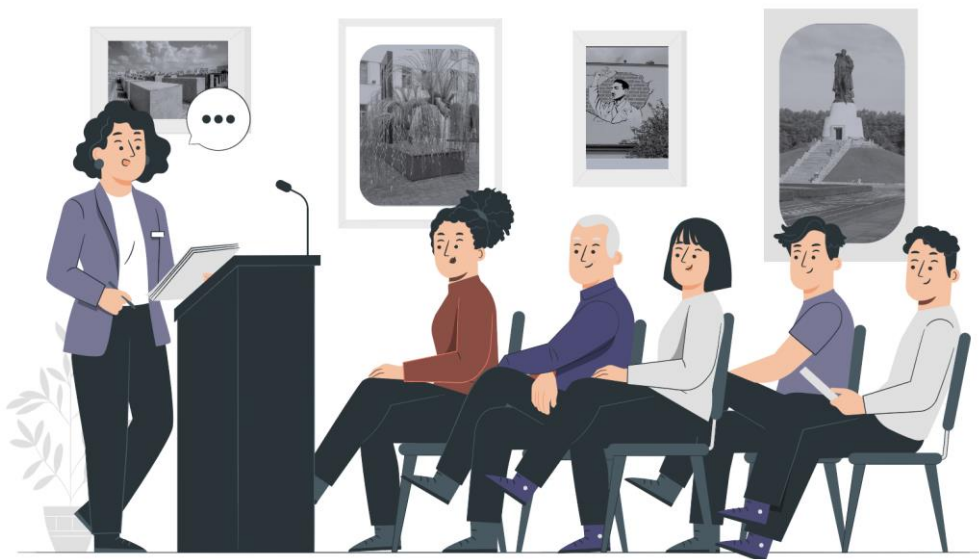


Commemorating the Victims of the Holocaust

Maria Pawlak



Introduction

This lesson scenario is intended for students aged 14 and above. The subject matter discussed allows for its use in interdisciplinary classes in history, culture, native language, media education, ethics and social sciences. The material has been divided into three parts: the lesson scenario proper, a set of source materials and a worksheet with exercises to be done during the class, in a group or individually.

Instructions

This scenario contains three worksheets with attachments. The suggested lesson structure can be modified. It will be useful to ensure Internet access and allow the students to use mobile devices.

Teaching objectives

The student will:

- learn about various ways of commemorating historical events and examples of memorial sites,¹
- become familiar with selected ways of commemorating the Jewish community in Poland, Hungary, Czechia and Germany.

¹ In this scenario, we use the terms memorial site, remembrance site or commemoration interchangeably and define them in a simplified manner as places in public space having the purpose of commemorating historical events or persons. The classic definition of a site of memory (*lieu de memoire*) has been proposed by Pierre Nora.

Skills developed

The student will:

- improve his/her skills of reading and analysing historical sources,
- develop the ability to work in a team.

Teaching aids

- a projector
- printed worksheets with attachments
- a phone/PC with Internet access

Worksheets and attachments:

1. **Worksheet 1** – Memorial sites (a puzzle)
2. **Worksheet 2** – Memorial sites
3. **Worksheet 3** – Memorial site (to be completed)
4. **Attachment 1** – Time axis
5. **Attachment 2** – Map



The course of the lesson

1. Present the teaching objectives of the lesson to the students. Divide them into pairs after having prepared **Worksheet 1** for each pair: cut the sheet along the lines and hand it out in the form of pieces of a puzzle to be put together. Ask the students to match the name, photo and description of the site. Once the task has been completed, answer these questions together (for this task, the students can use phones with internet access):
 - Where are those sites located? Who or what do they commemorate?
 - Can you give some examples of other types of memorial sites?
 - Are historical events always commemorated where they took place?

In your commentary, draw their attention to the fact that memorial sites are not just plaques and monuments but also entire spaces, green areas or artistic installations. They can appear where historical events took place (e.g. Tchorrek memorial plaques in Warsaw), but also elsewhere, for instance in the form of a representative square.

2. Divide the class into four groups and provide each with a description and a photo of one of the memorial sites from **Worksheet 2**. The students' task will be to read the description and analyse the photo of a single site of remembrance. They can supplement their knowledge with information available online. Having read the description, they can now answer the questions on the worksheet.

3. Ask the class to discuss their work together. Let each group describe the memorial site they have analysed in their own words. Together reflect on what connects those commemorations – noting the similarities and the differences. Discuss the answers they have given to the questions.

Pay attention to the different emotions that may accompany visitors to memorial sites.

The emotions felt by the students should not be divided into good or bad, yet it is worth stressing that at many sites of remembrance you should show respect for those commemorated as well as the visitors.

4. Then the group's representative uses the time axis to show when the site described by them was created, see **Attachment 1**.
5. Once the task has been completed, ask the students to mark the memorial sites they have learnt about during the lesson on the map of Europe, using **Attachment 2**.
6. Place the following statements on the board or distribute them as print outs:
 - It is still necessary to create Holocaust memorial sites.
 - Holocaust remembrance sites are symbolic cemeteries of Holocaust victims.
 - There should be memorial sites commemorating Holocaust victims in every town or village in Europe where Jews were killed.
 - Memorial sites have an impact on the local community.
 - Memorial sites should primarily provide knowledge about the events (e.g. in the form of plaques) rather than focus on symbols or modern art.
 - In my opinion there should be more memorial sites devoted to individuals.

The students who agree should raise their hands. Those willing to speak up may say why they are for or against a given statement. Try to listen to all their contributions together.

Before starting the exercise, ask the students about what elements are needed to create the best debating culture? Give some examples: we respect the opinions of others; we do not offend others; we ask questions if we do not understand something; we do not pronounce judgements or criticise others.

7. To conclude, ask the students this question: how and where is the Jewish community commemorated in your neighbourhood? Once the task has been completed, collect their answers. As homework, the students can complete – on their own – **Worksheet 3** with selected examples of memorial sites located close to where they live.




Additional assignment, idea for a groupwork project or homework:


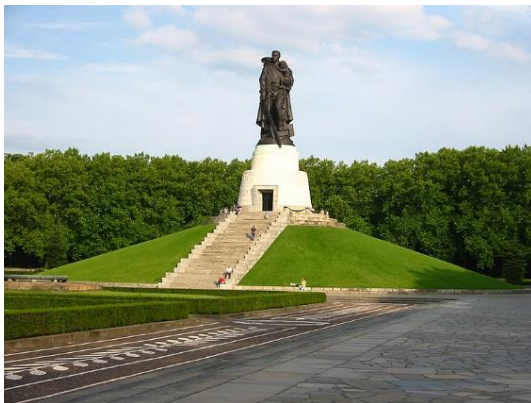

Ask the students whether the examples discussed during the lesson commemorate individuals (specific people) or groups. Ask them to reflect why commemorations mostly focus on groups and not individuals. Write the word **Stolpersteine** on the board, and then ask the students to work in pairs trying to find information on that kind of commemoration. Provide each pair with a blank **Worksheet 3** (about a memorial site, to be completed). Once the exercise has been completed, ask a few willing pairs to read out the results of their work. Ask them what in their opinion is the difference between this example and the one they worked on during the lesson.





Content editor: Urszula Bijoś | Translation: Mikołaj Sekrecki | Editor: Caroline Brooke Johnson

Worksheet 1

Museum	House of Terror Museum, Budapest	Commemorates the victims of totalitarianism in Hungary and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.	 <p>House of Terror Museum, Budapest Source: Wikipedia, photo ?, public domain</p>
Space	Berlin Wall Memorial (Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer)	Commemorates the division of Berlin into east and west by the Berlin Wall and the deaths that occurred there.	 <p>Berlin Wall Memorial Source: Wikipedia, photo Matthias Süßen, CC BY-SA 4.0</p>
Monument	National Monument on Vítkov Hill, Prague	Commemoration of the Czech resistance movement during the First World War.	 <p>National Monument on Vítkov Hill, Prague Source: Wikipedia, photo Michal Kmínek, CC BY-SA 3.0</p>


Mural	Mural of Marek Edelman, Warsaw	Commemorates Marek Edelman – the last leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.	 <p>Mural of Marek Edelman, Warsaw Source: Wikipedia, photo Mateusz Opasiński, CC BY-SA 3.0</p>
Cemetery and monument	Soviet War Memorial in Treptower Park, Berlin	Commemoration and cemetery of Red Army soldiers who died during the Second World War.	 <p>Soviet War Memorial in Treptower Park, Berlin Source: Wikipedia, photo Andreas Steinhoff – (§59 German co. law)</p>
Museum	Museum of Communism, Prague	Museum dedicated to presenting an account of the post-Second World War Communist regime in Czechoslovakia in general and Prague in particular.	 <p>Museum of Communism, Prague Source: Wikipedia, photo Henry Mühlpfordt, CC BY-SA 3.0</p>

<p>Plaque</p>	<p>Tchorek memorial plaques in Warsaw</p>	<p>Commemoration of the Second World War sites of struggle and martyrdom in Warsaw.</p>	 <p>Tchorek plaque, Warsaw Source: Wikipedia, photo Thunderman83, Public Domain</p>
<p>Square</p>	<p>Heroes 'Square (Hősök tere), Budapest</p>	<p>One of Budapest's major squares, noted for its iconic Millennium Monument with statues featuring the Seven Chieftains of the Magyars and other important Hungarian national leaders, as well as the Memorial Stone of Heroes.</p>	 <p>Heroes 'Square, Budapest Source: Wikipedia, photo Andrew Shiva, CC BY-SA 4.0</p>

Worksheet 2 – Memorial sites

Read the description of the memorial site and answer the questions below.


GROUP 1

Berlin	Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe
Photograph	 <p>Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe Source: Wikimedia Commons, photo Wolfgang Staudt, CC BY-SA 2.0</p>
Date of establishment	built in 2003-2005, unveiled in 2005
Creator(s)	Architect Peter Eisenman
Location/address	Centre of Berlin, near the Brandenburg Gate, the Tiergarten park and the Reichstag
Originator(s)	In 1988 journalist and activist Lea Rosh suggested that a monument be erected in Kreuzberg, Berlin. In January 1989, she – together with the historian Eberhard Jäckel – published the first appeal of the civic initiative Berlin Perspective, calling for the construction of a memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe.

Description	The monument consists of 2,711 closely arranged concrete hollow stelae of varying heights (from 5 to 20 m.), placed in an area of 19,000 sq. m. There are 112 flat stelae placed around the periphery of the square. The site is enclosed by trees. Underneath the monument is an underground museum – a memorial chamber and bookshop. During the first year, it was visited by 3.5 million people. It remains one of the most visited memorials in Berlin.
Source of funding	Government of the Federal Republic of Germany
Other information	<p>The first decisions regarding the construction of the memorial date back to the early 1990s. A competition for its construction was announced as early as 1995, but the winning design was not turned into reality.</p> <p>Near the memorial, in the Tiergarten park, there are two other memorials to the victims of the Second World War – the Memorial to the Persecuted Homosexuals under Nazism (2008) and the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of Nazism (2012).</p>

Questions	Answers
What emotions can this form of commemoration arouse?	
Write down how you think people should behave at this memorial site.	


GROUP 2

Prague	Pinkas Synagogue
Photograph	 <p>Pinkas Synagogue Source: Wikimedia Commons, photo Vadim Zhivotovsky, CC BY 3.0</p>
Date of establishment	1959
Creator(s)	Artists Jiří John and Václav Boštík
Location/address	Jewish quarter of Josefov
Originator(s)	Hana Volavkova – art historian and museum director
Description	<p>A project by two modern art creators is on display inside the Pinkas Synagogue in Prague. The walls inside the synagogue show the handwritten names and surnames, along with biographical dates, of 77,297 Bohemian and Moravian Jews who perished during the Second World War. Furthermore, the space traditionally occupied by the <i>Aron ha-Kodesh</i> (an ornamental chamber in the synagogue that houses the Torah scrolls) features a list of the death and concentration camps where the persecuted died. Today, in addition to commemoration, the building serves as a museum. Its permanent exhibition features, among other things, drawings by children living in the Terezín (Theresienstadt) ghetto.</p>
Source of funding	Budget of the Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia in the 1950 and 1960s)

Other information	In the 1960s, the synagogue was closed due to problems with the dampness of the walls and flooding. After 1968, the communist authorities hostile to all things Jewish did not want to financially support the renovation of the building. It was only after its restoration in 1995 that the building was re-opened to the public. In 2002 the building was once again damaged by a flood.
Historical note:	<p>During the Second World War, the Pinkas Synagogue was closed but not destroyed by the Germans. It survived the war thanks to being acquired by the Central Jewish Museum, which was established in 1942 at the initiative of Karel Stein, the chairman of the Department of Provincial Affairs of the Jewish Community in Prague. The Nazis approved of the project, possibly seeing benefits in the preservation of precious items for their own ends. The Pinkas Synagogue served as a storehouse of historically valuable liturgical objects, books and archival records that were collected and meticulously documented by the Jewish museum staff. In total, almost 213,000 objects taken from the Jewish communities in Bohemia and Moravia were saved from destruction and are now part of the Jewish Museum in Prague.</p> <p>Source: https://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/info/about-us/history-of-the-museum/ Leo Pavlát, The Jewish Museum in Prague during the second world war; article available on JSTOR.</p>

Questions	Answers
What emotions can this form of commemoration arouse?	
Write down how you think people should behave at this memorial site.	


GROUP 3

Warsaw	Ringelblum Archive commemorative monument
Photograph	 <p>Ringelblum Archive commemorative monument Fot. M. Pawlak</p>
Date of establishment	April 2021
Creator(s)	Architect Łukasz Mieszkowski and art historian Marcin Urbanek
Location/ address	28 Nowolipki (once no 68), Muranów, Warsaw
Originator(s)	Muranów Station and Association of the Jewish Historical Institute
Description	<p>‘We wanted the commemoration to have a modernist and minimalist form, and an abstract yet clear symbolism.</p> <p>A cube of glass rests on a glass lid, closing the opening in the ceiling of the chamber. The lid allows one to look safely into the depths of the chamber. The cube is at the same time the place where we propose to place a photocopy of Graber’s will – a material artefact symbolising the typescripts, ephemeral prints or posters saved in the Underground Archive.</p> <p>To ensure that no other solid object competes with the illuminated glass cube rising above ground level, we have placed the text of the memorial on granite slabs, the rhythm of which leads visitors towards the memorial.’</p> <p>Łukasz Mieszkowski and Marcin Urbanek Creators of the commemoration project</p>

Source of funding	40 donors from Poland and abroad
Other information	In Warsaw, an exhibition was created at the Jewish Historical Institute in 2017 to tell the story of the creation of the Archive, its discovery and the history of the people associated with it.
Historical note:	<p>The Warsaw Ghetto Archive was created at the initiative of the historian Emanuel Ringelblum, who began collecting evidence of the everyday life of Jews in Warsaw. After the ghetto was closed, a group of researchers expanded to include literary and social activists and came to be known as Oneg Shabbat. They collected documents, announcements, private records, memoirs, accounts of displaced persons, programmes of cultural events and the press. Furthermore, the Oneg Shabbat conducted surveys among the Jewish population and compiled data on the extermination of Jewish communities throughout Poland. Their work resulted in reports to the Polish Government in London, which informed the authorities in exile about the murders at Treblinka, among other places. Members of the Oneg Shabbat hid the collected materials in metal boxes and milk cans. They buried them in three parts in the cellars of the house in 1942 and 1943. In September 1946, the first part of the archive was unearthed, the second was discovered by chance in December 1950 and the third has not been found to this day. All found materials are in the care of the Jewish Historical Institute.</p>

Questions	Answers
What emotions can this form of commemoration arouse?	
Write down how you think people should behave at this memorial site.	

GROUP 4

Budapest	Holocaust Tree of Life Memorial
Photograph	 <p>Holocaust Tree of Life Memorial Fot. M. Pawlak</p>
Date of establishment	1991
Creator(s)	Imre Varga
Location/address	District VII, near the Jewish cemetery, the Great Synagogue and the Jewish Museum (Dohany Utca 2)
Originator(s)	The Emanuel Foundation for Hungarian Culture
Description	The centrepiece of the monument is a willow-tree made of steel, which bears the names of Jewish residents of the city on its leaves. In the sunlight, the leaves look like water droplets from a distance. In the wind, the leaves rustle and produce sounds; for some, it sounds like a melody. The memorial was the first commemoration of Holocaust victims in Budapest.
Source of funding	The monument has been founded by the Emanuel Foundation for Hungarian Culture, established by Hollywood star Tony Curtis (descendant of Hungarian Jews who emigrated to the USA).

Other information	The Holocaust Memorial Centre in Budapest was established in 2004 with funding from the state budget. Part of the facility is housed in a former synagogue and part in a purpose-built building.
Historical note:	<p>Since 1919, Hungary's political leader had been the authoritarian Admiral Miklós Horthy. The country was allied with the German Reich even before the outbreak of the Second World War. Already between 1938 and 1941, anti-Jewish legislation was enacted which excluded Jews from the economic life of the country and limited their freedoms.</p> <p>In 1941, Hungary got involved in military operations on the side of the Axis Powers. At the time, about 860,000 Jews lived in Hungary and the territories it had annexed. They now became the target of the government's further discriminatory policies.</p> <p>In Hungary, the first mass action against Jews took place in 1941. Later, in 1942, Hungarian soldiers murdered about 700 Jews and over 2,500 Serbs in Novi Sad (in Hungarian-occupied northern Serbia). Nevertheless, Jews in Hungary were relatively safe at the time. In fact, the country had become a safe haven for Jewish refugees from many countries occupied by Nazi Germany. The situation changed dramatically in 1944 when the country came under German occupation. The Germanophile Döme Sztójay became Prime Minister and implemented [a] harsh anti-Jewish policy.</p> <p>Jews from outside Budapest were confined to ghettos and deported to KL Auschwitz between April and July 1944 on the orders of the senior SS officer Adolf Eichmann. Most of the 437,000 deportees perished in the gas chambers immediately upon arrival at the camp. On 6 July 1944, Miklós Horthy suspended transports which were to leave Hungary. From October, on the orders of the new Prime Minister Ferenc Szálasi, [the] Jewish workforce was marched on foot to the German border and handed over, mainly to work on fortifications.</p> <p>In November 1944, some 70,000 Budapest Jews were confined to the ghetto, where many died of cold, hunger and disease. 30,000 Jews were enlisted in "labour brigades" and deported to Germany, whereas about 20,000 lived in designated houses outside the ghetto (known as [an] "international ghetto") which embassies of neutral countries had labelled as enjoying immunity. It is estimated that about 250,000 Hungarian Jews survived the war, including about almost 35,000 using false papers or else hiding in Budapest. They were helped by diplomats, ordinary people – some connected to the ruling regime – and members of the clergy. International Jewish organisations also offered indirect assistance.</p> <p>Source: Between Life and Death: Stories of Rescue During the Holocaust (https://enrs.eu/between-life-and-death)</p>


Questions	Answers
<p>What emotions can this form of commemoration arouse?</p>	
<p>Write down how you think people should behave at this memorial site.</p>	

Worksheet 3

Stolpersteine	Description
Date of establishment	
Creator(s)	
Location/ address	
Originator(s)	
Description	
Source of funding	
Historical note:	

Questions	Answers
What emotions can this form of commemoration arouse?	
Write down how you think people should behave at this memorial site.	

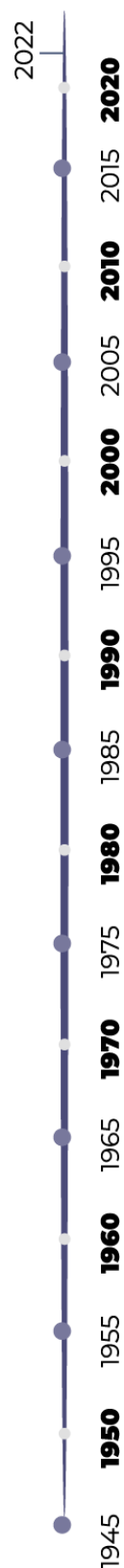
Worksheet – answers

France	Stolpersteine
Photograph	 <p>Stolpersteine in Strasbourg, France Photo U. Bijoš</p>
Date of establishment	Originally, the streets of Cologne in 1995
Creator(s)	Artist Gunter Demnig and local activists
Location/address	Europe, 20 countries, such as Germany (Berlin 6,000, Hamburg 5,000 and Cologne 2,000), Poland (Oświęcim, Wrocław, Słubice, Zamość and Szczecin), Italy, Norway, Czechia, Ukraine, the Netherlands, Hungary, Belgium and Austria
Originator(s)	German artist Gunter Demnig was the creator of the name (he continues to support the projects of the newly created Stolpersteine in various European cities)

Description	The Stolpersteine are brass plaques embedded in cobblestones or the pavement. They show the names and biographical dates, as well as the circumstances of the death of individuals killed during the Holocaust. The plaques are individual memorials placed where the person lived before deportation. The people inscribed on them are victims of Nazism – not only Jews, but also Roma and Sinti, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals and people with disabilities.
Source of funding	Grassroots initiatives/individual sponsors
Other information	There has been controversy surrounding the Stolpersteine, with opponents of this form of commemoration believing that metal plaques on the pavement are not a worthy commemoration of the victims.

Questions	Answers
What emotions can this form of commemoration arouse?	
Write down how you think people should behave at this memorial site.	

Attachment 1



Attachment 2

