

# Holocaust Memorial Day genocide film screening and discussion



HOLOCAUST  
MEMORIAL  
DAY TRUST

A film screening and discussion is an engaging way to mark Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) with your group, suitable for a wide range of ages and interests. You could combine this with a minute of silence or a candle lighting as an act of remembrance. This resource is designed for those leading the film screening and we recommend it is not shared with other members of the group as it contains details of the films' plots.

This resource has suggestions for a number of films which explore the experiences of those persecuted and murdered as a result of the genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. If you would like to watch a film based on the Holocaust and Nazi Persecution, you can find the information you need in our other film club guide [here](#).

All of these films have been chosen because they are widely accessible on DVD and streaming services. Films may also be available to loan from your local library. Your group may choose to watch the film together, either on a big screen or at a cinema if possible, or through an online platform such as zoom, and then discuss it immediately after the screening. Alternatively, they may wish to watch the film individually at a time or place convenient to them and schedule a later session to come together for the discussion.

The length of time your activity will take will vary depending on the length of the film you choose. We would suggest between half an hour, for groups including younger audiences, to an hour of discussion time for adult audiences.



## Background context

Genocides have taken place around the world since the Holocaust. For more information on what genocide is, and how the term came to be legally defined, see [this page](#) on our website.

Films can be useful for finding out more about, and discussing the impact of, genocide. You can learn more about the **Holocaust** and **Nazi Persecution**, and the genocides in **Cambodia**, **Rwanda**, **Bosnia** and **Darfur** on our website. It may be helpful for members to read through the information about the genocide the film focuses on after finishing the film, or prior to your discussion.

We all have a responsibility to challenge discrimination and prejudice in society, whenever we see or hear it taking place. Our world often feels fragile and vulnerable and we cannot be complacent. That is why we learn and remember on Holocaust Memorial Day.

Some suggested questions are provided below to help start a discussion following the film screening for both adult and younger audiences.

## Discussion questions

### Questions for adult audiences

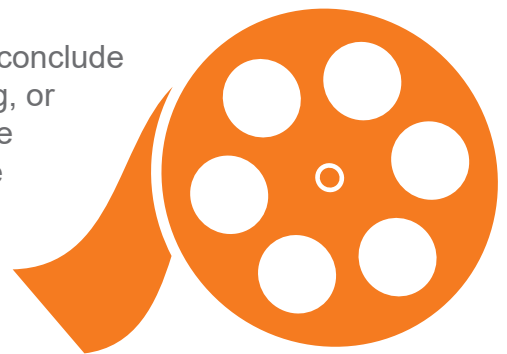
- What do we learn about the Holocaust/genocide through this film? Is it informative enough? What issues might there be using fictional stories to portray a real genocide?
- Alternatively, in a documentary, what issues might there be when using footage/images of a genocide, for viewers, and for victims and survivors?
- What parts of the film did you find memorable? Why?
- Consider if the film subverted your expectations, or fitted them. Were there major turning points or unexpected twists in the plot and characterisation?
- Are there any recurring motifs – either visual, musical or thematic, for example, which contribute to the narrative and emotional impact of the film/documentary? How does this build throughout the film/documentary?
- How did the film's editing and cinematographic choices contribute to its treatment of the moral or ethical issues raised in the story? What are your opinions on the issues the film raises?
- What motivated the characters in the film? What points of view did the camera show and why do you think this was?
- Alternatively, why do you think the documentary makers chose to interview or follow the individuals they did? Why do you think they structured the documentary interviews in the way they did?
- Have you been inspired to learn more or take an action as a result of seeing this film/documentary?

### Questions for younger audiences

- What do we learn about genocide through this film/documentary?
- Why is it important to learn about these events?
- What parts of the film/documentary did you find memorable? Why?
- What moral or ethical issues were raised by the film/documentary?
- What are your opinions on these issues?

- **What does this film actually tell us about the genocide it is set in? Is it informative enough?**
- **Why do you think this film was made, using a fictional story, instead of a documentary based only on the facts?**
- **Alternatively, why do you think the documentary makers chose to focus on the people and events shown in the documentary? Did they have a purpose?**
- **How were people shown doing awful things?**
- **How were people shown to be doing good?**
- **Why did these people make decisions to do good? Or decisions to do terrible things?**
- **Why do you think the filmmakers wanted to include their moral choices in the film?**
- **How have you been inspired to learn more or take an action as a result of seeing this film/documentary?**

Once your group have finished their discussion, you could conclude your HMD activity with a minute of silence, a candle lighting, or reading a poem aloud as an act of remembrance. There are many other options, and you can find out more about these on our website's **resources section**.



## Film list

Genocide	Film title and certification	Synopsis	Available formats
Cambodia	First They Killed My Father (15)	Directed by Angelina Jolie, this film follows the story of Loung Ung, who was 5 years old when the Khmer Rouge took control of Cambodia. Her family are forced from their home with the rest of the population, and endure forced labour, being trained as child soldiers, and the constant threat of death.	Available on Netflix and DVD
Cambodia	The Killing Fields (15)	The Killing Fields is a film adaption of an eye witness testimony of an American journalist covering the civil war in Cambodia during the time of the Khmer Rouge's rise to power.	Available on <a href="http://intofilm.org">intofilm.org</a> for free for teachers and schools. Available to stream on Amazon Prime, and on DVD
Rwanda	Sometimes in April (15)	The story follows two Hutu brothers – Augustine and Honore – . between the events of genocide in 1994, and April 2004, when Augustin is invited by his brother, Honoré Butera, to visit him as he stands trial for his involvement in the genocide. The film shows the attitudes and circumstances leading up to the start of the genocide, the stories of people struggling to survive, and the aftermath as people try to find justice and reconciliation.	DVD available

Rwanda	Shooting Dogs (15)	Shooting Dogs is based on the true story of a Catholic Priest who sheltered over 2,500 Tutsis in the Ecole Technique Officielle during the Genocide in Rwanda. The film also looks at international responses to the genocide, including the evacuation of foreign nationals who had also sought refuge in the school, and the recall of UN personnel despite the ongoing atrocities.	Available on <a href="http://intofilm.org">intofilm.org</a> for free for teachers and schools. DVD available
Bosnia	In the Land of Blood and Honey (15)	Set in Sarajevo during the Bosnian War, the film follows the story of a Bosnian Serb soldier and his former lover, a Bosnian Muslim held in a prison camp.	DVD available
Bosnia	A Cry From the Grave (unrated, 16+ suggested)	This BBC documentary is a harrowing account of the Srebrenica massacre. The film begins with an eerie extended clip of a tourism video, depicting a peaceful, scenic Srebrenica that saw visitors flock from all over Europe. It shares accounts from survivors, alongside the testimonies from the Dutch peacekeepers and government officials. Contains potentially distressing footage and images taken during and post genocide.	Freely available <a href="#">here</a>
Darfur	The Devil Came on Horseback (18+)	A documentary style film adaptation of former US marine Brian Steidle's book. Steidle discusses his experiences in Sudan during the genocide in Darfur. Although his role was that of an observer, Steidle chose to record the horrific events he witnessed through photography to show the world what was happening in Sudan. Contains distressing images and footage recorded during the genocide.	Available to rent/buy on iTunes
Darfur	The Lost Boys of Sudan (unrated but suitable for ages 12+)	This documentary follows two boys, Peter and Santino, refugees from Darfur, through their first year in America.	Freely available <a href="#">here</a>

## What next

If you found it useful watching these films for HMD, why not explore our other **HMD Together** resources, which include:

- You may want to choose a different film to screen, or hold a second film screening and discussion. We have produced a separate **HMD film screening guide** for films about the Holocaust and Nazi Persecution here.
- **Hosting a book club for HMD** – your group may find it particularly interesting to read books from the same period as the film you chose, and compare the two.
- **Writing a poem** with your group for HMD
- Creating a **group artwork** for HMD



**Let us know about your activity** by adding it to our activity map:

[hmd.org.uk/letusknow](https://hmd.org.uk/letusknow)



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## Find out more...

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust: [hmd.org.uk](https://hmd.org.uk)  
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*Learning from genocide – for a better future*