

# THE VIENNA PROJECT TEACHING UNIT

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

### Overall Objectives

- To increase their awareness of memorials and remembrance practices
  - improve consciousness of monuments and memorials
  - the ability to consider remembrance practices critically
- To learn about the various victim groups targeted by National Socialism in Austria
- To gain a deeper understanding in how thorough a system can be in oppressing its citizens
- To have a taste or flavor of the experience of oppression
- To deepen their understanding of the city of Vienna and its history
- To reinforce historical learning by tying it to place and physical experience
- To introduce students to the aftermath of WWII (post-war experiences, restitution and memory); to improve their awareness of how these events shape the world they live in today
- To practice skills of research and presentation
- To allow students to practice performing research and presenting in English (when applicable)

## LESSON I: HISTORY AND MEMORY

### Overview

Students will discuss the ideas of history and memory and how they relate to each other. They will then relate these ideas to their own exposure to the history and memory of WWII and the Holocaust. Finally, they will consider the importance of historical “remembrance” and how it relates to historical “knowledge.” This lesson will prepare students for discussions on memorials and historical memory after their participation in the Vienna Project tours.

### Suggested Grade Level

Ages 14-18

### Duration of Activity

50 minutes

### Historical Context

Students should have at least an overview of WWII and Holocaust history and a timeline of events (this is not necessary for Lesson 1, but will become more so later on). They should also have a basic understanding of Austria's role within WWII and the Holocaust.

### Teacher Preparation

Print student worksheets  
Have a blackboard or shared writing space available

## Activity

1. Introduce the project by telling students a bit about The Vienna Project. Let students know that will be participating with the memorial project, first by discussing history, memory, and monuments, then by learning about the different victim groups represented in the memorial, and lastly by visiting some of the sites in the memorial and creating their own tour.

Tell students that they will be asked to think critically about the memorial and judge whether they think it is successful.

2. Give students worksheet on History and Memory. Ask students to spend a few minutes answering the following questions either alone or with a partner (teacher preference). Then as a class, discuss their answers:

a. Define the terms in your own words:

- i. history
- ii. memory

b. Describe the relationship between these two ideas<sup>1</sup>

Come to a working definition of history and memory based on the students' ideas.

3. Ask students to think about all of the different ways in which they have gained knowledge or ideas about WWII and the Holocaust. As a class, brainstorm and create a list of these places. Encourage students to think creatively. Mediums to consider may include:

## THE VIENNA PROJECT

The Vienna Project seeks to identify and commemorate persecuted Austrian victim groups murdered under National Socialism, including:

- Jewish, Roma and Sinti victims of genocide
- the mentally ill and physically disabled victims (or declared so) and homosexual victims of racial persecution
- Communists, dissidents, socialists, Slovenian partisans, and Jehovah's Witnesses, identified as victims of political persecution

38 historical sites around the city were selected to represent these groups, and at each site students from the Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien painted graffiti that reads in several languages, "What happens when we forget to remember?" Each site has also hosted performance art, readings, street art, historical lectures, educational programs, and tours.

Fusing public memory with participatory methodologies, the memorial project will engage the Austrian public in a

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<sup>1</sup> "Jewish Thought and Culture: Memory and History." *Teaching Heritage*. Thirteen, Educational Broadcasting Corporation, n.d. Web. 18 Sept. 2014. <<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/teachingheritage/lessons/lp1/index.html>>.

- School
- History books
- Novels
- Family stories
- Museums
- Memorials and monuments
- Movies
- Comic books
- Video games
- The news
- Websites

After brainstorming, ask students to discuss the following questions in small groups, then share their answers with the class:

- Which sources are the most important for getting accurate information about WWII and the Holocaust?
- Which ones are the ones that have been the most memorable for students? Which ones shaped their impressions of WWII/the Holocaust the most?

4. Draw a line on the board, label one end “History” and the other end “Memory”.

**HISTORY-----MEMORY**

Then, as a class, ask students to take all of their sources of knowledge listed in #3 and place along this spectrum from the sources they feel are the most “History” and those that are most “Memory”. This will allow students to consider the ways that history and memory interact with each other give them an awareness that “memory” and “history” might be tied together in ways they had not considered.

At the end of the activity, ask students whether their definitions of “history” and “memory” have changed at all. Can one exist without the other? Is one more important than the other?

6. In the last portion of the class, ask students to consider that when discussing “memories,” there are memories on a personal level and memories on a “national level.” We are often asked to “remember” events that we have not experienced personally.

- What are some of the ways that we do so?
- What are some examples of this “shared memory” that the students can think of in their family/community/country?

Eventually guide the discussion to the idea of memorials/rituals/remembrance practices. Ask students to discuss:

- What are memorials?
- What are some different types of memorials? What counts as a memorial?
- Who/what do memorials “remember”?

