

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON RWANDA FOR TEACHERS:



HOLOCAUST  
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Rwanda is a small landlocked country in east-central Africa. There were three main social groupings in the country – the majority Hutu (84%), the minority Tutsi (15%) and the Twa (1%).

Throughout the 20th century, power and leadership in Rwanda shifted between the Hutus and Tutsis, with uprisings often leading to bloodshed. Tension between the two groups had existed for many years.

In 1990, a three-year civil war began. Hutu extremists blamed the Tutsi for all of Rwanda's problems, and used state-controlled radio stations to spread their message, calling the Tutsi names such as 'cockroaches' to dehumanise them. Finally in 1993 a power-sharing agreement was made between the Hutu president and the Tutsi rebel army, the Rwandan Patriotic Force (RPF).

On 6 April 1994, the President was flying back into Kigali (the capital city) on his private plane, following peace talks around the country. His plane was shot down and he was killed. It remains unclear who was responsible, but extremist Hutu leaders immediately blamed the Tutsi for assassinating the President. Ordinary Hutus were told by radio broadcast and word of mouth that it was their duty to exterminate the Tutsi population.

Attacks began immediately against Tutsis, and any Hutus who supported the peace agreement or tried to help Tutsis. As the murders continued, many people sought refuge in what they believed would be safe havens – churches, hospitals, schools, sports stadia and community centres – only to be found and deliberately targeted.

The genocide continued for 100 days and around 1 million people were killed.

Despite its colossal scale, the genocide was carried out almost entirely by hand, by killers using machetes and clubs. Tutsis were easily identified as targets as many killers knew their victims personally, as neighbours, friends and even family.

The RPF restarted their attack upon hearing news of the genocide, and they gained control of the country in July 1994, stopping the genocide. The RPF are still in control of Rwanda today.

In an effort to move on from the genocide, the terms Hutu and Tutsi have been banned.

**You can find out more about the Genocide in Rwanda by visiting:  
[hmd.org.uk/rwanda](http://hmd.org.uk/rwanda)**