



The Holocaust Educational Trust

## **“What happened to the Jews of Hungary in 1944?”**

### **Introduction**

Even within the extraordinary history of the Holocaust the fate of the Jews of Hungary is quite remarkable, and learning about their story offers insights into the Nazi aims and policies in the latter stages of World War Two. Prior to the German occupation of March 1944, Jews in Hungary had been largely untouched by the Holocaust and the population of around 750,000 was the largest in Europe. However, after occupation and the instillation of the pro-German prime minister General Sztojay Hungarian Jewry experienced intense persecution. Indeed, in just four months some 437,000 Jews were ghettoized and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where a newly constructed railway spur brought them straight to the gas chambers. This large influx led to a massive intensification in killing, and in many ways contributed to the infamy of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Within such indiscriminate murder the individuality of the victims can easily be lost, and it is this particular issue which the lesson seeks to counter.

In itself, the following lesson does not constitute Holocaust education, but it does provide an example of how WW2history.com can be an invaluable resource to teachers delivering the Holocaust in schools. It is designed for use with pupils aged 13 and over, and has been primarily formulated in line with the National Curriculum for History Scheme of Work Unit 19: How did the Holocaust Happen? It can be used by teachers to meet the following requirements of the history programme of study for Key Stage 3:

Key Concepts:

1.1a, 1.2a, 1.3a, 1.4a, 1.5a

Key Processes: 2.1a, 2.1b, 2.2a, 2.2b, 2.3a, 2.3b

Range and Content: 3a, 3b, 3i, 3j

Curriculum Opportunities: 4a, 4d, 4e

This lesson could also be used by teachers wishing to make cross-curricular links to Religious Education, English, Citizenship for it can meet the following requirements of the programme of study for Key Stage 3:

### *Religious Education*

Key Concepts: 1.5a

Range and Content: 3i

Curriculum Opportunities: 4d, 4e

### *English*

Key Concepts: 1.1a, 1.1b, 1.2a, 1.4a, 1.4b, 1.4c

Key Processes: 2.1a, 2.1e, 2.1f, 2.1g, 2.1h, 2.1i, 2.2a, 2.2b, 2.2d, 2.2e, 2.2f, 2.3a, 2.3o, 2.3r, 2.3s

Range and Content: 3.1b, 3.1e, 3.3b, 3.3d

Curriculum Opportunities: 4.1b, 4.1c, 4.1e, 4.1f, 4.2a, 4.2c, 4.3a,

### *Citizenship*

Key Processes: 2.1c

Curriculum Opportunities: 4a, 4c, 4i, 4j

## **Aims and Learning Outcomes**

The lesson has two core aims:

- To establish knowledge and understanding of the fate of Hungarian Jewry
- To use the personal testimony of a Hungarian Jew as a point of access to the final stages of the Holocaust

By the end of the lesson, all pupils will have acquired knowledge and understanding of the fate of Hungarian Jewry in 1944. Most pupils will have identified the notability of the experience of the Hungarian Jews to the Holocaust, and begun to consider the human impact of these historical occurrences through engagement with survivor testimony. By way of this re-humanisation of the historical events, some pupils will have begun to consider some of the moral, ethical and philosophical questions to arise out of the Holocaust.

## **Materials**

For this lesson the minimum teachers will require is a subscription to the [WW2history.com](http://WW2history.com) website and a sufficient number of the question crib. It is suggested that this is photocopied up to A3 size.

## **Starter Activity**

- Using a data projector or interactive whiteboard, show the class the film “How did Auschwitz develop – 1944”. As a class discuss:

a) what reasons there may have been behind the construction of the railway spur

b) what was unusual about doctors being involved in selections

c) what the priorities of the Nazis at this time appear to have been. (I would bullet these three different points)

- Explain that the lesson will explore these issues and the fate of Hungarian Jewry through the testimony of Alice Lok Cahana.

## **Activity**

- Depending on your subscription and the availability of computers, play or ask pupils to listen to the audio of Alice Lok Cahana. Working individually or in pairs, ask pupils to complete the question crib on Alice’s experiences in Auschwitz. If pupils are not working with individual computers, the audio will need to be paused periodically to allow pupils to complete the table.

- Collect feedback on Alice’s testimony, using the questions on the crib as discussion points.

## **Plenary/Follow-up Activity**

- Depending on the availability of computers, choose one (or more) activities from the following options; using the question cribs and the website for information

a) Individually or in small groups, pupils create the front page of a newspaper, which includes both a report of Alice's experiences and an editorial comment on the importance of her story

b) Working in small groups or as a whole class, pupils produce a webpage for the school's intranet which focuses on Alice's story and highlights the lessons that can be derived from it and the Holocaust in general. The tasks required to construct the page will need to be divided among the group or the whole class. It may also be decided to include within the webpage a short filmed "television report" which relays Alice's testimony.