

Remembering the Holodomor

Presentation for teachers and students

- 10 descriptions of Holodomor memorial sites
- 2 exercises for students

Objectives

Thanks to this presentation you will be able to:

- read about different monuments of the Holodomor established in various countries
- learn to analyse monuments and memorials
- reflect on why and how the societies remember their past



Example slide

In this presentation you will find slides about 10 memory places.

All the places are described using the same template:

Photo



Madonna and Child

What does the monument look like? What is it about?

In the centre of Roman Kowal's composition is the figure of a mother and child, cast in bronze. The entire monument stands 4.5 metres tall, with a base made of black granite. It emphasises the loneliness and isolation from any external help during the Great Famine.

Unlike in other monuments, the figure of the woman with her child as portrayed by Kowal is not crying but rather, lowers her head in the face of an inescapable situation. She is alone in a trap from which there is no exit. She holds her child close, shielding the child with her right arm from the surrounding walls that are closing in on them.



Erected	24 June 1984
Creator	Roman Ivan Kowal
Originator	Winnipeg branch of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee (Ukrainian Canadian Congress)
Source of funding	Private donors

Inscription in English, French, and Ukrainian

'This monument was erected to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the famine-genocide in Ukraine of 1932-33, and to the eternal memory of over 7,000,000 innocent victims of forced starvation: the result of a ruthless policy decreed by the Soviet government in Moscow.'

Name of the memory place

What does the monument look like?
What is it about?

Here you will find a short description of the memory place, outlining its appearance and the elements that are worth noting. It will interpret the meaning of this memorial site and its message.

The table contains basic information about the memory place, including the creator, originator, the date it was erected and its source of funding.

Location of the memory place

The inscription on the monument.



The Broken Life Cycle

What does the monument look like? What is it about?

The monument design, in the shape of a circle made from polished aluminum and 2.5 metres in height, symbolises a human life broken in an unnatural way. The circle features hands made of steel, deformed and outstretched in a gesture pleading for salvation and an end to suffering.

This monument symbolises the devious twist of a political ideology and the range of human suffering and resistance to violence.



Erected	23 October 1983
Creator	Ludmilla Temertey
Originator	Ukrainian Canadian Professional and Business Club (UCPBC) of Edmonton
Source of funding	Private donors

Inscription in Ukrainian, English and French

‘In memory of the millions who perished in the genocidal famine inflicted upon Ukraine by the Soviet Regime in Moscow 1932–33.’

‘Let us all stand on guard against tyranny, violence and inhumanity.’

Other information

It was the first monument to the Holodomor located in a public space. The artist’s mother was a Holodomor survivor.



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Barrow of Sorrows

What does the monument look like? What is it about?

The monument appears as a mighty bell with thirty smaller bells attached to its lip in a number corresponding to the number of Ukraine’s regions. The monument combines Christian and other traditional forms of burial in Ukrainian culture. The monument was located on a burial mound, which was symbolically built on the model of a Cossack grave.

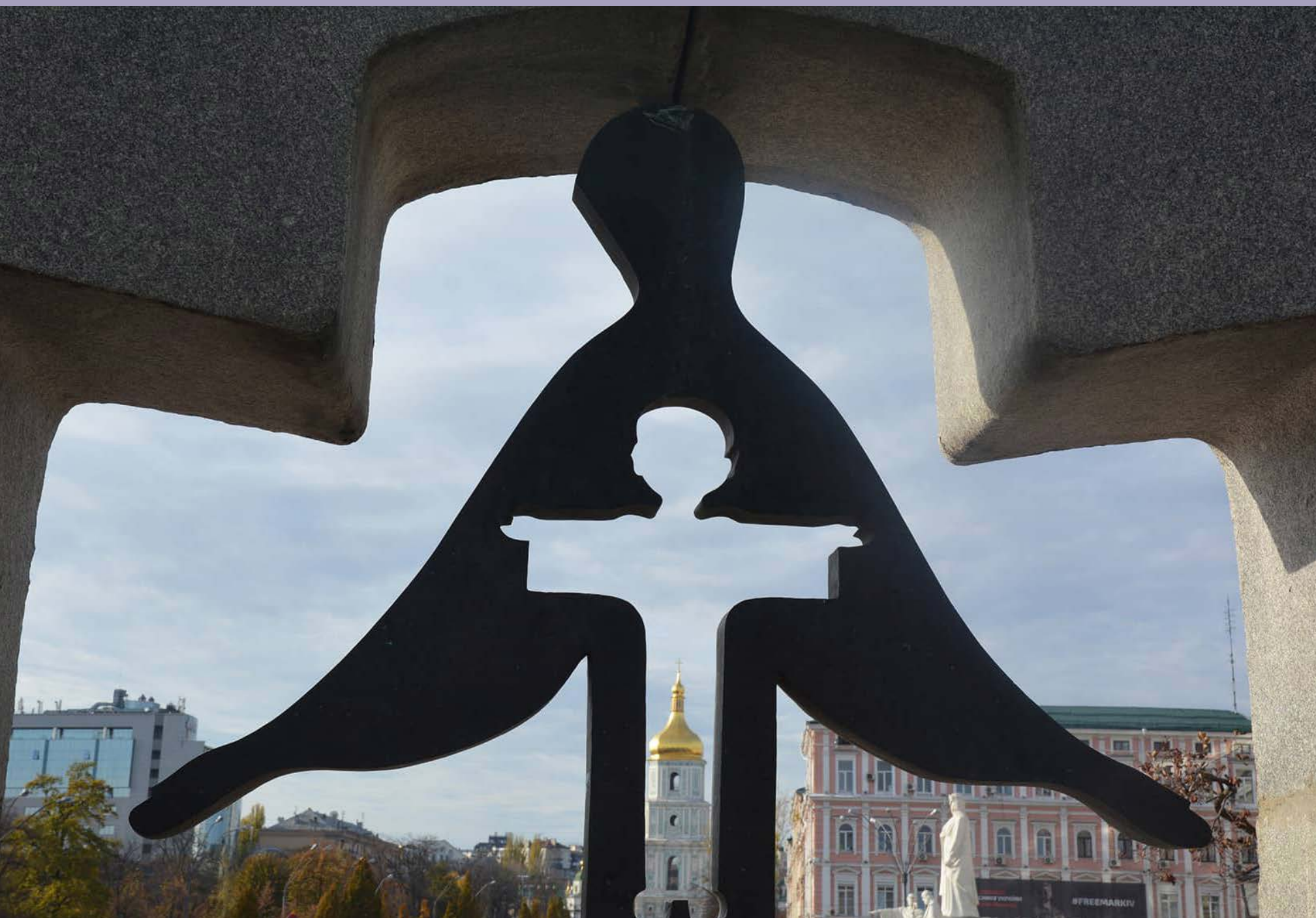
The symbol of the bell, widely employed by artists in designing Holodomor monuments, is an inseparable element of Christian places of worship. Here it becomes a symbol of the living historical memory of a nation that recalls its past.



Erected	11 September 1993 (to mark the 60th anniversary of the Holodomor)
Creator	Anatolii Ihnashchenko
Originator	The Ukrainian Cultural Foundation

Inscription in Ukrainian

‘The Holodomor – 1933: when one person departs, an entire world dies with them. When millions head off into the abyss, a whole galaxy then becomes extinct.’



The Holodomor monument at the Church of St Michael

What does the monument look like? What is it about?

The monument is a square stele* made from grey granite with the shape of a cross cut out of its centre. Within the cross-shaped space is a female figure made of metal; the shape of a child with outstretched arms has been cut out of her chest.

The earth on which the monument stands was brought from all regions of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Both figures are framed by the cross to highlight the martyrdom of death and annihilation during the Holodomor.



Inscription

'1932-33'



Other information

Many monuments inspired by this monument and faithfully reflecting its shape have been unveiled across Brazil, Paraguay, US, United Kingdom and Germany. One of them is a monument from Edinburgh, Scotland (dated 2017).

Why do you think this symbol has been repeated in so many places?

Erected	12 September 1993 (to mark the 60th anniversary of the Holodomor)
Creators	The monument was designed by Mykola Kysly and the sculpture was made by Vasyl Perevalsky.
Originator Source of funding	The Association of Researchers of the Famine-Genocide of 1932-33

*stele, stela - an upright stone slab or column typically with a commemorative inscription or relief design, often serving as a gravestone.



The Candle of Memory



Rushnyk, Ukrainian embroidered cloth

What does the monument look like? What is it about?

An imposing 30-metre-high monument in the shape of a candle, commonly referred to as the ‘Candle of Memory’. Its white surface has been made to look like a traditional Ukrainian embroidered cloth (‘rushnyk’, similar to the ones used in traditional wedding ceremonies).

Four black crosses are placed around the monument, resembling barbed wire. Additionally, golden storks are trapped within the crosses and crucified on them. The stork is very important in Ukrainian folk culture, symbolising the comfort of the home, peace and prosperity of the areas they inhabit. The colour gold stands for the riches of the Ukrainian countryside, and is often used to contrast with sombre elements representing the Holodomor.



Erected	22 November 2008
Creator	Anatolii Haydamaka
Originator	The President of Ukraine (Viktor Yushchenko)
Source of funding	State financial programme

Question

Why do you think the artist used a symbol of a trapped stork?

Other information

Memorial in Commemoration of the Holodomor-Genocide in Ukraine is Ukraine’s national museum and a centre devoted to the victims of the Holodomor.



Bitter Memories of Childhood

What does the monument look like? What is it about?

In the centre of this symbolic stone circle is a sculpture of a young girl. The girl holds five stalks of wheat as a symbol of the Law of Spikelets that criminalised the collecting of even a few straws. She stands barefooted on a stone plinth.

The girl's central placement can be interpreted as the death of a child sacrificed on the altar of history (which is a Christian interpretation). Certainly, the largest group of famine victims were infants and young children.



Erected	2008
Creator	Petro Drozdovskyi
Source of funding	State financial programme

The plinth is inscribed in gold lettering with the title of a poem by Taras Shevchenko

‘I mertvym, I zhyvym, i
nenarodzhenym zemliakam moïm
v Ukraïni i ne v Ukraïni moie
druzhnieie poslaniie.’

[‘To my fellow-countrymen, the
dead, the living and as yet unborn,
in Ukraine and not in Ukraine,
my brotherly appeal’].¹



Field of Wheat

What does the monument look like? What is it about?

At the centre of the National Holodomor Memorial is a bronze bas-relief sculpture entitled Field of Wheat.

Stretching across nine metres, highly articulated wheat heads and stalks gradually fade away, symbolising the confiscation of wheat. The dynamic transition from left to right of a wheat field disappearing might represent the emptiness left by the lives lost in the Holodomor or it could reflect the artificiality of the famine. The inscription ‘Holodomor 1932-1933’ can be read at the base of the wheat stalks. The sculpture is placed within arm’s reach to encourage touching, resulting in the polishing of the bronze surface.

Inscription ‘Holodomor 1932-1933
In memory of millions of innocent victims of a man-made famine in Ukraine, engineered and implemented by Stalin’s totalitarian regime.’



Erected	2015
Creator	Larysa Kurylas
Originator	National Park Service of the USA and the Ukrainian government
Source of funding	State financial programme

Other information
Larysa Kurylas is the first artist to draw attention to the cultural destruction caused by the Holodomor. To symbolise the Soviet regime’s attack on Ukrainian culture and the Ukrainian cultural elite, she included granite panels on the back of the “Field of Wheat” that feature a geometric design derived from a folk-inspired textile pattern created by the prominent Kyiv artist Vasyl Krychevsky in 1933.

Memorial in Commemoration of Holodomor Victims

What does the monument look like? What is it about?

The monument is located on the side wall of the Greek-Catholic Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

The circular shape of the bas-relief can be interpreted in many ways. The location of this memorial in a church may evoke Eucharistic symbolism, the Christian ritual of breaking the host and Holy Communion.

Inside the circle are two interlinked female figures (a mother and daughter) with blurred faces positioned within the cut-out shape of a cross. The blurred faces prevent identification with a single person, portraying instead the Holodomor’s mass of victims.



Erected	2008
Creator	Stefan Dousa
Originator	Consulate General of Ukraine in Kraków
Source of funding	

Inscription in Ukrainian, Polish and English

‘In memory of the victims of the Great Famine (Holodomor) 1932–1933 in Ukraine.’

Lest We Forget

What does the monument look like? What is it about?

The monument is made of black granite. Its appearance resembles a grave monument, referring to the tradition of building symbolic graves.

It combines the private experience of loss with the tradition of remembering the dead within local communities (rural parishes). Although it is built in Australia, it resembles monuments erected in independent Ukraine.

Inscription in Ukrainian and English

‘In memory of seven million Ukrainians who perished in 1932–33 as a result of famine imposed by the Russian-Bolshevik regime in Ukraine. Lest we forget.’

Other information

Alexandrov, who donated \$5,000 AUD to the project, did not live to see its unveiling. The monument’s design was drawn up free of charge by George (Yurko) Himmelreich, an Australian artist.



Erected	23 October 1983
Creator	Ludmilla Temertey
Originator	Ivan Alexandrov
Source of funding	(private donation)

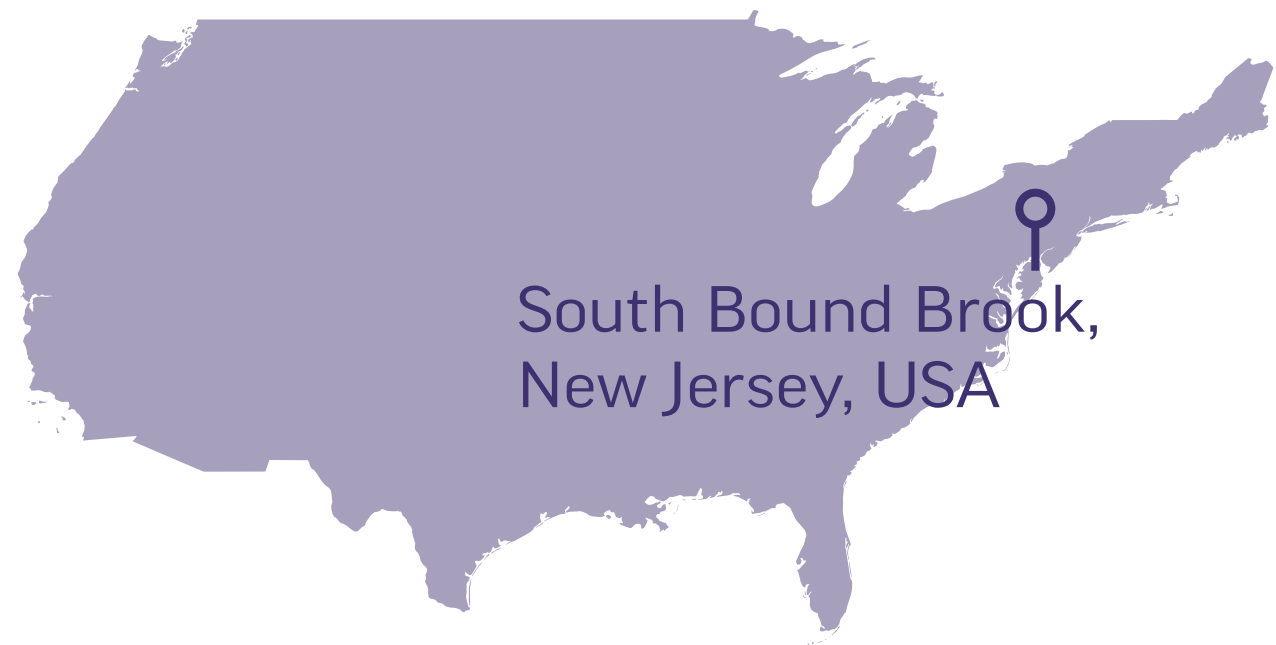


St Andrew Memorial Church in New Jersey

What does the monument look like? What is it about?

This memorial church was a symbol of Ukrainian church architecture, built in the Ukrainian Baroque style. The aim of building a memorial church was to remind future generations of the Ukrainian diaspora of their national roots and national heritage.

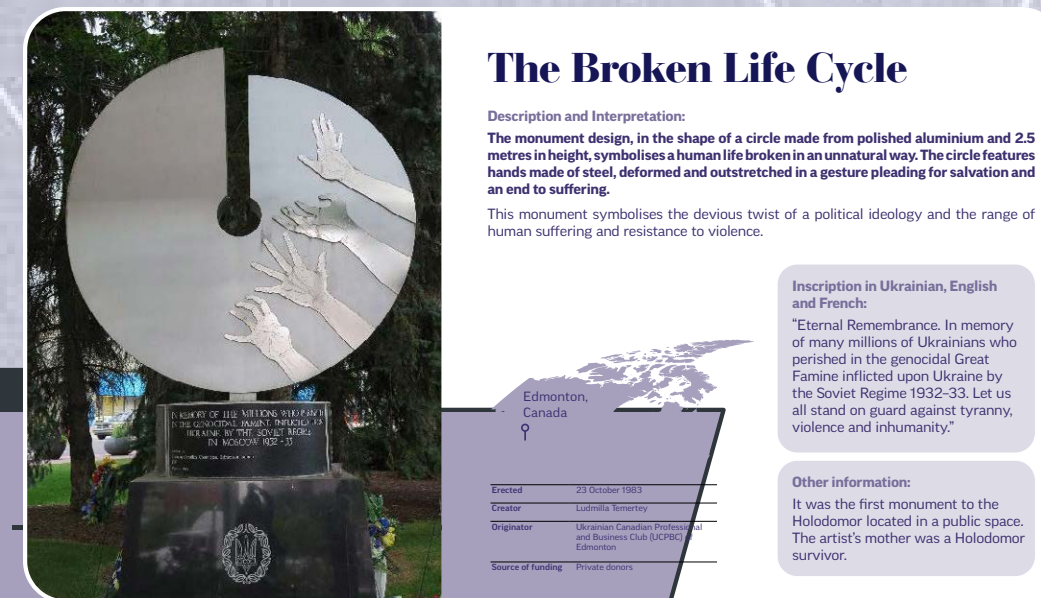
From 1965 to 1993 St Andrew Memorial Church was the central place of memory of the Holodomor in the USA, erected by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in memory of all the Ukrainians killed by the Communist regime, those who gave their lives for Ukrainian independence, and all the holy places destroyed in Soviet Ukraine.



Erected	1965 (consecration of the church)
Creator	Yurii Kodak
Originator	Archbishop Mstyslav Skrypnyk
Source of funding	Private donors

Exercise 1

Analysing a Holodomor memorial or monument



1. Look over the presentation and then chose one memory place to analyse. In the notebook or laptop, answer the following questions, using what you have observed in the photos and the information in the descriptions:

- What prompted you to choose this memorial to analyse?
- Who is the intended audience for the memorial?
- What, specifically, is the memorial representing or commemorating?
- What story or message do you think the artist was trying to convey to the intended audience? What might the memorial be leaving out?
- How does the memorial convey its intended story or message? What materials did the artist use? What kind of experience did the artist create for the audience?
- Whose memories, whose point of view and whose values and perspectives are being represented (in terms of groups, nations and people)?

2. Talk about your observations in small groups.

Exercise 2

Design a monument or memorial for a significant event in the history of the place where you live (country/city/village).

1. Take some time to reflect on what you have learned about this event and what you think is the most important thing to remember.
2. Create a plan for your memorial. Your plan should answer the following questions:
 - What idea do you want the design to convey?
 - What audience will it attract?
 - How will your memorial communicate your vision of the monument or memorial?
 - What specific materials, forms, imagery or words will it include?
3. After you've thought it over, create a project – it can be a sketch, a 3D-model made using graphic design software or a sculpture made from clay or plasticine.
4. To finish, give your design a title and write a brief description, or artist's statement, to accompany it.





About the author

Wiktoria Kudela-Świątek is an associate professor at the Institute of History and Archival Studies at the Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland. Her academic interests focus on interdisciplinary critical thinking and writing about the past, especially memory studies, oral history and visual history. She is the author of five books and more than forty academic articles. Her last book is 'Eternal Memory: The Monuments and Memorials of the Holodomor' (CIUS Press & Księgarnia Akademicka: Toronto-Edmonton-Kraków 2021).

Sources:

- Kudela-Świątek, W., 'Eternal Memory: Monuments and Memorials of the Holodomor', transl. G. R. Torr, introd. F. E. Sysyn (Edmonton-Toronto-Cracow: University of Alberta, University of Toronto and Księgarnia Akademicka, 2021)
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