

## EDUCATORS' NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

UK Jewish Film's *Speak Out* resource is designed to promote discussion and critical analysis of films set during the Holocaust. The suggested films have been chosen because of their relevance for young people, and to bring some of these lesser-known stories to wider audiences. The activities and discussion questions are designed to encourage young people to be active, critical viewers of media rather than passive recipients.

No one story whether it is told on film, as audio or in print can capture the vast Holocaust narrative. Our aim with this resource is to stimulate discussion and historical enquiry. We want to encourage and facilitate conversations in which young people feel informed and confident to speak out against antisemitism, racism and discrimination.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It is essential when exploring films set in the past educators establish a reliable historical context. Without doing this, some of the characters, scenarios and stories represented in the films can be very misleading. As a starting point, we recommend the Holocaust Educational Trust. The Teaching Resource section of their website at [www.het.org.uk/login](http://www.het.org.uk/login) provides a range of excellent free, downloadable lesson plans, classroom resources and guidance documents for teachers. Access to the teaching resources is free, but you need to login to access the materials.

### APPROACHES

Our approach to this topic is to offer young people some basic tools of film analysis. From the outset, they must be aware that what we see on the screen is the result of a number of choices made by a filmmaking team. We focus our interrogation of film texts on three concepts:

- PURPOSE – why has the filmmaker made this film?
- REPRESENTATION – how has the filmmaker portrayed the world of the film?
- INTERPRETATION - what elements of the story have been emphasised?

### AUTHENTICITY

Most feature films based in the past are not necessarily reliable representations of what it was really like. When exploring the Holocaust with students, we should encourage students to interrogate all sources. Films offer accessible, but sometimes unreliable, secondary source material, which is what makes them such interesting pedagogical tools.

The aim of UK Jewish Film's *Speak Out* project is to promote discussion about films in order to judge the extent to which they represent the past authentically. To decide if a film is or isn't an authentic representation, students need to ask questions.

Encourage, young people in groups to devise questions that they think we should ask when we watch any film about the past. For example: *Who made this film and why?*

The KEY QUESTIONS support sheet offers more suggestions for during viewing. These questions are organised into four concepts:

- PURPOSE
- REPRESENTATION
- INTERPRETATION
- SIGNIFICANCE

Rather than expecting all young people to answer all questions, you could divide them into four groups, each looking out for a different concept that they report back on at the end.

## FILMS

Before young people watch a film, it is useful for them to reflect on their existing knowledge of genres. To support their analysis of genre features, here are some key conventions to prompt discussion. These may apply to one or more categories of film.

- Narrative voiceover
- Interviews with real people not acting
- Newsreel footage from the period
- Characters based on real people who once lived
- Characters created in the imagination of the scriptwriter
- Still photographs from the period
- Music
- Reconstructed scenes from the past
- Emphasis on emotional impact

For many of the films included in this resource, useful educational study guides already exist on the Internet, which we have linked through to. Some of these have been designed for students outside of the UK but still have relevant discussion points and ideas for learning that are applicable to the young people in the UK. Where learning materials do not already exist, we offer new content to stimulate discussion and analysis.

## RESOURCES & FURTHER READING

- *Historical context* - [www.het.org.uk/login](http://www.het.org.uk/login)
- *History on Film, Film on History* – Robert A. Rosenstone (2006)
- *Holocaust and the Moving Image – representations in film and television since 1933* - Edited by Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman (2005)

# SPEAK OUT

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION THROUGH FILM

- *The Guardian* article about film footage from death camps - <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/jan/09/holocaust-film-too-shocking-to-show-night-will-fall-alfred-hitchcock>
- *Thinking Film, Thinking History* - downloadable resource based on clips from Holocaust themed films: <http://www.thefilmSPACE.org/thinking-film/>
- *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* film and video archives - <http://www.ushmm.org/research/research-in-collections/overview/film-and-video>
- *University of Southern California, Shoah Foundation* - <http://iwitness.usc.edu/SFI/Activity/>