



# Jewish artists in Wales: Josef Herman

## GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS

This is one of 20 resources about the Holocaust and Wales.

It explores the life and work of the Jewish refugee artist Josef Herman, who lived in Ystradgynlais in the Swansea Valley for eleven years, from 1944-1954.

**Ages:** 9-14.

### 1. PURPOSE OF THE RESOURCE

Learning about the Holocaust through local examples allows learners to **discover their heritage** and **develop a sense of place and cynefin**. It also removes the idea of 'otherness' – that this happened to other people in another place and time – and instead, **creates feelings of connection and empathy**.

### 2. LEARNING AIMS

The aim of the resource is to enable learners to:

1. Explore past and contemporary ethical and moral issues and engage with concepts of prejudice, discrimination, antisemitism, extremism, equality, tolerance, humanity, responsibility, good and evil, make a connection between past and present issues and consider what is happening locally and globally today.
2. Develop critical and reflective thinking.
3. Explore and develop creative and artistic skills.
4. Develop confidence, resilience, and empathy: To become more aware of their own experiences and feelings when engaging in activities with others, and to recognise that other people have experiences and feelings.
5. Become responsible citizens in Wales and the wider world.

### 3. FOCUS OF THE RESOURCE

1. Critically reviewing how past and contemporary events are perceived, interpreted, and represented; forming their own viewpoint and developing self-awareness.
2. Critically analysing and evaluating evidence; interpreting and synthesising information; drawing informed conclusions about the world, its past, present, and future.
3. Expressing ideas and emotions through art.

4. Learning about the complexity and diversity of human societies (e.g., values, social norms, rituals, and faiths) and the impact of actions and beliefs.
5. Developing an understanding of challenges and opportunities in their personal lives and wider society and considering how to respond ethically.

#### 4. WHAT SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND EXPERIENCE THE RESOURCE HELPS DEVELOP

Indicators of learning:

1. Knowledge and understanding of Josef Herman's artistic style and how it was influenced by his experiences as a refugee.
2. Understanding of how a sense of place and community can influence artistic works.
3. Ability to critically evaluate, and use different sources (e.g., memories and artwork) to form and express their own views, opinions, knowledge, and understanding.
4. Ability to respond to and reflect on a historical event with creativity, using inspiration and imagination, and experimenting with new techniques.
5. Experience of participating in art as both a creator and an audience.
6. Understanding of ethical and moral concepts, e.g., discrimination, racism, antisemitism, and the importance of democratic values and human rights.
7. Ability to make a connection between past and contemporary discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and religion and consider what is happening today in Wales, the UK, and the world, e.g., refugees coming to the UK/Wales.
8. Understanding that people have different beliefs, values, and experiences and respecting the needs and rights of others.
9. Ability to work as part of a team.
10. Experience of participating in group discussions and tasks.
11. Becoming more aware of their own experiences and feelings, values, and beliefs and being able to communicate them.
12. Developing empathy for other people and their circumstances/challenges they face(d), e.g., refugees.

#### 5. HOW THE RESOURCE SUPPORTS LEARNING IN LOCAL (CYNEFIN), NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL CONTEXTS

This resource allows learners to hear the stories of people who were directly affected by the Holocaust, and who lived in Wales. These are the stories of people who contributed to and were part of their local Welsh communities. They settled and had families here and their history is part of the story of Wales.

These local examples can help learners understand the connection between Welsh history and global events like World War Two and the Holocaust.

## 6. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Josef Herman (1911–2000) was a realist artist who was known for his sketches and paintings of working people. He was born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1911. He was one of several Jewish artists who fled Eastern Europe to escape Nazi persecution. In 1938, he became a refugee and travelled to Britain. In 1942, he discovered that his entire family was murdered in the Holocaust.

In 1944, Herman moved to Ystradgynlais in the Swansea Valley. He stayed there for 11 years. He became an important part of the local community where he was fondly nicknamed 'Joe Bach'. Herman was inspired by the strong sense of community in the town and the people of Ystradgynlais, particularly the miners, appeared in his artworks.

## 7. IDEAS and QUESTIONS

1. The resource can be used:

- To explore and recognise the experiences and feelings of people who were persecuted by the Nazis.
- To explore the importance of community and belonging.
- To enable learners to become more aware of their own experiences and feelings and to develop confidence, resilience, and empathy.

Questions:

- Why were the miners in Ystradgynlais so important to Josef Herman? Prompt learners to think about his home community in Poland and his experience as a Jewish refugee.
- How can a sense of place and community influence artistic style?
- How can art help develop a sense of community?

2. The resource can be used to explore Josef Herman's life and his artwork.

Questions:

- What is Josef Herman's connection to Wales?
- How can Josef Herman's artistic style be described?
- Who are the subjects of Herman's work and how are they portrayed?

3. The resource can be used to explore the Nazi persecution of artists and the importance of artistic expression.

Question:

- Why is artistic expression, which was often not allowed under the Nazi regime, so important?
- Are artists still persecuted today?

4. The resource can be used to promote learners' creativity by encouraging them to experiment with new techniques.

Learners create a drawing or a painting of an individual or group of people from their community in Josef Herman's style.

They are asked to consider what it is about that individual or group that they would particularly like to capture, e.g., their friendliness, their hard-working attitude, their passion, or their skill, and what colours, shapes, textures, and tones they wish to use to achieve this.

These pieces could be developed over several lessons if time allows.

5. The resource can be used to promote critical and reflective thinking.

Learners reflect on their created pieces and responses to Josef Herman's art.

Questions:

- What has influenced their choice of subject (individual or group of individuals) and technique (colours, shapes, textures, and tones)?
- What message did they wish to convey?

## 8. RESEARCH AND FURTHER INFORMATION

### 1. Introduction to teaching and learning about the Holocaust:

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) [Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust](#) provide information on why, what, and how to teach about the Holocaust.

The Holocaust Educational Trust's worksheet '[Defining the Holocaust](#)' may be used to introduce learners to the topic of the Holocaust; it helps learners to think about how the Holocaust is defined and why the issue of definition is important.

### 2. Further reading:

Josef Herman Foundation: [Josef Herman](#).

Arolsen Archives: [Artists persecuted under Nazism](#).

### 3. A list of 20 resources about [the Holocaust and Wales](#):

- [Kindertransport 1: Jewish Life in Central Europe before the Second World War.](#)
- [Kindertransport 2: The Journey to Britain.](#)
- [Kindertransport 3: Arrival in Wales.](#)
- [Kindertransport 4: Life in Wales.](#)
- [Memories of Kristallnacht: Destruction and Flight.](#)
- [Memories of Kristallnacht: The Last Bar Mitzvah.](#)
- [Jewish Artists in Wales: Josef Herman.](#)
- [Jewish Artists in Wales: Heinz Koppel.](#)
- [Aero Zipp Fasteners at Treforest Trading Estate.](#)
- [General Paper and Box Manufacturing Company at Treforest Trading Estate.](#)
- ['Enemy Aliens' and Internment Camps.](#)
- ['Enemy Aliens' and Human Rights.](#)
- [Jewish Refugees as Domestic Servants.](#)
- [Jewish Refugee Doctors, Dentists, and Nurses in Wales.](#)



- [Jewish Refugees in the British Army during the Second World War.](#)
- [Religious Life of Jewish Refugees in Wales.](#)
- [The Welsh Language.](#)
- [Liberation.](#)
- [Identity.](#)
- [Remembering the Holocaust.](#)