

Holocaust Memorial Day 2026

Ideas for 2026

Introduction

Every year we mark Holocaust memorial day on the 27th of January, the day that the Auschwitz Concentration camp was first liberated in 1945. But Holocaust Memorial Day is about more than just the horrors experienced in the Auschwitz Concentration camp; it seeks to remember the suffering of people in genocides across the globe, and throughout the 20th century. It helps us to learn lessons about how these horrific events can take place, and what we can do to prevent them from happening in the future.

Specifically, Holocaust Memorial Day focusses on the Holocaust which took place in the period 1938 – 1945 in Europe, The Cambodian Genocide which took place in the period 1975 – 1979 under the Khmer Rouge, The Rwandan Genocide of 1994, The Bosnian Genocide of 1995 and the Genocide which took place in Darfur in 2003 – 2005.

Bridging Generations

Every Year the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust nominate a theme for Holocaust Memorial Day events. These are very carefully thought of and offer a great way to focus the work that you do with your pupils.

This year's theme is "Bridging Generations" which is as always an excellent choice giving us a wide range of opportunities for focussing our work with our pupils. The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust suggest that we can use the theme to remind ourselves that "The responsibility of Remembrance doesn't end with survivors – it lives on through their children and their grandchildren and through all of us" – The theme of Bridging Generations reminds us of the crucial role that the next generation has in preserving the memory of genocides and ensuring that they are passed into the future so that generations in the future we can still remember the lessons that these horrific events taught us.

But what does that mean for us as teachers? The Lancashire Education Inclusion: Stronger Communities Team really like the idea of focussing on The Windermere Children, a group of children evacuated from Concentration Camps after the second world war and relocated to Windermere where they were given space and support to recover from their trauma and build a new life for themselves. We have some great ideas for how you could use the theme of Bridging Generations and the history of The Windermere children to work with your pupils on Holocaust Memorial Day and in the lead up to it in 2026...

The Windermere Children

Introduction

In the summer of 1945, a remarkable group of young people arrived in the Lake District, seeking safety and the chance to rebuild their lives. Known today as The Windermere Children, these were Jewish children who had survived unimaginable horrors during the Second World War, including the concentration camps of Nazi Europe. They were brought to the beautiful quiet surroundings of Windermere as part of a government initiative to offer sanctuary and hope. Here in the North West, far from the devastation they had endured, they began the slow process of healing—learning English, playing football by the lakeside, and rediscovering what it meant to be children again.

Among them were children like Ben Helfgott, who had lost almost his entire family, and Arek Hersh, who had endured years in Auschwitz and other camps. For these young survivors, the quiet beauty of Windermere was a world away from barbed wire and hunger. Their story reminds us how communities in our region continue to open their doors to those escaping persecution, offering not just shelter but dignity and hope. In exploring their experiences, we can reflect on the enduring importance of compassion and welcome - values that remain as relevant to the children and families in Lancashire today as they were to in 1945.

Lesson and teaching ideas

Key Stage 1 and 2

With Key Stage one and two pupils we are mostly interested in using The Windermere Children as a way of helping the children to explore how we could make people who have escaped war feel welcomed. We do this in three stages, the first using the story *The Journey* (by Francesca Sanna) to help pupils understand how it feels to have to flee your home, the second helping children understand the context and area of The Lake District and what it must have been like for the Windermere Children to arrive there and the last asking children to imagine how they would make sure that The Windermere Children felt safe and welcomed in their new home. You could present these as three separate lessons or blended into one session depending on your class and context.

The Journey (by Francesca Sanna) is a great story that focuses on a child having to leave everything behind travelling miles to somewhere unfamiliar. Start by reading and discussing the story with your children, particularly focussing on how it would feel to have to leave everything behind and go somewhere new.

You can then broaden the discussion to The Lake District – some pupils in the class may be unfamiliar with The Lake District while others may visit regularly, so you could present some photographs of Windermere and the area around and discuss any experiences your children may have of the area. Focus particularly on how people go there on holiday because it is quiet and peaceful. You can then explain to the children that after the Second World War, a group of children called "The Windermere Children" were rescued and brought to The Lake District so that they could recover from having to escape, just like the child in *The Journey*. How do you

think that might have felt for them and what kinds of things do you think they would have done when they got there?

Finally, we focus on how we could make The Windermere Children feel welcomed and safe when they arrived in The Lake District. This is a great opportunity to look at how you can make sure other children who might join your class from elsewhere feel safe and welcomed, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, Refugees and Asylum Seekers and other children who might be new to your school and community. You could do this through a roleplay activity looking at how we can greet a new member of the class, or you could put together a class "manual" for how we greet new members of the class. You could even look at an art activity putting yourself in the places of the children at a school in Windermere who are welcoming the children evacuated to the area.

Key Stage 3 & 4

At Key Stage 3 and 4 we recommend reading *After the War* by Tom Palmer as part of their English Sessions (<https://amzn.eu/d/a6af4Qo>) to ensure that they have a good understanding of the subject matter and the context of The Windermere Children.

We spent ages trying to come up with clever lesson plans and ideas about using the resources with your pupils, but if we're honest the UCL lesson pack by the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education (available for free here: <https://holocausteducation.org.uk/lessons/open-access/lesson-materials-to-support-after-the-war-a/>) is so good that trying to imitate or better it

You could also watch the 2020 film "The Windermere Children" (<https://amzn.eu/d/esTVRFd>) with your pupils, and then use this as a springboard to using the lesson plans and materials from the UCL Centre for Holocaust Research.

Useful Links

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zfjsgpg8> - BBC Bitesize discusses the Windermere Children. Well written for pupils. Sadly the documentary and series aren't available on iPlayer at the moment.

[The Windermere Children - Historic UK](#) – This is a very detailed and well written account of the experiences and context of The Windermere Children. You could even use it with your pupils with a bit of work!

<https://amzn.eu/d/a6af4Qo> - The Windermere Children is a great and highly rated film from 2020 about the experiences of The Windermere Children. It's available on DVD or as an Amazon Prime rental/purchase and at 88 minutes it's reasonably practical to fit watching the whole film into a session. Also great for getting a (slightly dramatised!) insight into the story of The Windermere Children.

<https://amzn.eu/d/1ctNfOC> - *After the War* is a fictionalised but very historically accurate story of three children who survive the concentration camps of Nazi Germany and were brought to Windermere to recover. It's beautifully written and engaging for upper KS2 and KS3 pupils.



<https://holocausteducation.org.uk/lessons/open-access/lesson-materials-to-support-after-the-war-a/> - A fantastic and free set of lesson plans and resources produced by the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education for use with Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils. Highly recommended!