept of Himmelmann, democracy can be understood through three complementary dimensions: democracy as a form of governance, democracy as a societal form – for example a free press and active civic engagement – and democracy as a way of life, which refers the characteristics of democratic culture and the distinctive forms of social coexistence within the democratic communities[7]. With this understanding, each pillar is more deeply embedded in everyday social life, reflecting the dynamic nature of democracy.

Democracy is constantly evolving. Its structures, boundaries and processes are never fixed. It is the only form of government that must be learned, and this requires citizens willing to participate in independent thought, critical judgements and active engagement. In order to create a sense of belonging in an active democratic society, people need safe spaces to learn how to participate, develop arguments, understand different perspectives and foster a culture of constructive dialogue. This is especially important for young people and schools can – and should – provide such safe spaces.

Democracy Education in Schools – Right-Wing Attacks

It is widely acknowledged that schools play a crucial role in supporting young people's development into mature and responsible citizens and that civic education is an essential part of this mission. In recent years, however, democracy education in schools has come under growing pressure from conservative and right-wing actors, who accuse educators of promoting progressive ideologies and call for a narrow return to teaching democracy merely as a form of government. Moreover, these actors claim that schools and civic education must be what is supposed to be 'neutral'[8]. The fact that civic education is not neutral but must be grounded in fundamental human and constitutional rights is often ignored[9].

---

5 V-Dem Institute, *Democracy Report 2025: 25 Years of Autocratization – Democracy Trumped?*, *V-DEM Democracy Report 2025 25 Years of Autocratization – Democracy Trumped?*.

6 Dirk Lange and Sarah Straub, "Demokratiebildung: Von der Theorie zur Praxis," in *Doing Democratic Education in School and University. Democratic Education als Aufgabe von Schule und Hochschule*, eds. Gabriele Kulhanek-Wehlend et al. (UniWien: Wien, 2023), *www.lit-verlag.de/media/pdf/3f/71/9c/2_Dirk-Lange-Sarah-Straub_Demokratiebildung_Von-der-Theorie-zur-Praxis.pdf*.

7 Himmelmann, G. (2004): „Demokratie-Lernen: Was? Warum? "Wozu?", *www.pedocs.de/volltexte/2008/216/pdf/Himmelmann.pdf*.

8 AFD, "Schluss mit politischer Bevormundung und Indoktrination! Abschaffung der Landeszentrale für politische Bildung!," *www.landtag.sachsen-anhalt.de/plenarsitzungen/transkript?tx_lsasessions_transcript%5Bspeaker%5D=15955&cHash=ad1761c6270e0aa858defd77d99b9e29*.

9 *Unterrichtsprinzip Politische Bildung Grundsatzerlass 2015*, *www.politik-lernen.at/dl/optmJKJKoOoOnJqx4LJK/2015_12.pdf*.

Even the 'Beutelsbacher Konsens', one of the most important frameworks for civic education in Austria and Germany, does not demand neutrality. On the contrary, it requires that topics which are debated in society must also be presented and discussed as controversial in the classroom[10].

Teachers play a crucial role as facilitators of democratic culture. They create learning environments in which students can practice participation, explore different viewpoints and develop the skills needed for constructive democratic engagement. Especially in times of rising social-media-based fake news, populism and increasing violations of human rights, democracy and human rights education function as crucial protective factors for open and inclusive societies. Yet, democracy education cannot rest on schools alone. To defend and strengthen democratic culture, cooperation between formal and non-formal educational institutions as well as civil society organisations is essential. Only through joint efforts that connect classroom learning with community engagement can democracy education reach its full potential and provide young people with meaningful opportunities to practise and embody democratic values.

Democracy Education as Part of Remembrance Education and Vice Versa

The authoritarian regimes of National Socialism and Fascism in Austria and Italy were preceded by a gradual erosion of (democratic) norms and the increasing persecution of political opponents. Understanding this past is essential for young people to recognise the warning signs of democratic backsliding in the present and to imagine futures worth living in.

Remembering helps societies avoid forgetting the lessons of history. Democracy education, in turn, enables students to translate these lessons into responsibility for the present and the future.

In this sense, democracy education and remembrance education are deeply interconnected. Remembrance supports democratic awareness and democracy education provides the values and competencies needed to critically engage with the past. CU Remember builds on this close connection between democracy education and remembrance education. With its regional focus and international perspective, the project strengthens transnational approaches to remembering and understanding the past. By fostering collaboration among formal and non-formal educational institutions, civil society organisations, museums and universities, CU Remember promotes shared learning processes and co-creative methods that support young people in engaging critically with history and in developing democratic competencies for the present.

10 'Beutelsbacher Konsens', *BPB*, 2011, www.bpb.de/die-bpb/ueber-uns/auftrag/51310/beutelsbacher-konsens.

If You Want Peace, Educate with Peace

by Elena Bergonzini

Monte Sole Peace School was initially a project carried out by different associations with diverse missions, all of which shared the idea of creating an institution working in the field of peace education, implementing projects on a memorial site, Monte Sole, where a brutal event happened during WWII, namely a massacre of civilians by the Nazis[11].

The innovative quality of the project was to deal with the memory of the event not necessarily as a content to convey, but as a background, or better as a 'sfondo integratore' as defined by the methodology of the 'didattica per sfondi'[12]. The 'sfondo integratore' is the context in which different activities and contents connect with each other, providing the vision and motivation to educators.

In the case of Monte Sole, for instance, we can propose activities on a variety of subjects, all interconnected, i.e. from Italian constitution rights to the *controversial* citizenship rights[13]. All the activities have a connection with the memorial site.

This specific approach was born out of the awareness that the common statement "remembering the mistakes of the past is important to not repeat the same mistakes again" does not truly hold significance, although it is perceived as something that must be said, while teaching about the crimes of WWII.

Actually, memorial sites are not necessarily educational tools per se and the educational work ON and not only ABOUT memorial sites is crucial in terms of peace education. WWII historical memory may have been a powerful tool in some European countries in the past, where the experience of daily life in that period was closer, but now the relationship with that historical period is getting looser in younger generations, as family memories are fading. We believe that memorial sites have the power to restore that relationship, when dealt with in a proper way.

It is often believed that memorial sites should shock; the attitude of the ones mediating the sites to visitors is in many cases to underline the horror with the assumption that exposing visitors, especially students, to cruel details would get their attention. They will probably listen, but this approach may also cause rejection. We believe that shock causes estrangement and we work in the opposite direction, searching to implement a feeling of what is defined in Italian as 'appaesamento', that is a feeling of getting acquainted with a site.

There are some steps and methods needed to facilitate a relationship between a memorial site and its visitors.

To begin with, the facilitator needs to 'humanise'[14] the visitors and the groups need to be small, 15 people per facilitator. The first step is an introduction where each person introduces themselves and the facilitator is in the position to address everyone by their name. We strongly believe that in peace education every step, every method needs to be consistent with the content and it would be a contradiction explaining the dehumanisation of the victims when we do not humanise the people we are talking to.

---

11 Monte Sole is a large, mountainous area in the southern part of the Bologna province of Italy. During World War Two, an Italian partisan brigade called Stella Rossa (Red Star) threatened Nazi supply and transportation routes in the area, which was strategic within the last frontline, the so-called 'Gothic Line'. The partisans' activities were regarded as 'banditry' by the Nazi army and units were sent *to clean up the area*. In the context of a declared operation against bandits, from 29 September to 5 October 1944, the Nazis conducted mass killings throughout the area. Almost all of the nearly 800 casualties were Italian civilians, including 216 children, 142 people over the age of sixty, and 316 women. The massacre of civilians was planned in advance and no distinction was made between civilians and partisans. This attitude was a consequence of the contempt instilled in the Nazi troops for the partisans, whom they considered bandits and Bolsheviks, and for the community among which the partisans operated. It was a 'war on civilians'. Luca Baldissara and Paolo Pezzino, *Il Massacro. Guerra ai Civili a Monte Sole* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009).

12 The 'didattica per sfondi' is an elaboration of a work group at Bologna Pedagogy Universities. Paolo Zanelli, *Uno "sfondo" per integrare. Progettazione didattica, integrazione e strategie di apprendimento* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1986).

13 In Italy, people who do not hold a citizenship are actually denied some basic constitutional rights, even if they were born in Italy and have lived in Italy all their life.

14 The expression was used by Paulo Freire in the pedagogy of the oppressed.

The setting we use is also very important. We always sit or stand in a circle, as our posture should not be the same as a teacher, but suggests that every opinion, comment, question has the same relevance. In a circle, we can not only see each other, but what we say has the same relevance and it helps encourage visitors, especially students, to join the conversation.

It is a kind of 'pedagogy of the example', where people learn by doing and seeing it done by the educator setting the example.

If memorial sites are to educate with peace, a delicate and necessary element is the reflection on the circumstances where violence occurs. What makes violence possible? We think it is really relevant that the educators reflect on their personal position towards the concept of violence. If we consider lots of memorial sites, monuments, paintings, pictures dealing with WWII memory, violence is very often openly and frequently represented. Educating with peace while celebrating violence is quite confusing. Violence is very often in the picture of our workshops, and we carefully include also the perpetrators when telling the history of the site. Those who could have decided to stop the violence were the perpetrators, so we include them – not to celebrate them, of course, or to indulge in wanting them repented, but because they were too young to choose or obliged to obey.

There are conditions that make violence possible and a good amount of them have to do with group dynamics. It is easy to recognise the same dynamics, with absolutely different outcomes, in any group.

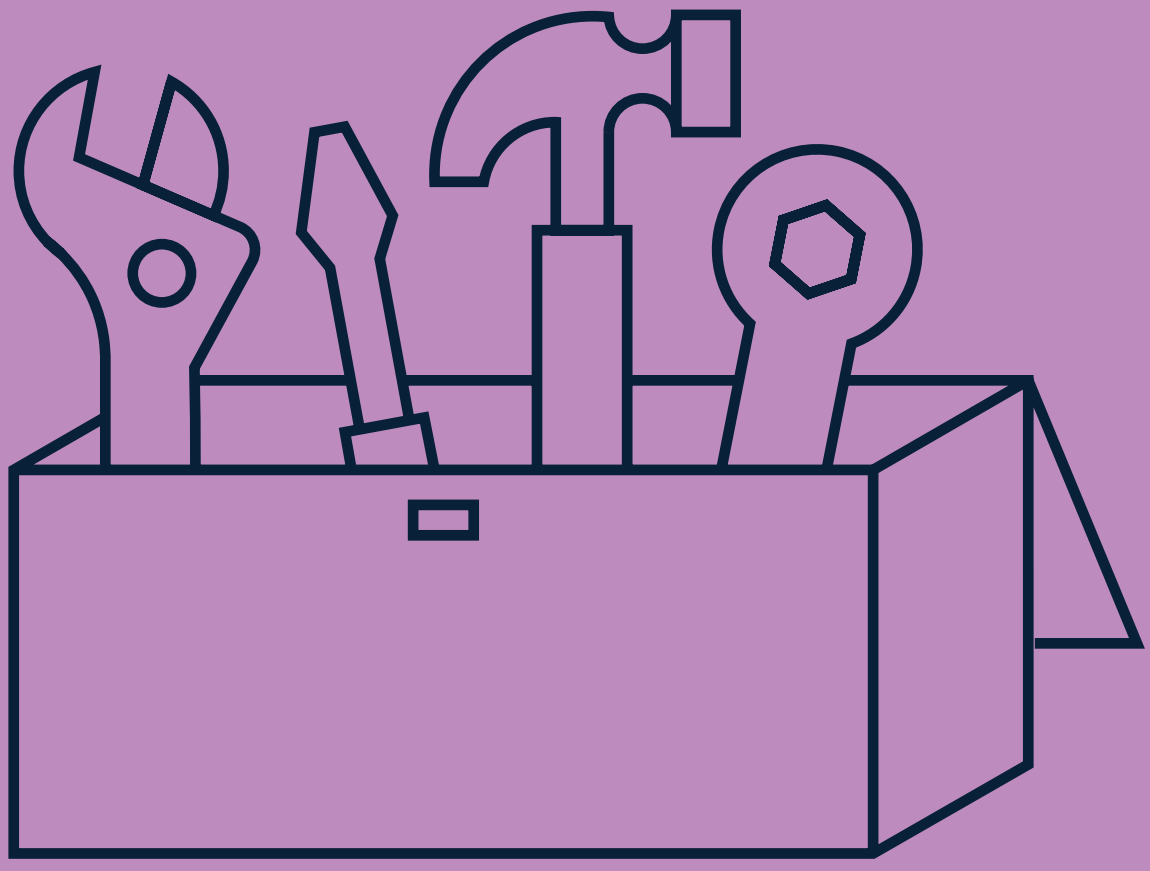
Peace is a holistic concept, it concerns peoples as well as individuals in their daily life.

Peace is not an easy subject, it requires a lot of competences and consistency, but we feel memory sites should be the right places to deal with it.



Monte Sole Peace School
© Elena Monicelli, Fondazione Scuola di Pace di Monte Sole

General Tools and Advice





The CU Remember Framework for Remembrance Education

The CU Remember Framework for Remembrance Education was developed at the outset of the CU Remember project as a shared foundation for the collaboration of all project partners. In this early phase, we collectively examined our pedagogical assumptions, approaches and priorities when teaching about the history of Fascism and National Socialism. The Framework played a role in refining and clarifying the project's conceptual direction, allowing all subsequent activities and events to build on a set of jointly formulated principles.

As a foundational text, the Framework offers more than internal guidance. It invites a broader community of educators, practitioners and institutions to reflect on what Remembrance Education can and should be in contemporary societies. It highlights the field's core aims, promoting historical understanding, fostering democratic values and encouraging critical engagement with past and present Fascist crimes and dangers, while acknowledging the diversity of contexts and educational traditions across Europe.

By articulating these shared commitments, the CU Remember Framework provides both a conceptual starting point and a practical orientation. It aims to support educators in developing thoughtful, responsible and inclusive approaches to teaching about difficult histories and their ongoing relevance.

Managing Emotions and Trauma in the Classroom

by Marco Ius

It is of crucial importance, when addressing the topic of the Holocaust in schools, to be aware that this subject deeply engages the emotional dimension, both for students and for teachers. The topic can evoke profound empathy and bring to the surface emotions such as fear, sadness, anger, confusion, and it may sometimes trigger reactions of silence or intense emotional activation.

Beyond attention to the emotional dimension, many educators are concerned that addressing the Holocaust in the classroom may be traumatic. These are legitimate questions for teachers, and we believe they should be raised not only in relation to the Holocaust, but also with regards to many other topics addressed at school, or experiences that children bring into the classroom based on what they absorb in their everyday lives.

This invites reflection: Why are we so concerned about the potentially traumatic nature of teaching the Holocaust, while often paying less attention to the impact that exposure to scenes of violence and war in our contemporary world – readily accessible to children through television – may have on them? Within their families, students may currently be living in contexts of vulnerability and social disadvantage, or may have experienced, directly or indirectly, traumatic situations such as war conflicts, forced migration, life in refugee camps or natural disasters.

Therefore, regardless of the topic being addressed, the competence of managing emotions and trauma in the classroom requires teachers to exercise awareness, responsibility and a reflective educational stance.

It is not a matter of applying ready-made techniques or 'recipes'.

First of all, it is essential to distinguish between emotions and trauma, rather than treating them as the same phenomenon, as if they always went hand in hand.

Emotions are complex psychological and physiological responses to internal or external events that influence how we feel, think, learn and act. They also help us process experiences, connect with others, learn and guide decision-making. So, they always play a crucial role in learning processes and classroom climate. When teaching about the Holocaust, educators are called to recognise both their own emotional responses and those of their students, and to promote a learning environment characterised by empathy, inclusion and respect.

When speaking about trauma, we are not referring simply to strong emotions. In fact, trauma results from an event, a series of events, or a set of circumstances (adversity) that are experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening, exceeding a person's ability to cope, and that have lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being.

Contemporary academic literature consistently emphasises the importance of adopting a trauma-informed approach when working with individuals in diverse contexts. Consequently, this perspective should inform not only teaching about the Holocaust, but educational practices as a whole.

Key aspects teachers should consider include:

- creating a safe, predictable and supportive classroom environment, where students are never forced to recount or relive painful personal experiences
- tailoring educational proposals to students' age, psychological maturity and capacity for empathy, and using stories of children and young people from the past to foster identification without overwhelming them
- knowing students well in order to make intentional pedagogical choices, while acknowledging that emotional reactions cannot always be anticipated or controlled and therefore require a listening-oriented and responsive approach. When significant or concerning experiences emerge, it is necessary not to act alone and to work together with other colleagues and/or to seek support from specialised professionals (e.g. school psychologists).

- using mediated representations – such as literary texts, artworks, memorials, museums and symbolic narratives – to support thoughtful engagement while maintaining emotional distance.
- avoiding realistic representations of horror, overly analytical and gruesome accounts and narrating events that are excessively persecutory and being attentive to language, narrative strategies and teaching materials in order to avoid reactivating trauma
- encouraging the exploration of similarities and differences with those who were persecuted in the past. To support this, use the stories of children or young people, focusing on aspects that are less distressing and more accessible to understanding – for example, losing your identity or hiding your identity, needing to find a hiding place, being forced to leave your home and undertake somewhat adventurous escapes.
- leaving space for hope by highlighting acts of resistance, solidarity and rescue, and emphasising positive values such as trust, responsibility and human dignity
- using teaching about the Holocaust as an opportunity to reflect with children on discrimination as a social process, connecting historical events to contemporary forms of exclusion – also among them – without simplistic comparisons
- connecting antisemitism to racism showing how racial hatred was fueled during periods of the war and also in the current time
- reflecting on the role of memory as both a personal and collective process. Simple activities based on personal memories can introduce different forms of memory and their functions, leading to an understanding of Holocaust Remembrance Day as a shared act of collective remembrance rooted in democratic values and the rejection of discrimination. Students can also be guided to recognise the role of monuments, artworks and museums in sustaining collective memory
- working collaboratively and creatively through interdisciplinary approaches, involving colleagues, families and the wider community, and framing Holocaust education as a practice that promotes human rights, democratic values and emotional awareness in the present.

References

Fredrik Stenhjem Hagen and Vidar Fagerheim Kalsås, "How we try to grasp genocide: emotions in Holocaust education," *History Education Research Journal 22*, no. 1 (2025), DOI: doi.org/10.14324/HERJ.22.1.10.

Marco Ius, "Building resilience following major trauma. Learnings from children of the Shoah," in *The Routledge Handbook of Child and Family Social Work Research: Knowledge-Building, Application, and Impact*, eds. Elizabeth Fernandez, Penelope Welbourne, Bethany Lee, Joyce L. C. Ma (London: Routledge, 2025), 874–886.

Marco Ius and Michaela Sidenberg, "The All-Powerful Freedom: Creativity and Resilience in the Context of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis' Art Teaching Experiment," *Proceedings* 904, no. 1 (2024): 1–12, doi.org/10.3390/proceedings1090904.

Sarah Naish et al., *The A-Z of Trauma-Informed Teaching: Strategies and Solutions to Help with Behaviour and Support for Children Aged 3–11*, (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2023).

Clotilde Pontecorvo, *10 consigli per insegnare la shoah*, www.scuolaememoria.it/site/it/2018/10/02/10-consigli-per-insegnare-la-shoah.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14–4884* (Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2024).

Online Material for Teaching about the Holocaust

by Matteo Perissinotto

This section presents a selection of links to materials and activities proposed by the main international and national institutions (for Austria and Italy) that deal with the history of the Holocaust. Many other institutions (memorials, museums, foundations) have important collections of survivor testimonies and organise courses for teachers, as well as make available to the public selected bibliographies, summaries, online exhibitions and other in-depth material about the history of WWII and the Holocaust[15].

Two issues should be highlighted. The first is that the majority of sites provide material and lessons for students above 13 years of age, with less attention paid to younger audiences. For this reason, I have focused in particular on the 8–12 age group. The second issue is a linguistic one: most sites are available in English (and very often in German), while sections in Italian are lacking.

Fondation Mémorial de la Shoah
Paris (France)

memorialdelashoah.org/en/pedagogie-et-formation/activites-pour-le-primaire/conseils-pour-enseigner-lhistoire-de-la-shoah.html

The site provides important *suggestions* on how to address these issues in the classroom, with material available in many languages, including Italian and German.

Among the various activities offered, one interesting tool is the interactive site *Sarah's attic*, which introduces children and young people to the history of the Holocaust, while respecting the sensitivity of young visitors. The contents and iconography are carefully intended to suit their emotional and cognitive abilities. The materials presented offer a glimpse into the diversity of Jewish cultures and the linguistic pluralism of Judaism. There are also nine biographies about the lives of Jews during the persecutions. Along each personal story, definitions and documents are available to the young visitors. For teachers and educators, a specific educational section contains additional resources, guidelines and teaching materials.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Washington (USA)

ushmm.org/teach/teaching-materials/holocaust

The American institute provides a series of lesson plans that introduce key concepts and information to middle school and high school students. Grounded in historical context, the lessons use primary source materials from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collections. It is not always clear what age group these lessons are suitable for, as lessons for children are often mixed in the list with lessons for adolescents. The *material* provided is interesting, with multidisciplinary approaches and including not only educational videos and testimonies, but also worksheets designed for children with disabilities.

These lessons, provided only in English and Spanish, have two limitations. The first is that they are designed for an American audience that has different basic historical knowledge and cultural references than European ones. In addition, the materials require significant selection and adaptation by teachers.

Yad Vashem
Jerusalem (Israel)

yadvashem.org/education/educational-materials/lesson-plans.html

The institute has one of the simplest and most user-friendly websites, allowing users to immediately select the age group of children and young people for whom they want to prepare the lesson[16]. The lessons are structured with videos or comics, questions to ask in class and material made available directly on the site. The material is appealing from a graphic point of view and well calibrated for the different ages that are always indicated for each lesson.

15 We recommend that teachers visit the Ehri portal to explore all topics related to the Holocaust, find sources, materials and links to the main institutions dealing with the subject: *www.ehri-project.eu*.

16 The website presents the materials in several languages, including English and German. For the Italian section: *www.yadvashem.org/education/other-languages/italian.html*.

For the children, the video on the story of Holocaust survivor Simcha Holzberg is useful for introducing children to the topic[17].

The project *Children in the Ghetto*[18], which talks about the lives of children in the ghettos during World War Two, is interactive and includes a series of activities and hands-on tasks to continue exploring the various topics covered.

Anne Frank House
Amsterdam (Netherlands)
annefrank.org/en/education

The institution offers a *video* with the story of Anne Frank, lasting about 30 minutes, in many languages.

The website also offers *educational courses*, in English and German, but not in Italian, on the life of Anne Frank, as well as on the importance of promoting democratic education and combatting discrimination today. It could be useful for teaching work on both perspectives.

Erinnern.at
Austria
erinnern.at/

The project Erinnern.at serves as a database, collecting materials from various other institutions and websites on these topics. The website shows the activities of Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD), which works on behalf of the Ministry of Education to promote learning about National Socialism and the Holocaust, as well as to counter antisemitism through educational initiatives. It provides an extensive overview of educational projects and learning opportunities, offering access to numerous resources such as teaching materials, topic-focused websites and digital learning tools. In addition, the platform presents training and professional development programmes for teachers at regional, national and international levels, functioning as a key hub for information, collaboration and support for educators engaged in this area.

Materials dedicated to different age groups can be found, allowing teachers to better target their lessons. The site presents material only in German.

Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC)
Milan (Italy)
cdec.it/formazione/

The Education Department of the Fondazione CDEC, an independent research institute based in Milan at the Shoah Memorial, develops educational programmes based on its own archival and library resources on the Holocaust in Italy, Jewish history in contemporary Italy, heritage education and human rights education, countering antisemitism and hate speech, and digital humanities.

The pedagogical process includes teacher training, support for educational planning and direct work with classes. Each year, the department organises residential seminars and courses for teachers, educators and scholars in Jewish places and memorial sites in Italy.

Activities for students include workshops based on archival sources, such as those at the Shoah Memorial in Milan, and educational journeys on the Writing and Reading Workshop method.

Numerous educational resources are available on the Fondazione CDEC website, including *exhibitions*, thematic courses, documentaries and educational materials dedicated to the Holocaust in Italy, the Resistance, contemporary migrations and countering hate speech[19].

17 The video is also available in German *www.yadvashem.org/de/education/educational-materials/lesson-plans/holtzberg.html*; while it is only available with Italian subtitles *www.yadvashem.org/education/other-languages/italian/educational-materials/la-storia-simcha-holtzberg.html*.

18 The material is not available in Italian.

19 Memoir (IT/EN), *www.youtube.com/watch?v=kg9xWvw5ZGk*, It Wasn't Them! (IT/EN/ES/FR/RO), *www.montesca.eu/relationgame/intro.php?lang=*; Un tè a Samarkand (IT/EN), *www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_pGrgnutnY;* Trame. Tracing Routes and Memories (IT/EN), *trame.cdec.it/en*.

Guidelines and Suggestions for Classroom Activities

In this section, we have collected some examples of lessons and workshops, organised by age group, which address certain aspects and issues related to Nazi-Fascist crimes, the Holocaust and citizenship education.

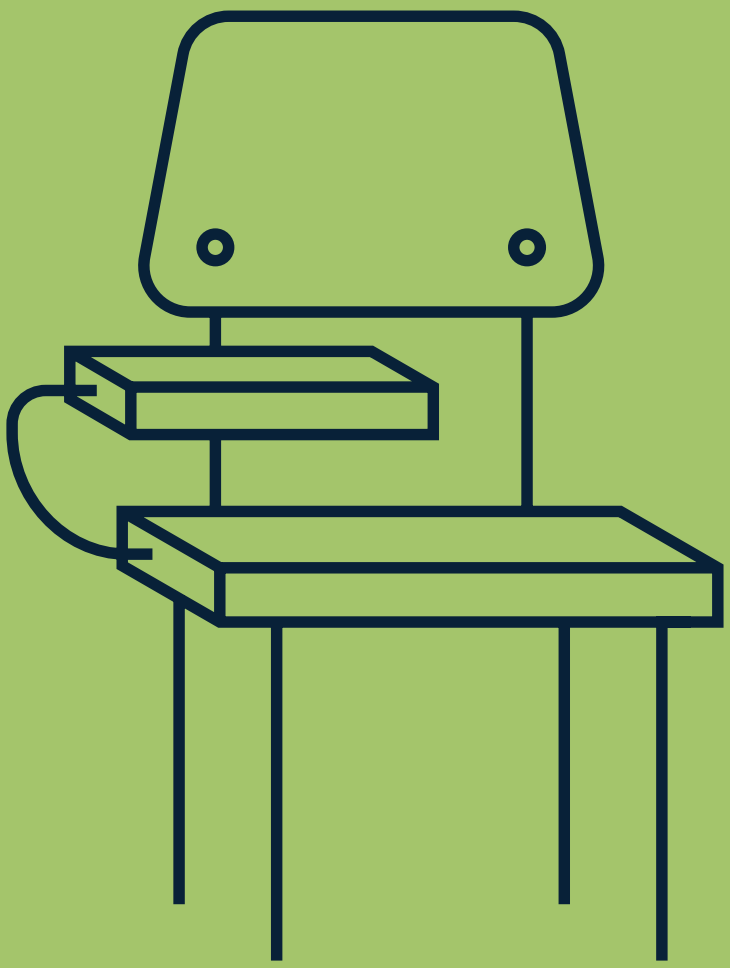
However, it should be noted that there is no clear distinction between age groups and each lesson can be adapted to your class.

From a methodological point of view, the biographical approach is the most versatile and easily adaptable to students of various ages, partly because it allows them to listen to testimonies given by survivors and read diaries and autobiographies of the protagonists, all of which are useful sources for stimulating student engagement.

In addition, particular attention has been paid to the analysis of images and films, tools and sources often used by teachers, which require basic skills to be correctly interpreted in the classroom. Finally, we focused on visits to places of remembrance, as they represent an important teaching tool, but one that requires preparation beforehand and follow-up afterwards, which cannot be omitted.



Activities for 6–12 Years of Age



6→12

“Cause grandpa told me something about it while playing chess”: Remembering with Children – for Good Reason

by Julia Netter

The headline is a statement from a 9-year-old student who explained to me why he knows about the Holocaust. Time and again, I ask my students in religious education classes “What do you know about Judaism and about Jewish people?” It is a question that does not directly refer to the Holocaust. But time and again, it is evident that some of the young learners have prior knowledge about this period.

What to do when children talk about the ‘unspeakable’? Whether it is ‘stumbling blocks’ (small stones installed in the pavements of many European cities with brass plaques inscribed with the names of Nazi victims), a conversation with their grandparents, or a post on social media – they encounter the Holocaust. Some later, others earlier. We adults must not react helplessly at this moment. Rather, we must be able to respond competently and in an age-appropriate manner, enabling them to approach the subject gently, while at the same time educating them in the spirit of democracy and humanity. Young learners are open to this, if it is done in the right way.

Learning History through Stories
Challenging children with facts, horrific images or disturbing information about the Holocaust would be counterproductive. However, stories touch them and challenge their curiosity and empathy.

With true biographies, we can tell young learners about what happened in the past, shape their attitudes for the future, and lay an important foundation for their future culture of remembrance and understanding of democracy. We should not take this opportunity away from them.

An Example – “*Einmal nach Havanna und zurück*” (“Once to Havana and back”)
The story *Einmal nach Havanna und zurück* recounts the childhood of Sol Messinger, a German-Jewish boy who failed to flee to Havana in 1939. However, thanks to the courage and humanity of Captain Gustav Schröder, the ship St. Louis, on which the boy was travelling with his parents, was allowed to dock in Antwerp. A return to Germany, which would have meant death for the Messingers and over 900 other Jewish passengers, was thus averted, ensuring the survival of Sol and his family, who escaped the Holocaust. The fact that Sol was a child at that time and that the story has a happy ending are key reasons why the story is suitable for children aged 9 and above.

In addition, the story is written in age-appropriate language. Sol Messinger takes the young readers on a journey through time to his childhood and recounts that period from a child’s perspective: the deteriorating living conditions in Germany, the preparations for escape, the happy departure from Hamburg, the tedious wait to be accepted into another country. These are all topics that we can naturally discuss with children.



Image of the story “Once to Havana and Back” –
Sol Messinger and his escape on board the St Louis in 1939
© Project INTER-DI-KO

Digital and Interdisciplinary
In addition to the 'core story', other important content is conveyed through the interdisciplinary digital *flipbook*. Additional informational texts, historical photos and maps explain historical backgrounds in a variety of ways, provide knowledge about Judaism and address fundamental differences between democracy and dictatorship. Current photos and personal audio messages from Sol Messinger to young readers, recorded during a visit to Buffalo in May 2023, make him even more accessible as the main character.

Fear of Remembering?
This story is not about Auschwitz or life in a ghetto. Nothing is disturbing. But much of it encourages reflection. Is that not what we want for our children? And is it not us adults who shy away from confronting children because we are afraid of doing something wrong? Does fear prevent us from remembering? There is no reason for it. There are many arguments in favour of it and few against it.

It Is also about Humanity
The extermination of the Jews is the terrible culmination of a long history of perverted hatred of Jews. It has a long run up and began with exclusion and the gradual deprivation of rights – in many small steps.

> **It is our responsibility to tell children about these beginnings so that, when necessary, they will show humanity, look and intervene.**

Just as Captain Schröder did not look away, but courageously intervened, took responsibility for his passengers and thus saved their lives.

Teachers can find a handout (in German) at:
inter-di-ko.net/projekt-erinnerungslernen

Building a Community: From Myself to Us

by Thomas Troy and Chris Gary

The Vienna University Children's Office offers two school-based workshops that focus on preventing vulnerability to extremism through empowerment. Each workshop is carefully tailored to the respective age group and its level of understanding. The aim is not primarily to prevent children and young people from developing sympathy for extremist trends, but to strengthen them within a discrimination-sensitive environment and support the development of a democratic, inclusive society. In this way, the approach also contributes to primary prevention within the broader framework of extremism prevention.

About the Workshop

Fostering a positively connoted class or school community begins with recognising one's own strengths, becoming aware of others and practicing collaboration and shared decision-making. The workshop explores the diverse strengths of all children. Participants make democratic decisions, face challenges together, learn how to deal with frustration and celebrate collective successes.

The workshop consists of three main parts, which build on each another and are logically interconnected.

The workshop is designed for primary school students aged 8 to 10 years, as participants need basic writing skills to fully engage in the activities. The workshop lasts three hours, with breaks every 50 minutes, following the rhythm of regular school lessons.



Teamwork game
© Vienna University Children's Office

Structure of the Workshop

From Self-Reflection to Appreciating Your Classmate

Starting with self-reflection, all participants think of facts about themselves and what makes them special – e.g. favourite games, hobbies or languages. After this reflection, they are paired randomly with a classmate to think about each other and highlight positive aspects of one another. Pairs volunteer to present both the self-reflection and the findings of one another, creating a positive atmosphere within the whole group.



Children draw and describe themselves (what they are good at, favourite colour/food, what they like or dislike). In the next step, they describe a peer in their class, highlighting positive things about the other person.
© Vienna University Children's Office

Understanding Diversity as a Strength

The second part broadens the focus to the class community and society as a whole. School students explore how diversity enriches an inclusive environment in which everyone contributes their strengths, interests and knowledge.

Through age-appropriate video clips, discussions and interactive methods, the group discovers that although every person is different, some differences – such as language – can also create unexpected common ground.

Building a Supportive Class Community

The final part emphasises that everyone has an important role in the class community and that challenges can be mastered only together. By working collaboratively, students begin to understand that a supportive and respectful atmosphere benefits the whole group and enables everyone to grow.

To conclude, facilitators and teachers jointly address an issue that is currently relevant to the students, aiming to identify underlying patterns and develop possible ways of responding constructively. All suggestions are collected on a flipchart and can be placed visibly in the classroom, serving as a shared reminder that challenges can be approached collectively and democratically.

Didactical Objective

The workshop aims to foster perspective-taking, self-reflection and positive social interactions.

> **School students are encouraged to explore their own strengths and (unique) interests while also getting to know their classmates in a structured but flexible way.**

Randomly assigned pairs and groups help ensure that children interact beyond their usual social circles, with the emphasis on giving only positive feedback to create a supportive and appreciative atmosphere. Teacher-centred instruction is kept to a minimum, empowering school students to actively engage in democratic participation. Through these experiences, they practice teamwork, shared decision-making and respectful communication, while also developing social and emotional skills that contribute to a resilient and inclusive (class) community.

An Example from the Practice of an Inclusive Primary School: Maintaining Democracy and Cooperation in the District

by Petra Feldhofer-Mahmoudian

The School as Part of the Educational Landscape

The 'Öffentliche Volksschule (OVS), Am Kaisermühlendamm 2' is a full-day, inclusive primary school in Vienna's 22nd district, established in 1999. Located in close proximity to the 'UNO City' as a flagship of global relations – one of the four headquarters of the United Nations, along with New York, Geneva and Nairobi, which for example accommodates The United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV), The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) or The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – the school is embedded in a network of local institutions. Even before the school was built, the leaders of nearby educational institutions, kindergartens and schools regularly met to exchange ideas and foster a culture of dialogue – an approach that continues to shape their collaboration today.

This long-standing tradition of exchange and cooperation is clearly reflected in the school's pedagogical priorities. Since the 2012–2013 school year, the school community has actively participated in 'Bildung und Erziehung nach dem Holocaust – Erinnern und Gedenken (Education after the Holocaust – Remembrance and Commemoration)', a mutual project between teachers from Germany and Austria. The initiative aims to support educators in approaching this challenging topic with young school students through practical examples and shared learning.

The objectives defined for the OVS Am Kaisermühlendamm included:

- holistic development of competencies with a focus on citizenship;
- strengthening personal and social skills;
- fostering a strong sense of community;
- encouraging understanding and appreciation of differences;
- experiencing diversity as an enrichment for the entire school community;
- enhancing self-esteem through socially recognised norms and expanded conflict resolution strategies.

Democracy and Participation as Elements of Peace Education

At the beginning of the 2012–2013 school year, the school parliament was implemented.

In addition to discussing school and community-related topics, students choose five main lesson units per year – each lasting two months – that are explored across all classes and age groups. At the end of each learning unit, the entire school community celebrates the students' progress with a ceremony planned, organised and moderated by the children.

For the first unit of each school year, the entire school community works with a shared overarching theme, such as 'From myself to you to us'. The foundations for this unit are already laid during the pedagogical day of the previous semester, when the teaching team jointly develops the content and structure. Particular emphasis is placed on relationship-building, as trust and stable relationships are seen as the essential basis for all further learning.

This unit deals with 'Nonviolent Communication (NVC)' according to Marshall Rosenberg and on selected works of children's literature. Together with the students, behavioural agreements are developed, the rationale behind key guiding principles is explored and rituals as well as routines are established or renewed. For example, children become familiar with the concepts of 'wolf' and 'giraffe' language and elect class representatives and peacekeepers in each class community. The peacekeepers receive training to accompany conflicts in an easily accessible , supportive manner and to help guide peers toward constructive solutions. Furthermore, parents are actively involved as well – monthly parent coffees provide a regular opportunity for participation, exchange and community-building.

A Culture of Peace

In October 2013, the school was visited by representatives of the European School Hagenow, the Ministry of Education Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the Montessori Elementary School Stralsund, the Recknitz Campus Laage and the History Didactics of the University of Rostock. This exchange generated valuable pedagogical impulses and ideas that were incorporated into the school's ongoing development and quality enhancement processes, gradually adapted and implemented within the school community. Drawing inspiration from various frameworks – including the Malik Basic Model – the school engages in participatory work on processes, school culture, structures and strategic development.

This collaboration strengthened the school's commitment to cultivating a culture of peace. When different perspectives or tensions arise, dialogue is deliberately sought in the spirit of mutual understanding. Individuals describe, without judgment, what they perceive, which feelings are elicited, what needs emerge and what requests might follow. In this way, varying viewpoints become visible and are embraced as an enrichment, grounded in the awareness that every person's perception is inherently subjective.

A fundamental principle is the clear distinction between a person and their actions. The individual, in their uniqueness and dignity, is regarded as inviolable, whereas actions may be experienced as functional or dysfunctional. These distinctions are communicated respectfully to foster a shared, co-creative 'we' through dialogue. Conscious, carefully chosen pedagogical language – especially during interventions – plays a vital role.

Whenever differences in thinking, feeling or intentions arise, dialogue remains the primary approach. Debates – understood as rigid yes-or-no confrontations that may harden positions – are intentionally avoided in favour of conversations that support understanding, connection and cooperative problem-solving.

Stronger Together: Peace Education as a Cross-Institutional Principle

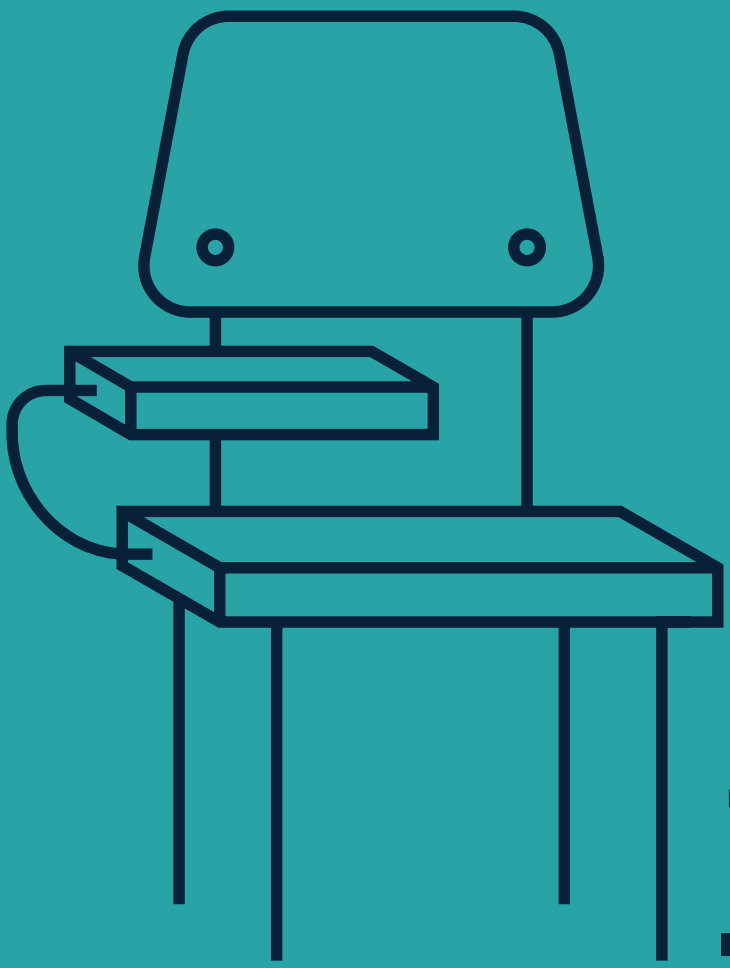
On 10 October 2018, the Bildungsgrätzl Kaisermühlen (BG Kaisermühlen) was officially founded at a ceremony in the school's auditorium, with the support of the City of Vienna. 'Bildungsgrätzl' are permanent, local cooperations between schools, kindergartens and other educational and leisure facilities in a district or neighbourhood. Their aim is to expand coordinated educational, recreational and counselling opportunities for children and young people, thereby strengthening educational success and promoting equal opportunities. The BG Kaisermühlen consists of five kindergartens, six schools, a library and a music school – and is part of the network of 36 Bildungsgrätzl currently operating across Vienna.

Peace education forms a core component of the joint pedagogical work within the BG Kaisermühlen. Twice a year, a peace festival is held directly next to the UNO City. All participating institutions engage in extensive preparation: songs are rehearsed, and students create decorations – for example, ornaments for the UNO City Christmas tree. In 2025, doves of peace were ceremonially handed over by children from the various institutions during the festival and then escorted to the UNO City by the 'Grätzlpolizei' – local police officers who support educational work and mutual understanding within the neighbourhood.

Also in 2025, the cross-institutional initiative Children's Rights Messages will take place for the third time at the UNO City Vienna. The BG Kaisermühlen invites all Viennese Bildungsgrätzl to send messages of peace, which are publicly presented and later exhibited as part of the UNO City Christmas tree. In some years, children are also given the unique opportunity to ring the UNO Peace Bell – an event that is officially recorded in the UNO Book.

These activities demonstrate the commitment of the school community and its surrounding institutions to peace, participation and shared growth across all areas of learning and collaboration – creating an environment that sustainably empowers children, young people and adults. At the same time, international projects such as CU Remember broaden the perspectives of teachers and educators. The project aims to establish innovative educational approaches that connect formal and non-formal learning. To this end, 'MemoriaLinks' will be developed in Vienna and Trieste, combining remembrance work with contemporary educational formats. Through these innovative approaches, CU Remember seeks to transform historical learning from a potentially intimidating topic into an inspiring journey of discovery – cultivating empathy, understanding and a commitment to democratic values among the youngest members of society. In this way, the cooperation between formal and non-formal education makes a significant contribution to a peace education that is vibrant, impactful and oriented toward the future.

Activities for 12–18 Years of Age



12→18

Teaching Principles for Watching a Film about the Holocaust in Class

by Emiliano Perra

The Holocaust is without doubt the most thoroughly researched and widely represented genocide in history. It is also the one most prominently taught in schools, and films and TV programmes are frequently used to support teaching and learning about this event. Using films and television series to teach about the destruction of the European Jews offers great advantages and poses even greater challenges. Being mindful of them is the first necessary step to maximise the benefits and avoid the pitfalls. The most obvious benefit of a film is its very visual nature. A film that shows what is told through other more traditional pedagogic means enhances their impact. The requirements of narrative films focusing on a limited number of characters rather than being about the fate of millions also helps eliciting empathetic responses from students, which in turn can facilitate developing equally empathetic responses to other past and current events. This is possible only if the challenges are addressed. The Holocaust is an extreme event involving tens of millions of people from multiple subject positions. No film can represent not only its depth but also its breadth. If that was not sufficiently challenging, Holocaust education can sometimes risk charging teachers with very broad briefs: learn the history *of* the event, draw lessons *from* the event, promote responsible future citizen development, draw connections between the past and the present.

Here is the first key recommendation: Holocaust films can be very powerful when paired with clearly defined teaching goals, an understanding of what facet of history is pedagogically central, and an awareness of the fact that every historical film is a historiographical intervention (sometimes conscious, other times less so) that can be fruitfully situated alongside other interpretations.

> **For example, the representation of perpetrators is a difficult but essential part of trying to understand why the Holocaust happened.**

From this point of view, the Wannsee Conference offers a good case study, as it is a pivotal moment involving key figures. The Conference is at the centre of *Die Wannseekonferenz* (Heinz Schirk, ORF & BR, 1984), recently remade in *Die Wannseekonferenz* (Matti Geschonneck, ZDF, 2022), and *Conspiracy* (Frank Pierson, HBO & BBC, 2001). Whilst the two versions of *Die Wannseekonferenz* follow a broadly intentionalist and Hitler-centric interpretation of the Conference, and by extension the Holocaust, *Conspiracy* is more aligned with the functionalist historiography. *Conspiracy* frames the Conference as a power grab by the SS in a process of cumulative radicalisation that adds nuance to our understanding of the decision-making process of the Holocaust. In addition, *Conspiracy* represents the Conference as not unlike a board meeting for any corporation, and the attendants as highly educated professionals owning social capital. Combined, these films create space for constructive discussions of who these high-ranking desk murderers were, what motivated them, and how they differ from us or the world around us.

Teaching the Holocaust through Photographs

by Laura Fontana

This activity does not replace the history lesson on the Holocaust, and it is recommended to present it after providing: **a)** a historical overview of the persecution and extermination of the Jews; **b)** an introduction to the propaganda use of photography under the Nazi regime. Under occupation, Jews were forbidden to own cameras; photographing, writing and documenting illegally was a potentially life-threatening undertaking.

Duration
90 minutes

Objectives
Students will learn to observe, describe, analyse and understand photographs of the Holocaust as primary sources and to extract historical information from them.

The activity focuses on the importance of contextualisation and critical interpretation, using the Łódź ghetto as an example.

Activity structure
20 minutes

Introduce the context of the establishment of ghettos in Poland and other occupied countries, where the Nazi authorities confined thousands of Jews in inhumane conditions (overcrowding, lack of food, medicine, housing and sanitary facilities).

1. Show a map of Europe between 1939 and 1944 to locate Łódź (known under the German occupation as Litzmannstadt) and explain the main features that made it different from other ghettos.
2. Explain that during the four years the ghetto was in operation, there was intense photographic activity by several photographers, both Nazi and Jewish (such as Mendel Grossman and Henryk Ross), emphasising the importance of comparing and understanding the different points of view.
3. Define the keywords and highlight those that are part of Nazi language: ghetto, deportations, liquidation of the ghetto, extermination centres, Holocaust.

The teacher explains the method of photographic analysis, which is structured as a historical investigation that directly involves the students. The aim of this activity is to treat the photographs not as simple illustrations, but as historical sources that require in-depth investigation. Three series of two photos taken in the Łódź ghetto will be presented, showing the same event or aspect, but from different perspectives.

The students' task is to follow four basic steps, just as a historian would do.

1. Observation and description (What do I see?)
2. Analysis and comparison (How was the photo taken and for what reason? From what point of view and in what context?)
3. Interpretation (What does the framed situation mean?)
4. Conclusions (The photo as a historical source and documentary value).

The teacher divides the class into groups of up to 5 people. Each group receives a worksheet with two photos and questions A, B and C to answer.
20 minutes

Ask the students to **1)** examine the photograph(s); **2)** exchange their impressions and observations, noting them down on a sheet of paper or tablet; **3)** answer the questions indicated on the worksheet prepared by the teacher.

For the worksheet, the teacher will select the questions they consider most appropriate and interesting, also based on the age of their students.

Please find an example below.

A. Where and when
Based on what the two photographs show and reading the caption, describe the setting or the precise location where it was taken. Try to be precise: What kind of place is it (outdoors or indoors)? In what season and in what weather conditions was the photo taken? Can you trace the year the photograph was taken?

B. Who is in the photo
Who took the photo? Who is in the photo? One or more people? Are they adults or children, men or women? Who are they? How are they dressed? Do you know their names? Can you guess their ages? What role might they play or what is their status in relation to the context? Are the subjects in the photo gesturing or standing still in front of the camera? Try to read their body language (posture) and facial expressions (mimicry). What feelings do you think they are experiencing? Are they aware of being photographed?

C. The photographer

Is it possible to identify the author of the photo? How? What role did they have and in what context did they take the photograph? What was their objective and what was their relationship with the subjects photographed (one of supremacy or equality, distance or closeness)? Is it an official or clandestine photo? Spontaneous or posed?

At this point, the teacher brings everyone together in a plenary session (40 minutes). Through a spokesperson, each small group will share the results of their analysis and reflection. Everyone is encouraged to debate. (All the photographs used are projected).

Then, still in a plenary session, the students are asked to compare the photographs, in groups of two per theme, identifying the elements they have in common and those that differentiate them. Are there spontaneous photos (unaware subject) or posed photos (aware subject)?

What do they tell us about the photographer? What feelings do they evoke? How informative are they in terms of learning about the history of the Holocaust?

In conclusion, the teacher will raise the question of truth: Which photo is more representative of the reality of the ghetto? What is truth in a photo, bearing in mind that photography is an easily manipulated medium? (10 minutes)

At the end of the exercise, students will have understood that a photo does not faithfully reproduce reality, but offers a subjective and partial representation from a particular point of view, the result of the photographer's choices and values. To understand it, we must not stop at appearances, but train our eyes to capture all the details, even formulating hypotheses about what the photographer chose to exclude.

For this activity, you can find numerous photos on the websites of the main institutes and museums dealing with the Holocaust. The photo collections are accompanied by information sheets and notes.

Here are some examples of images that you can use in class to address topics such as hunger, deportation and forced labour.

The deportation of Jews from the ghetto

- Deportation of Jews from the Łódź ghetto to Chełmno, April 1942.
  juedischesmuseum.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Bilder/Sammlungsseiten/dokumente-fotografien/genewein-lodz-dias.pdf
  Photo reference: Lodz-A375.jpg
  Original caption: Judenaussiedlung (Jewish resettlement)
  Photographer: Walter Genewein, © USHMM, courtesy of Robert Abrams

- Children talking through fence of central prison on Czarnecki Street prior to deportation, Łódź ghetto, 1942, Poland.
  mfa.org/image-gallery/lodz-ghetto-photographs,
  Photo reference: 2020.495

Forced labour

- The Ghetto of Łódź – Saddlery, 1940–1944 Łódź ghetto, saddlery.
  juedischesmuseum.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Bilder/Sammlungsseiten/dokumente-fotografien/genewein-lodz-dias.pdf
  Photo reference: Lodz-A232.jpg
  Original caption: Getto Litzmannstadt Sattlerei (Menschenmenge in Halle) Saddlery
  Photographer: Walter Genewein, © USHMM

- Photo of three boys in the Łódź ghetto struggling to pull a cart loaded with excrement. Young boys hauling a cart in the ghetto, 1940–1944.
  https://www.mfa.org/image-gallery/lodz-ghetto-photographs
  Photo reference: 2020.455
  Photographer: Henryk Ross, © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
  Note by Laura Fontana: the Jewish children in the photo are responsible for collecting excrement from house to house (the Łódź ghetto has no sewage system).

Hunger

- Children lining up for soup, Łódź ghetto 1940–1944
  juedischesmuseum.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Bilder/Sammlungsseiten/dokumente-fotografien/genewein-lodz-dias.pdf
  Photo reference: Lodz-4170.jpg
  Original caption: Getto Schulausspeisung (ghetto school lunch)
  Photographer: Walter Genewein

- Three youngsters in front of the closed service window of a public soup kitchen. The Ghetto of Łódź – Saddlery, 1940–1944
  regards-ghettos.memorialdelashoah.org/photos/gro_005.html
  Photographer: Mendel Grossman- © The Ghetto Fighters' House Museum, Israel

Biographical Work on the Topic of Expulsion at Universities under National Socialism

by Veronika Schallhart and Thiemo Kronlechner

This project supplements existing lesson formats and does not replace a fundamental historical discussion of National Socialism. It is recommended that students start with the project after they have been introduced to the following topics: anti-semitism, persecution and expulsion of students and academics as well as the role and responsibility of universities under National Socialism.

Learning Outcomes

Students should:

- understand the impact of National Socialism on universities;
- analyse the fate of individuals who were persecuted and expelled, using biographical examples, and identify similarities in their stories;
- acquire basic skills in working with historical sources;
- present the results of historical research in a suitable media form.

Project Overview

- General introduction (at the central university location).
- Biographical work on universities and expulsion under National Socialism (suitable location: library or archive at the university).
- Interviews with descendants and experts.
- Production of short videos.

Duration

approx. 6 weeks

Methods

combination of workshops, group work and independent work.

Phase 1: Introduction – National Socialism and the University of Vienna

Duration

approx. 3 teaching units (incl. preparation and follow-up)

The project begins with a thematic introduction to the history of the University of Vienna during the National Socialist era[20]. A digital multimedia guide (Actionbound[21]) activates the student's prior knowledge and provides spatial orientation.

In small groups, students work on tasks at selected places of remembrance and commemoration in the Main Building of the University of Vienna. Historical information is conveyed in multimedia form by means of gamification (answering questions and obtaining opinions through text, audio and image contributions).

The results are discussed and contextualised together. Finally, the further course of the project is explained.



A group of students use the Actionbound app to analyse the rectors' plaque, which addresses National Socialism at the University of Vienna.
© Alexander Bachmayer

20 More on this topic in the CU Remember blog: *Meet the Library! A MemoriaLink at the University of Vienna – The European Children's Universities Network*.

21 *Actionbound | Multimedia guide – App for city scavenger hunts and guided walks – create mobile adventures and interactive guides for smartphones and tables*.

Phase 2
Biographical Work in the Archive of the University of Vienna[22]

Duration
approx. 4 units

After an input on archive work and historical sources by employees of the University Archive, students begin to work independently. The class is divided into small groups (4–5 students); each group works on the biography of a person expelled from the University of Vienna in 1938.

The biographies prepared for the workshop were selected from the Memorial Book for the Victims of National Socialism at the University of Vienna 1938[23]. In addition to short biographies, printed materials such as copies of documents, images and biographical literature are made available in folders.

The groups are tasked with presenting the most important stages of the person's life in the form of a poster. The presentation of the results provides a comparative overview of different biographical trajectories and common structural characteristics of persecution.



The students work in groups to compile the biographies of expelled persons and record the most important stages of their lives on posters.
© Veronika Schallhart

Phase 3
Interviews with Descendants or Experts[24]

Duration
approx. 4 weeks (independent work)

The students conduct semi-structured interviews with descendants, with people who were close to the displaced persons or with people who have researched their biographies. In the preparation phase, students familiarise themselves with the content as well as with organisational and data protection aspects and develop questions.

The interviews with descendants, which are recorded on video, are the most sensitive and emotional phase of the project. To prepare and conduct the interviews, students from the teacher education programme at the University, i.e. prospective history teachers, are available to the students as contact persons (1 contact person for 3 groups of school students).

The aim of this phase is to supplement the biographical research with memories of and knowledge about the displaced person, imparted by descendants or experts. This brings history to life and makes it tangible.



Interview with Ruth Wodak, daughter of Erna Mandel-Wodak (video screenshot).
© Andras Koermendi-Toth, Alyona Konstantinova, Ershad Jamalabad, Ali Mirzeai

22 Further information in the CU Remember blog: *1938 as a Turning Point – Individual Life Stories – The European Children's Universities Network*.

23 *Memorial Book* for the Victims of National Socialism at the University of Vienna in 1938.

24 Further information in the CU Remember blog: *From Biography to Dialogue – The European Children's Universities Network*.

Phase 4
Production of Videos

Duration
approx. 4 weeks (parallel to phase 3)

The school students create short documentary videos[25] (3–5 minutes) summarising the results of their biographical work. Specifications regarding format, length and design should be made jointly.

- The tasks include, among others,
- the development of a concept for the content;
- the selection of suitable interview sequences;
- supplementary film recordings at historical locations;
- video editing.



A group of students are presenting their video portrait of Holocaust survivor Elfriede Pichler.
© Alexander Bachmayer

Phase 5
Presentation and Conclusion

Duration
approx. 2 teaching units

The final videos are screened in a school setting. Watching these videos together with others serves to make students' achievements visible and to reflect on the project. External guests (e.g. descendants, project partners) can be invited to the presentation as well, which also serves didactic purposes.

Didactic Categorisation
The project combines biographical learning, critical work with sources, conducting interviews and media-supported presentations. The introduction to the topic using a gamification approach[26] ensures a high level of involvement at the start of the project.

> **By dealing with concrete life stories and meeting the descendants of Holocaust victims, historical knowledge is contextualised and expanded on a personal level beyond the everyday school routine.**

Students learn that historical knowledge is based on selection, perspective and interpretation and reflect on forms of remembrance in a contemporary context.

25 Videos created as part of this workshop: *eucu.net/projects/curemember/cu-remember-videos*.

26 Further information in the CU Remember blog: *Remembering with Games – The European Children's Universities Network*.

Ourstory?! The Stories of the Many: Enabling Participation in Our Migration Society

by Philipp Salzmann-Stöckl, Thomas Troy and Chris Gary

The Vienna University Children's Office offers two school-based workshops that focus on preventing extremism through empowerment. Each workshop is carefully tailored to the respective age group and its level of understanding. The aim is not primarily to prevent children and young people from joining extremist groups, but to strengthen them within a discrimination-sensitive environment and support the development of a democratic, inclusive society. In this way, the approach also contributes to primary prevention[27] within the broader framework of extremism prevention.

About the Workshop

Which narratives are included in historical accounts, which are left out, and why? In this workshop, students explore the importance of multiple perspectives for living together in a migration society. By engaging with historical figures such as Immanuel Kant and Sanité Bélair, as well as key events in individual biographies, participants actively question and co-create historical narratives.

The workshop puts underrepresented voices in the foreground and draws on feminist, anti-racist and postcolonial approaches to examine their contributions to the development of human rights and democratic freedoms. In its main phase, students imagine a society in which diversity and participation are central principles.

The workshop is grounded in the understanding that inclusive participation is a key factor in preventing extremism. Young people who experience themselves as being recognised, included and able to contribute to society are less likely to be attracted to dehumanising extremist ideologies.

Approach and Methodology

The workshop is designed for a three-hour intervention for upper-secondary grades. It is based on the understanding that young people are experts in their own lived realities. Through counter-historical writing, their perspectives are strengthened, their resources made visible, and their experiences acknowledged. The guiding question throughout the workshop is: What connects us all? The educational approach is inclusive, sensitive to differences and explicitly anti-racist.

Methodologically and didactically, this approach acknowledges a particular responsibility for students affected by discrimination. Participation is central to both content and method, with collaborative formats prioritised over teacher-centred instruction. Methods such as empowerment circles and world cafés create a participatory learning environment in which all participants can contribute, feel valued and receive mutual support.

In line with inclusive principles, all materials are designed to be accessible, enabling active participation regardless of abilities or language backgrounds. Clear language and visual support are used throughout, fostering inclusive historical writing and the joint exploration of a utopian vision of society.

Objectives of the Workshop

By making the stories of marginalised groups relatable, the workshop offers role models beyond a Eurocentric perspective and highlights the value strengths of a diverse society. This approach supports identity development – particularly, though not exclusively, for students with migration or refugee experiences.

> **Engaging with multiple narratives raises awareness of anti-discrimination, self-articulation and civic courage, while emphasising the importance of solidarity for the historical and ongoing development of democracy and human rights.**

The workshop aims to create a space in which students can support, empower and show solidarity with one another.

27 Jaschke, Hans-Gerd (2012): *bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/133384/zur-rolle-der-schule-bei-der-bekaempfung-von-rechtsextremismus* (01.12.2025)

Challenges:
Reproducing Forms of Discrimination
The themes addressed in the workshop may inadvertently reproduce forms of discrimination and can be potentially retraumatising. For this reason, the workshop should be facilitated by individuals with extensive experience in group work with people affected by structural discrimination. Facilitators are expected to have solid expertise in anti-discrimination practices as well as in postcolonial historiography.

Learnings for Workshop Facilitators
Facilitators gain deeper insight into students' perspectives and needs while increasing awareness of their own blind spots and privileges. They strengthen their anti-racist and inclusive pedagogical skills, acquire practical experience working with diverse groups and develop strategies for addressing sensitive or discriminatory situations constructively. In addition, facilitators receive feedback on their methods and further refine their approach to participation, diversity and power relations.



Upper secondary school students discuss human rights.
© Alexander Bachmayer

Multi-Day Remembrance Trips to Memorials Sites of Fascist and NS Crimes: Opportunities and Challenges for Upper-Secondary Teachers

by Sebastian Dallinger and Dino Perco

General Approach

Remembrance trips to the sites of World War Two, deportation and the Holocaust are in-depth historical programmes aimed at helping young people develop an informed understanding of history and memories, and at contributing to the construction of a public sphere that looks to the past as a tool for interpreting the present and strengthening critical thinking.

This approach combines a solid historiographical framework with methods from non-formal education. Looking at the history of Fascist and National Socialist crimes from a European perspective means building an awareness that the processes behind them, as well as their consequences, are part of a shared past. The process aims to help participants 'learn history' and 'orient themselves within memory': to develop an adequate knowledge of events, understand the processes that led to the Holocaust and other forms of mass violence, and encourage a critical use of narratives and sources, with particular attention to individual and collective memories.

Within this framework, preliminary workshops are an essential condition. Through lectures, workshops and non-formal education activities, participants can be guided both in reconstructing historical processes and in reading the challenges of the present: rigid and exclusionary identities, racism, hate speech and democratic crises. The use of different languages and of learning by doing makes it possible to build an educational experience that is interwoven with history teaching and civic education pathways.

A central issue concerns the emotional dimension. Encounters with sites of memory are designed as experiences that draw on emotional intelligence: empathy, the ability to recognise and name one's own emotions. At the same time, it is necessary to avoid an emotional burden that becomes overwhelming, feeding a pedagogy of shock. For this reason, it is recommended that remembrance trips include time and spaces for reflection – talking circles, writing, small-group work – in which the impact of the journey can be transformed into questions, critical thinking and an awareness of individual responsibility towards the wider community.

Learning Potential for Students

A frequent and significant learning moment for students is the realisation that a contemporary memorial site is not a concentration camp. Memorials are historical yet transformed sites in which multiple 'layers' of history overlap: traces of Nazi crimes, post-war reconstruction, ongoing restoration and changing interpretive frameworks. As both museums and pedagogically curated environments, they highlight that Remembrance Education is not about 'authentic' emotional re-enactment. Students learn that the experiences and feelings of former prisoners cannot and should not be 'relived'. Such expectations are historically inaccurate and pedagogically problematic, as attempting to 'relive' historic experiences does not create further historical or analytical understanding; additionally, such emotional and psychological impact contains the danger of 'vicarious traumatisation'.

> **Instead, memorial sites open spaces for critical inquiry: How could perpetrators and bystanders organise, support or enable NS crimes?**

How did extreme and precarious conditions shape prisoner society? And how have these sites and narratives been negotiated since 1945? These questions foster key competencies in Remembrance Education.

Example of a Four-Day Remembrance Trip to Oświęcim (Auschwitz-Birkenau)

Day 1 : Arrival; introduction to the history of Oświęcim and the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp complex.

Day 2: Guided tour of the Auschwitz I State Museum; visit to the city centre of Oświęcim and Auschwitz Jewish Center / Oshpitzin: Jewish history of Oświęcim before 1939; reflection.

Day 3: Visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau; meeting with first- or second-generation survivor; reflection.

Day 4: Workshop on critical engagement with memorial sites; feedback.

The Post-Trip Phase

The post-trip phase can be an integral part of a remembrance trip. Later meetings focus on creating spaces for future engagement – public events, multimedia products, collective narratives – through which young people become 'student multipliers', able to share the journey with their peers and reference communities. Learning how to narrate and communicate what has been experienced helps to transform emotions and knowledge into self-awareness, an understanding of the present and concrete forms of active participation in the places where they live.



Students in Auschwitz-Birkenau
© Nici Mairhofer, Verein Gedenkdienst, 2020

Credits

- **Elena Bergonzini,** senior educator Peace School Foundation of Monte Sole Marzabotto, Bologna (IT)
- **Tullia Catalan, PhD,** associate professor of Contemporary History at the University of Trieste (IT)
- **Sebastian Dallinger, MA,** educator at Verein Gedenkdienst (AT)
- **Petra Feldhofer-Mahmoudian, M.Ed.,** is the headmaster of the primary school OVS Am Kaisermühlendamm 2 in Vienna (AT)
- **Laura Fontana, Dr.,** Holocaust historian and educational expert, Mémorial de la Shoah de Paris (IT)
- **Chris Gary,** Vienna University Children's Office GmbH (AT)
- **Marco Ius, PhD,** associate professor of General and Social Pedagogy, University of Trieste (IT)
- **Thiemo Kronlechner, MA,** University of Vienna (AT)
- **Julia Netter, MA,** teacher at a primary school. Master's degree in Jewish Cultural History (PLUS Salzburg) (DE)
- **Dino Perco, Dr.,** trained historian and professional public historian. He serves as Regional Coordinator, scientific advisor, trainer, and tutor for Deina (IT)
- **Matteo Perissinotto, PhD,** historian and researcher at University of Trieste (IT)
- **Emiliano Perra, PhD,** Senior Lecturer in Modern European History at University of Winchester (UK)
- **Philipp Salzmann-Stöckl,** Uniclub, Vienna University Children's Office GmbH (AT)
- **Veronika Schallhart, Mag.,** University of Vienna (AT)
- **Roland Trabe, Prof. Mag.,** teaches History Didactics with a focus on digital media and European civic/political education at the University College of Teacher Education Vienna (AT)
- **Thomas Troy,** Vienna University Children's Office GmbH (AT)

Imprint

Graphic Design: Andriana López Biagi
Proofreading: Julia Pöllabauer and Thomas Timlin
Coordination: Veronika Schallhart
University of Vienna, April 2026