



Challenging racism in school

Activities to challenge racism and discrimination in your school

Age 12-18

CFE Levels Third, Fourth and Senior Phase

Resource created by Show Racism the Red Card

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About this resource

This resource has been produced in association with Show Racism the Red Card Scotland, and incorporates a selection of resources which have been developed by the various Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) education teams across the UK.

This resource provides you with opportunities to examine and challenge the kind of attitudes that marginalise people and cultures, and listen to some of the unheard voices in our society.

About Show Racism the Red Card

Show Racism the Red Card is the UK's leading anti-racism educational charity.

Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) works in schools and other educational settings throughout the UK to offer a whole range of educational training, workshops, resources and activities, all designed to educate young people and adults about the causes and the consequences of racism.

Visit [the Show Racism the Red Card website](#) for a range of educational resources and further information.

Learning activities

Activity 1: Exploring stereotypes and prejudice

These activities can be used to safely explore how stereotypes and prejudice can influence how we react to and judge other people. They allow participants to

recognise that we all have prejudices and stereotypical ideas about different groups that are often based on one individual person or experience, or on misinformation and generalisations.

In order for these activities to be successful, it is important that time is spent fostering a 'safe space' where participants can feel comfortable expressing their honest opinions. For further information on tackling bullying and discrimination, we recommend the [RespectMe website](#).

Activity 2: New Neighbours

LIT 3-02a, LIT 3-09a, SOC 3-15a, SOC 3-16a

For this activity, [download the 'New Neighbours' activity pack](#) from the Scottish Book Trust website. Divide pupils into small groups and give them a set of the New Neighbours cards from the New Neighbours Activity pack. Save the New Neighbour profile for the end of the activity.

Give the pupils the following instructions:

Imagine you have just got home from school. You're approaching your home, and you see a large removal van parked outside. You have a new neighbour who is moving in! Look through the descriptions that are in your sets of cards and discuss who you would prefer as a new neighbour. As a group, choose at least 2 that you would prefer to have as a new neighbour, and at least 2 that you would prefer not to. Try to think of reasons for your answers. Be honest and go with your first instincts. Nobody will be judged based on their answers.

Ask each group for feedback on their choices, asking them to share their reasons. It can be helpful to write up/display some of these to record common themes. For example: "I live next door to a Celtic fan and they are sometimes really rowdy when the football is on", "There are people from Poland on our street and they don't speak English, I would rather live next door to people that I can speak to".

Discussion points:

- Was it easy or hard for the groups to make their decisions?
- What helped them choose? Where did their ideas come from?
- Were the opinions based on fact?
- What is a stereotype? Were some decisions based on stereotypes?
- What are the consequences of using stereotypes to judge others?
- Do you think that instead of these being the characteristics of 8 different people, they could all make up the various characteristics of just 1 person?

Reveal to the participants that these cards are, in fact, the characteristics of just one person. Read out or distribute the accompanying New Neighbour Profile.

Discussion points:

- Was anybody surprised?
- What are the dangers of judging people based on just one or two pieces of information?
- How are stereotypes connected to racism?

Sum up the main points by emphasising that every human is diverse and individual, with many aspects making up their identity. Labelling people and using stereotypes to judge people is extremely unfair, as it does not truly represent the unique characteristics of each individual. By labelling people, we deny them their own individuality, and confine their potential. Stereotypes and prejudice often lay the foundations for discrimination, and racist attitudes and ideas are intrinsically linked to these concepts.

Activity 3: I know a culture where...

LIT 3-02a, LIT 3-09a, SOC 3-15a, SOC 3-16a, RME 3-04a

This activity encourages participants not to judge others based on their cultural practices and customs, and explores how we shouldn't hold stereotypical views of others' cultures.

Give out the ["I know a culture where..." worksheets](#), which you can download from the Scottish Book Trust website. Ask pupils to read the statements and to indicate their reactions by circling the words they feel best describe the practice that is being described. Once all the young people have completed the activity, collect some thoughts from the room and ask why the young people felt this way.

Explain that the statements on the worksheet are actually describing:

1. Taking your coat off as you enter someone's house.
2. Eating egg on toast for breakfast.
3. Having a cup of tea.
4. Describes the position of women in Britain and many other countries.

Were the young people surprised? This activity highlights the fact that the way in which we describe customs can make them sound strange and even frightening, but if we take the time truly understand them, they may be perfectly ordinary.

For example, in the UK it is customary to use a knife and fork for eating, whereas chopsticks are common place in many countries in Eastern Asia. These contrasting implements may seem strange to somebody who has never encountered the other before, but each has evolved from the culture of that place and is well suited to the job that they are designed to do (once you learn how to use them)!

Every household has its own 'customs' and 'culture'. For example:

- Whether to take shoes off as you enter the house
- Whether to sit at the table for dinner
- Different ways of greeting each other

- Types of food eaten on different nights of the week or times of the year

Ask the members of the class to share their own household customs. If someone were to write a guide book covering just the customs of this class would they be able to write it accurately? The cultures and customs that are important to one person may be shared by or rejected by others in their peer group. We cannot assume somebody's cultures and practices just from knowing their background or ethnicity.

Activity 4: Understanding discrimination and violence

These activities explore how prejudice is connected to discrimination, hate and violence. The first activity helps pupils understand how prejudice escalates, and includes discussion around challenging racist behaviour. The second activity explores the story of a holocaust survivor and helps pupils to empathise with marginalised groups and understand the devastating impact of racism.

Activity 5: Escalation of hate

LIT 3-02a, LIT 3-09a, SOC 3-15a, SOC 3-16a

This activity can be used to explore how prejudice and discrimination are interlinked, and explores how hateful actions develop. It can also be used to explore and emphasise the importance of challenging racism at every level.

Display pieces of flip chart paper around the room containing the following headings:

- STEREOTYPE
- PREJUDICE
- SCAPEGOATING
- DISCRIMINATION
- HATE CRIME

Ask the young people to start thinking about definitions for these five key words. Ask them to walk around the room and try and contribute something towards a definition

for each word on each sheet; it can be key words, phrases or even examples if they wish.

Once participants have returned to their seats, thank the group for their contributions. Take each key word in turn and ask for a volunteer to read out the group's ideas.

Organise the young people into groups of five or six and hand out a set of the Escalation of Hate definitions. Set them the challenge of trying to arrange the different stages into an order to show how these behaviours progress.

It is extremely important to recognise that holding racist views is a burden on the perpetrator; there are no positives about behaving in a racist way or having racist attitudes. In fact hatred, anger, discrimination and prejudice hold a person back and prevent them from fulfilling their true potential.

Discussion points:

- What factors cause hate to escalate?
- Is the escalation clear?
- Can anyone recognise their own behaviour anywhere on the pyramid?
- Could any of the sections of the pyramid happen in isolation?
- How can an individual stop the escalation?
- How can communities stop the escalation?

Note: Genocide is the deliberate systematic killing of an entire group of people. Genocide is at the top of the Pyramid of Hate because it is the most extreme act of prejudice and hatred; it is much less common than all of the examples that are lower in the pyramid. For more information about genocide please visit the [Holocaust Memorial Day Trust website](#).

Further discussion points:

- Are there any positives about the existence of racism?
- What is the cost to the individual who doesn't act to challenge hate? What is the cost to the targets of hate? What is the result for society?
- Are there lessons we can learn from history? The Holocaust and other past genocides were only possible after all of the other stages had been established.
- What can be done to help people realise that their actions can have serious consequences?

Activity 6: Anna's story

LIT 3-02a, LIT 3-09a, SOC 3-15a, SOC 3-16a

This activity explores the real life story of Anna, a holocaust survivor, and can be used to encourage participants to empathise and sympathise with groups that have experienced hate.

Anna's Story is very powerful and could potentially be upsetting for some of the young people, especially if they know of anyone who was persecuted during the Holocaust or are part of a travelling community themselves. For further support for travelling communities, explore the [STEP website](#).

Make sure all young people are aware of how hard-hitting the story is and give yourself enough time to carefully set up your safe space at the beginning of delivery. Similarly, Anna's story requires maturity and respect from the young people; your expectations of them should also be made clear at the beginning of the activity.

Explain to the young people that they are going to hear a personal account of someone who was persecuted during the Holocaust. Arrange the young people into small groups of five or six and hand each group a set of [Anna's story cards](#), which you can download from the Scottish Book Trust website.

Explain that each group should read through the cards and place them in what they believe is the correct order. Once each group has arranged the story, work through it as a whole class and facilitate a discussion around some of the themes.

Discussion Points:

- How do the young people feel about Anna's experiences? What was the saddest or most shocking part of the story?
- How might they feel in Anna's situation? Is it easy for them to imagine themselves in Anna's situation? Why/why not?
- Did they know that travelling communities, including Roma and Sinti people, were persecuted and killed during the Holocaust before they read Anna's story? If not, why do they think they hadn't heard about this before?
- Why it is important for us to know about the experiences of travelling communities in the Holocaust? During World War Two an estimated 500,000 Roma and Sinti people were killed in Europe by the Nazi regime. Roma and Sinti people were labelled as 'asocial' and 'racially impure' and were deported to concentration camps. Many were subjected to medical research and horrific treatment before being murdered, solely on the basis of their ethnicity, heritage and culture. A person with at least two Roma and Sinti great-great grandparents was defined by the Nazis as a Gypsy. You can find more information about this on the [Holocaust Memorial Day Trust website](#).

Bernard Stembach, a survivor of Auschwitz, a Nazi concentration camp, said: *'What we put up with, you know, it's impossible to describe. It is too awful...what we experienced and suffered at Auschwitz, that can't be put into words.'*

Discussion points:

- How are travelling communities treated today? Do some travelling communities still suffer from mistreatment and prejudice?
- Why is prejudice towards travelling communities still so common? What more could we have learnt from events during World War Two?

Read out or show copies of the following newspaper excerpt:

'Many refugees are arriving in this country and in the majority of cases are being turned back...once it was known that Britain offered sanctuary to all who cared to come, the floodgates would be opened and we should be inundated by thousands seeking a home...our own professions are already overcrowded and have been further strained by arrivals in the last few years from Central Europe.'

Now ask the young people to try and answer these questions:

- Who/which group of people do you think the newspaper excerpt is written about?
- When do you think the newspaper excerpt was written?

Reveal to the young people that the excerpt was written by the Daily Mail newspaper in 1938 about Jewish people and travelling communities fleeing from the persecution of the Nazi regime in Germany.

- Are the young people shocked by this? Why?
- Why did the Daily Mail write about Jewish people and travelling communities in this way? Is it fair?
- How different is this from their guesses? Why do they think this is?
- Can they think of examples of times when words and phrases similar to these are written in newspapers these days?
- Why are some groups of people in society still written about in newspapers in this way? What are the dangers of newspapers writing like this?
- What lessons do they think we have learnt from how people were treated in the Holocaust? Could we have learnt more lessons from this?

The media is an extremely powerful tool – many young people will read this newspaper excerpt and will assume that it is about marginalised groups of people in society today; a lot of the words, phrases and sentiments will be familiar to them as ways in which certain groups of people today are spoken about. They are often shocked to learn that it was written about those fleeing persecution in 1938. This is therefore a useful reminder of that those in the most horrendous of situations are often treated with the most disdain and that, if we are not careful, situations of the past can become situations in the present. We must learn from past events to ensure that people never have to experience similar events in the future.

Facilitate a discussion around how we can ensure situations in which people are persecuted because of their skin colour, nationality, religion or culture are not able to happen in the future. Ensure that the young people finish the activity with ideas for positive action against racism.

Books for young people that explore racial discrimination

All of the books below are a brilliant way for young people to explore the topic of prejudice, discrimination and racism. These books can help to develop empathy and understanding of the effect of racial discrimination, and provide vital representation to help teenagers feel seen and heard.

- *A Change is Gonna Come* by multiple authors including Tanya Byrne, Inua Ellams, Catherine Johnson, Patrice Lawrence, Ayisha Malik, Irfan Master, Musa Okwonga and Nikesh Shukla.
- *Alpha* by Bessora and Barroux
- *Chinglish* by Sue Cheung
- *Full Disclosure* by Camryn Garrett
- *Noughts and Crosses* by Malorie Blackman
- *Run, Rebel* by Manjeet Mann
- *Swing* by Kwame Alexander
- *The Boxer* by Nikesh Shukla

- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *The Million Pieces of Neena Gill* by Emma Smith-Barton
- *The Pavee and the Buffer Girl* by Siobhan Dowd and Emma Shoard
- *The Undefeated* by Kwame Alexander

For more books on the topic of tolerance and justice, take a look at [Amnesty International's best young adults books list](#).