Holocaust Survivors’ Friendship Association Speaker Programme: Guidance for Teachers

July 2013
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1. Introduction
The Holocaust Survivors’ Friendship Association is a Leeds-based charity set up in 1996 to preserve the memory, testimony and records of Holocaust survivors based in Yorkshire for teaching, learning and research. We use the lessons from our members’ personal experiences of persecution to educate young people and adults about the Holocaust and its relevance today. We aim to combat prejudice in all its forms.

The HSFA can provide trained speakers to come to your school and talk about personal experiences of the Holocaust. Most of our speakers are Holocaust survivors – camp survivors, hidden children, Kindertransport and refugees who fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s. We also have a new panel of volunteer speakers who are not themselves survivors but have been trained to tell survivors’ stories with the aid of films and images. Some are family members of Holocaust survivors. This pack aims to provide further information about our speaker programme and guidance for teachers about how to get the most out of a speaker in your school.

2. Our Speakers
We have supported Holocaust survivors going into schools for over 12 years. However, inevitably as time goes on survivor speakers are becoming an increasingly scarce resource. While survivors remain energetic and committed to spreading their message, the fact remains that speaking is an emotionally and physically draining experience for them and we have a responsibility to ensure that survivors are not put under pressure to fulfil speaking engagements at the expense of their health and well-being. Nonetheless, survivors do continue to accept speaking engagements and wish to do so for as long as they are able.

To ensure that we are able to provide a speaker programme into the future, including at a time when Holocaust survivors themselves are no longer available, HSFA has trained a group of volunteer speakers who are available to speak in schools and to other community groups and tell survivors’ stories, carrying their legacy forward and continuing to spread the survivors’ message of the importance of embracing diversity and difference and guarding against prejudice.

Our volunteer speakers are trained to work in schools, and have in many cases an expert knowledge of particular aspects of the Holocaust through higher education study. Many of them are ex-teachers or educators and some are second or third generation survivors able to share their own family stories from their own unique perspective. Speakers all agree to uphold the HSFA’s values and principles and have committed themselves to a minimum voluntary time commitment on behalf of HSFA. Volunteer speakers can offer:
• In-depth knowledge of individual survivors’ stories, supplemented with film clips, original images and electronic copies of historical documents relating to that individual survivor
• The ability to answer questions (though please note that speakers who are not survivors cannot speak on behalf of the survivor).

3. Booking a Speaker
To make a booking, please complete and return our schools booking form. A copy is enclosed at the end of this pack, and the form is available to download from our website at http://holocaustlearning.org/about/speakers.

HSFA will try its best to find a survivor able to speak in your school at the date and time you request. If a survivor is not available, we will offer one of our trained volunteers. We will normally put you in direct contact with the speaker so that you can discuss your individual requirements with them before their visit.

Some schools are keen to inform the local press when they have a speaker visit school. We welcome publicity for our work and speakers are normally happy to cooperate with photographs and interviews. Please check with the individual speaker.

Please note that we do not allow filming or audio recording of speakers unless by prior arrangement.

4. Practical Considerations
A survivor speaker would usually only provide one session per day. A session normally lasts up to 90 minutes and includes time for students to ask questions of the survivor. Volunteer speakers may be able to offer more than one session per day. Please contact us to discuss your requirements.

To help our speakers offer the best learning experience for students, please ensure you can provide the following:
• Parking close to the entrance of your school. Many of our speakers are elderly and have limited mobility.
• Someone to meet the speaker, accompany them to the room and ensure they know how your equipment works
• A room of adequate size to accommodate the number of students who will be listening to the speaker, with a minimum of external distractions (e.g. external noise)
• Access to a laptop and projector with Powerpoint software and the facility to play DVDs
• If you have a large group of students (more than 30), and particularly if you are using a large room such as an assembly hall, please provide a microphone for the speaker to ensure all students will be able to hear them
• Adequate staff supervision for the students
• Drinking water for the speaker.
5. Child Protection
We take child protection seriously and take care when recruiting volunteers that we only accept people we feel have the right skills, attributes and attitudes to work with young people. We are in the process of ensuring all our volunteers are checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service. This process will take some time, so please check with us if you need to know the DBS status of the speaker allocated to you.

For your protection and that of our volunteers, we would expect speakers to be accompanied at all times while on school premises irrespective of their DBS status. We ask schools to ensure that speakers are not left alone with any child or children while on your premises. We also expect student discipline to remain the school’s responsibility and speakers are not trained to manage disciplinary issues in the classroom. We rarely encounter problems in any of the schools we visit; however, if a speaker feels at any point that they are not being treated with respect or that their safety is being compromised, they are within their rights to curtail the talk and leave the school before they have completed their speaking engagement.

6. Donations
HSFA asks schools to make a donation of £100 for a speaker visit plus the cost of speakers’ travel expenses. On occasions schools hold collections from students or become engaged in fundraising activities to raise the money for a donation. We do not receive any government or other public funding to subsidise our speaker programme and are reliant on donations to cover our administration costs, maintain our website, cover the cost of managing and supporting our volunteer workforce (including survivors) and enable us to continue our charitable operations into the future. None of our speakers receive any payment for their time. Instead of paying travel expenses, you may wish to arrange transport to bring the speaker to your school.

There are several ways of making your donation:
• Online via our Virgin Money Giving page – please follow the link on our homepage at www.holocaustlearning.org
• By cheque, made payable to ‘Holocaust Survivors Friendship Association’ and sent to our office at 411a Harrogate Road, Leeds, LS17 7BY
• By direct bank transfer. Please contact us for our bank account details.

The HSFA office will manage the collection of donations and travel expenses. Please do not ask speakers to take cash or cheques on the day of their visit.
7. Why should I invite a speaker into school?

There are many benefits to students from hearing a speaker talk about the Holocaust from the point of view of someone who was there:

- A focus on the individual helps students understand the human story behind the statistics. In teaching about the Holocaust, individual stories can become lost in a mass of numbers. Speakers help students to link individual experiences to the broader framework of events and understand the impact on real people.
- A lot of the evidence of the Holocaust focuses on perpetrator narratives. A focus on survivors’ experiences helps refocus students’ attention on the people who experienced it and the impact on them and their families.
- Listening to a speaker can make the subject ‘real’ for students in a way that is harder to achieve through normal classroom study.
- Meeting a speaker often engages disinterested or disaffected students in learning. Seeing what is possible in the face of great adversity often inspires students to realise that they themselves can overcome their own challenges.
- In History teaching, hearing a speaker provides the opportunity to discuss issues of evidence and interpretation such as the importance of eyewitness testimony, a comparison between witness testimony and other historical sources, and the nature of memory.
- Students have the opportunity to ask their own questions and be active participants in their learning through coming face to face with an historical source.
- Meeting a second or third generation speaker helps students understand that the Holocaust is not merely an event of the past, but still has repercussions for people living in the present day.

The impact on young people can be clearly seen in the thousands of thank-you letters our speakers receive every year from students describing the experience of meeting a speaker and the new perspective it has given them.

8. How should I prepare students for a visiting speaker?

The main benefit of having a speaker visit your school is the opportunity to hear individual stories first hand. This encourages empathy in students, making the sometimes overwhelming facts and figures of the Holocaust meaningful on a human level and enabling them to understand the impact of global historical events on individual people and families. The survivors were all young people when these events happened to them: between 4 and 17 years old.

However, speakers can only talk from their own personal experience, or in the case of non-survivor speakers, tell the stories of individual survivors. A speaker is not a substitute for teaching the Holocaust in class. Students will get far more out of a visiting speaker if they have some background knowledge beforehand. We suggest
that year 9 students will get more from a speaker visit if they have covered the following background knowledge in school:

• The basic chronology behind Hitler’s rise to power and the gradual escalation of the persecution of Jewish people and other minority groups
• The basic chronology of the Holocaust and the developments from persecution to genocide after the start of the Second World War
• A grasp of Holocaust vocabulary: words and events such as Kindertransport, Kristallnacht, concentration camp, perpetrator, bystander, refugee, evacuee
• A basic understanding of European geography and the Nazi occupation of Europe after 1939.

9. Asking questions
We consider that giving students the opportunity to ask questions is an essential part of the learning experience. Survivors who visit schools are willing to re-live their most traumatic memories in order that younger generations may learn from their experiences. They welcome questions from students and are always willing to try to answer relevant and considered questions.

It is useful if teachers can prepare students beforehand for the kinds of questions they might want to ask. Having some pre-prepared questions will ensure you make the best use of speakers’ limited time and takes the pressure off students to think up questions on the spot.

• Try to avoid asking questions that primarily relate to historical events, or where you could find out the answer easily elsewhere, as this does not make best use of the opportunity to find out about individual experience
• Ask students to think about the impact their questions may have on survivor speakers. This does not mean shying away from asking questions, simply that students should consider the speaker’s feelings and consider whether a particular question is appropriate before they ask it
• There are some memories that survivors may not be willing to discuss, either at all or with young people. Students should be prepared that, if they ask a particularly personal or difficult question, they may not get a direct answer. It is useful to talk about this with students afterwards and ask them to consider why speakers may not want to share particular memories
• Speakers may not always be able to answer your questions. If they can’t, they will take the question away and send a response to the lead teacher within a two-week period. Please note that any correspondence should take place with teachers rather than individual students
• Students often think of questions they would like to ask after the speaker has left. Most speakers are happy to respond to questions sent to them by email after their talk. Please check with the individual speaker on the day of your talk. Again, any correspondence should be via teachers rather than directly with students.
10. Additional resources
Our website, www.holocaustlearning.org, contains comprehensive resources to help you teach the Holocaust in your school:

• Filmed testimony of 12 Holocaust survivors telling their stories and reflecting on the impact of the Holocaust for themselves and their families. The films are split into chapters of between 3 and 8 minutes long with full transcripts available to download.
• A new Evidence section, being developed during 2013, which will contain high quality images of archive material from the International Tracing Service at Bad Arolsen. The evidence includes concentration camp record cards, transport records, prisoner lists and other documents relating to Nazi persecution of the survivors featured on the website. Documents can be enlarged and printed and English translations are provided for selected records.
• A Learning Resources section containing ideas for using the website in History, English, Citizenship and Religious Education lessons.
• A series of reflective pieces written by survivors, teachers, family members and academics on topics such as second and third generation perspectives, tracing the victims of the Holocaust, and remembering and commemorating the Holocaust.

In addition, the following sources might be useful to you in teaching the Holocaust effectively to students.

Holocaust memoirs
There are many Holocaust memoirs available and teachers will no doubt be aware of the better-known publications. The following were written by HSFA members and will help students understand survivors’ individual stories in more depth. Iby Knill’s book is stocked by or can be ordered from booksellers or from Amazon. Signed copies are available directly from Iby via her website, www.ibyknill.co.uk. The other three memoirs listed below were published by the Holocaust Centre in Nottinghamshire and are available from there.


Useful websites
The HSFA website, with filmed testimony from 12 survivors
www.holocaustlearning.org

Holocaust survivor Iby Knill’s website
www.ibyknill.co.uk

A film about the life of Holocaust survivor Arek Hersh
http://www.arekmovie.com/

The Shoah Foundation Institute, set up by Steven Spielberg to record and disseminate survivor testimony
http://sfi.usc.edu/

Beth Shalom (The Holocaust Centre), Nottinghamshire
www.holocaustcentre.net

The Holocaust Educational Trust
www.het.org.uk

The Anne Frank Trust
www.annefrank.org.uk

The Holocaust Education Development Programme
www.hedp.org.uk

The Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research
http://www.holocausttaskforce.org/index.php

Yad Vashem
http://www.yadvashem.org/

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
www.ushmm.org/

The London Jewish Cultural Centre
www.theholocaustexplained.org/

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust
www.hmd.org.uk

The Wiener Library
http://www.wienerlibrary.co.uk/

Holocaust Denial On Trial
www.hdot.org
The Ben Uri Art Collection’s Holocaust learning site
http://benuriholocaust.lgfl.org.uk/

The Association of Jewish Refugees
http://www.ajr.org.uk/

11. Feedback, comments and complaints
We welcome feedback about our service and would like to hear any comments you have about how we could improve our programme in future. We ask all teachers to please complete and return the feedback form that will be emailed to you after your speaker has visited.

We monitor all volunteer speakers and aim to ensure that we provide a consistent standard of delivery. If you have a complaint or comment about any aspect of our speaker programme, or about an individual speaker, please contact Lilian Black, HSFA Chair, on lilian.black@btconnect.com.
HSFA Speaker Request Form

Please use the form below to request a speaker. We will do our best to provide a survivor but due to the pressure on survivors’ time we may offer one of our trained volunteers instead.

Contact name: ...........................................  E-mail: ....................................................

School: ................................................................................................................................

Address including full postcode: ..........................................................................................

Contact Telephone Number: ............................................................

Subject Area Studied (if applicable): ...........................................................................

Year Group: ............  Size of Group: ............

Preferred date(s) and time(s) for speaker to attend:

1. ........................................................................................................................................

2. ........................................................................................................................................

3. ........................................................................................................................................

Please return form by email to Speaker Programme, HSFA, 411A Harrogate Road, Leeds LS17 7BY. Alternatively you can download an electronic (Word) copy of our speaker request form from http://holocaustlearning.org/about/speakers and return it by email to enquiries@holocaustlearning.org.

CONTACT DETAILS
For enquiries please email us at enquiries@holocaustlearning.org or phone 0113 2370494 (please note that our office is not staffed every day).