

# THE WHITE ROSE

## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

‘Somebody, after all, had to make a start. What we wrote and said is also believed by many others. They just don’t dare to express themselves as we did.’

Sophie Scholl at her trial.

1943. In a Munich court, brother and sister Hans and Sophie Scholl, with their best friend Christoph Probst, are tried for speaking out against the Nazi regime.

As German teenagers in the 1930’s the Scholl siblings had supported Hitler and his rise to power. They had even been members of German youth organisations and, like many others, believed that Hitler was leading Germany into a glorious future.

However, as World War II began and the reality of Hitler’s policies became apparent, Sophie and Hans Scholl started to act. Copies of a leaflet called *The White Rose* appeared at the University of Munich. This anonymous essay condemned the Nazi regime and encouraged ordinary Germans to rise up and resist the authority of their own leaders. Such open rebellion was unheard of. Over the next few months, five more leaflets followed. Seeing The White Rose movement begin to attract public support, the Gestapo redoubled their efforts to hunt down the ringleaders.

18 February 1943 saw Hans and Sophie arrested after leaving leaflets in the buildings of the Munich University. Christoph Probst was linked to the movement and also arrested. After four days of interrogation by the Gestapo, they were tried for treason, found guilty and executed on 22 February 1943. Hans was 24 years old, Sophie 21 and Christoph was 22.

More arrests, trials and executions followed as other members of this small group were rounded up. However, even though The White Rose had been broken, its ideals of freedom and non-violent resistance continued to influence many German citizens. Today, the story of The White Rose is taught and celebrated in schools and colleges all over modern Germany.

In this unit, students will have the opportunity to explore the story of The White Rose from a variety of perspectives. They will investigate something of the background context of national socialist Germany in the 1930s and 40s before dramatizing aspects of the White Rose story itself. They will work in both realistic and more abstract modes of performance and will also be able to examine the work of a professional playwright dealing with the same themes. Key issues of representation in drama will be considered as students create their own dramatizations based on carefully structured approaches to this engaging but in some ways problematic material. Finally they will be able to reflect on what they have experienced as they undertake the task of memorializing a group of university students who ‘made a start’ in resisting oppression.

## ACTIVITY 1

Write the word 'resistance' on the board.

- *What does the word 'resistance' mean to you?*
- *Can anyone think of an example of a person or a group who have stood up for something that they have believed in? This could be a local, national or global occurrence.*
- *How do people make their feelings known when they want to protest against something or stop something from happening?*
- *Can you think of any examples of people putting themselves at risk through their actions as they protest against something?*
- *If 'non-violent' is added to the word 'resistance', what does this phrase imply about the sort of action people might take?*
- *What sort of things would you be willing to fight for – freedom, equality, justice?*

## ACTIVITY 2

Using resource sheet 1, show the students the image of Jewish civilians being forced to clean the streets in Vienna. Without explaining the context of the photograph, encourage them to deconstruct what is happening.

- *When do you think this photograph was taken?*
- *What does it show?*
- *Who are the people on their hands and knees?*
- *Who are the people standing round watching?*

Your students may well successfully place the image in its proper context. However, they might need some more historical information to understand its implications.

Once Hitler and his National Socialist party was established in Germany of the 1930's he began a policy of intolerance and persecution resulting eventually in a process of mass-extermiation that would become known as 'The Final Solution.'

Hitler was obsessed with creating a master race of Aryans who were blond, blue-eyed, strong and healthy. He said that Germans and other north European people belonged to this Aryan race and should fulfil their destiny of ruling the world. Fuelled by relentless propaganda, the hatred and persecution of any non-Aryan grew. Jews, Slavs (from eastern Europe), black people, communists, gypsies, people with disabilities, homosexuals and anyone who did not hold the views of National Socialism became an enemy of the state.

In the run up to the Second World War, Jewish people in Germany found themselves in an increasingly dangerous world. Their shops and businesses were destroyed and they were openly attacked. Their houses and goods were seized and confiscated by the state. Laws were passed that banned them from working in government, using public transport or parks or even owning a bicycle. Jews and non-Jews were not allowed to marry.

1939 saw Germany plunged into The Second World War - a war that Hitler waged on two fronts. While German soldiers fought on the battlefields of Europe against the Allies, the persecution of Hitler's enemies at home and in captured countries moved towards its final phase. Whole areas of cities became walled up Jewish ghettos where thousands starved to death or died of disease. The construction of death camps such as Auschwitz, Sobibor and Treblinka provided the means to the Nazi's 'Final Solution' - intended to be the ultimate destruction of the Jewish people. Millions of Jewish people were shipped in cattle trucks to these camps and gassed to death in enormous sealed chambers. It is estimated that some six million Jews were killed.

Arrange some chairs or blocks in the middle of the room and explain that these represent the Jewish people in the photograph being forced to scrub the streets. Ask the students to get into groups of five or six and place each group in a circle around the blocks or chairs. Give each group a piece of paper and a pen.

*Imagine that you are one of the people in the crowd who find themselves witnessing this event. In your groups, I want you to form a still image of these spectators.*

- *What are your feelings about what is happening?*
- *Do you think it is fair?*
- *Are you worried that next time it could be you that is treated this way?*
- *Do the children in the crowd understand what is happening?*
- *Can you show your thoughts and feelings through your facial expression and body language?*

Once the students have completed their task, ask them to add a word or phrase that attempts to capture the feelings of their character.

*I want you write these words or phrases on the paper I have given you. We will be using them later in the work.*

Allow a few minutes to complete the task, asking each group to incorporate their spoken lines into their still image. As each group presents their drama, encourage the audience to offer captions or titles for each piece of work. Once all groups have shared their work, explain that during the next activity, you are going to work in role alongside them.

*For this part of the work, I am going to take on a role and become part of your scene. Each group will recreate their still image for a few seconds until I approach in role.*

*As I speak to you, animate your image. Carry the action on with movement and language, reacting to me and to each other until I stop the work. Imagine the play button on a video recorder has just been pressed to make the paused image come alive.*

The choice of role is up to you as the teacher. You may wish to consider a neutral role with equal status to the others in the group, drawing responses and reactions without providing a model to follow. You may wish to introduce the idea that there would be people in the crowd who believe they could be the next victim. A high status 'authority' role might be able to challenge the views of any spectators who might consider voicing their protests at what is going on. By careful questioning, you will be able to build the tension in the scene, highlighting the very serious implications of this event.

- *What's going on here?*
- *Who are the people on their hands and knees?*
- *Why are you letting this happen?*
- *Shouldn't someone do something?*
- *How would you feel if it was you and your family?*
- *It's not fair that these people are treated like this.*
- *I've heard the soldiers saying they are looking for others in the crowd.*
- *This is not the first time this has happened.*
- *If they are doing this now, what will they do next?*
- *Move back, we need to make more room so everyone can see.*
- *It is about time we made examples of these people.*
- *You look sorry for them, would you like to join your friends?*

Allow each group the opportunity to complete this task and discuss the work.

- *What did it feel like to be the spectator of this degrading act?*
- *What do you imagine it might have felt like to be one of the victims?*
- *Identify a line or word that someone said in role that you thought was effective. Why was it effective?*
- *Choose someone whose body language, facial expression, use of voice communicated something important to the audience. What can we learn from this?*

Explain to your students that this drama exploration will be placed within the context of Hitler's Germany, a time of great upheaval for the whole of Europe. Distribute resource sheet 2 and discuss the issues involved.

- *Why were the German authorities determined to stop The White Rose?*
- *What do you think The White Rose represented to ordinary Germans?*
- *What words would you use to describe the leaders of The White Rose?*

### ACTIVITY 3

If you have followed the introductory work to this point, you now have an option. You can skip this section and rejoin the sequence of work indicated in activity 4, or include the following tasks. There are two reasons for including these optional activities. Firstly, it serves as extension work for students who have completed the previous activities and now wish to create a more formal performance piece, based on their emerging understanding of *The White Rose*. Secondly, for older or more experienced students, this highly structured performance approach may extend their understanding of drama form and encourage them to view the theme from different perspectives.

This extension work raises interesting questions about the relationship between drama form and content. By moving the students into performance at this relatively early stage in the project, interesting questions about the relationship between process drama and theatre are explored.

In this sequence of activities students will explore the concept of minimalism in the arts in order to create a montage style performance based around fragments of *The White Rose* story as introduced in the previous frames. The form of the performance is stylized and without words which has proved to be a highly effective way for students to consider the treatment of heightened emotion in theatre, paradoxically, by reducing the theatre form to its barest essentials.

Explain to the group that they are going to dramatize the story of *The White Rose* (as detailed in resource sheet 2), in a very specific way. The work will proceed by drawing on ideas found most obviously in the visual arts and music - within the twentieth century art movement known as minimalism.

Minimalism focuses on presenting an idea that has been distilled to its essence and could be summed up by the credo 'less means more'. Musicians who have used these principals in their work are Steve Reich, Phillip Glass, Michael Nyman and Arvo Part. In the visual arts, presenting the paintings of Bridget Riley or the sculptures of Carl Andre may help students understand some of the principles involved. As a literary parallel, the Haiku verse form is a very accessible illustration.

Assemble the pupils into groups of four or five and ask them to select one episode from *The White Rose* story (using resource sheet 3), and help them to choose a moment that they see as significant, perhaps based around a key image, or a specific moment of heightened tension. In order to dramatize this episode, the groups are going to find a dramatic equivalent to the Haiku verse or Carl Andre's bricks, by creating a movement motif using the technique of 'animated tableau'.

Ask the group to imagine a video tape that has been paused. A frozen picture exists on the television screen. By pressing the frame advance button, the picture changes

almost imperceptibly. By then reversing the process – so the image returns back to its original position, a very short moment in time is captured, advanced and then reversed. In their groups, the pupils will explore this technique starting with a still image and manipulating their image forwards and backwards ‘frame by frame’ through extremely small, subtle movements. By repeating this ‘single frame’ animation perhaps 3 or 4 times, and by carefully choreographing the movement, it is possible to achieve highly resonant and absorbing effects, which explore human relationships, feelings and motivation in a very subtle manner.

The pupils should be encouraged to experiment with the pace of their ‘repeats’, and reduce the size of their movements to that necessary to capture the essence of the moment they are dramatizing. Eye contact, facial expression and gesture should be refined, so that everything that is presented on stage is deliberate, and carefully contrived. A challenging aspect of this work is in choreographing the various components of the animated tableaux to extract as much meaning from the scene as possible. For instance, in a motif based around an episode when Hans Scholl provocatively shook hands with a group of Jews who had been loaded onto cattle trucks by the Nazis, one group of students carefully synchronized their movement to good effect: as Hans offered his hand towards the prisoners in the truck, each of them responded differently. One, looking Hans directly in the eye, moved to grasp his hand as though grateful; a second, aware of the German soldier observing them, looked away and ignored the proffered handshake. A third, as if unable to decide what to do, simply looked from one prisoner to the other. All of this was signalled with subtle, repeated gestures, carefully timed to maximum effect.

As soon as the groups have created their tableaux and repeated movements, they should choose another two episodes to dramatize in the same way. Once each group has created three animated tableaux, representing three different fragments of The White Rose story, their work can be presented as a dramatic montage or sequence. Ask the groups to consider the order in which they wish to present their tableaux. Designate an acting area and seat the groups on chairs around its edge, either ‘in the round’ or ‘traverse’ (on two sides). Invite the groups to rehearse their entrance into the stage area for each of their movement motifs. In this form of theatre, very small actions or events can become quite significant, including the way actors enter or leave the performance area.

Once a group has performed its first animated tableau they return to their chairs, which becomes the cue for the next group to perform. When each group has performed their first movement motif, the sequence continues through motifs two and three, until all the work is performed. Design elements such as lighting and sound can add a great deal to the dramatic effect of this work. Music especially can enhance the emotive impact on the audience. By experimenting with the use of music as a soundtrack - such as Arvo Part’s *Speigel Im Speigel* from *Alina* - students can create effective and moving performances.

## ACTIVITY 4

Regardless of the pathway you have followed to reach this point in the project, the students should now have a growing understanding of the achievements and actions of The White Rose. Once the students are in groups of four or five, introduce the following:

*If a group of people wanted to commemorate and remember what The White Rose achieved, what would serve as a fitting memorial. What might have people thought of The White Rose at the time? Do you think that it might be different to the way that people think of them now?*

Discuss the suggestions from the group. They might include making a statue or sculpture, creating a painting, mural or poster, composing and performing a song, writing a poem or even creating a play or piece of drama.

Ask each group to create a memorial that is to be placed on the spot where the Scholls were arrested. You might wish to steer the students towards creating an image that is abstract – representing the idea of resistance symbolically. Examples could be a clenched fist, a group menacingly towering over a lone crouching figure, a crowd all making the same gesture while one person does something differently.

Allow each group time to create their memorial and share them in turn. Ask each group to present their work. Evaluate the task by encouraging the students to consider:

- *Which was the most powerful presentation?*
- *Why was it powerful?*
- *Was there an image that captured the ideas behind The White Rose?*

## ACTIVITY 5

Ask the group to consider the following. If they were devising a play to commemorate The White Rose, and the memorials shaped in activity 4 were to be the basis of the opening scene, how could they use them in the drama to create a powerful start to the play? As the pupils move into performance mode, they will need to consider what they are trying to communicate to the audience in this opening scene.

- *Does the group have an audience in mind when starting to create their drama?*
- *How will this affect the way they will develop their performance?*
- *What effect should the opening scene have on the audience? Should it create a mood or atmosphere, introduce the theme or plot, introduce characters or set the time and place of the action?*

- *Is the opening scene important to introduce the style and form of the drama to the audience?*
- *Where will the audience be in relation to the action on the stage?*

The following are suggestions that would encourage the students to shape their previous work into a more multi-dimensional scene. You may wish to empower one of the students to take on the role of director. The role of the director is to help co-ordinate the whole class in reinterpreting the selected piece of work.

Ask the group to select an effective example from the previous task.

- *If we were going to re-shape this work, making sure that everyone in the class is included, how could we make sure that we do not lose the elements that make it work so well?*
- *If this is the beginning of the play, how as actors might you build this group image on stage?*

Encourage the class to experiment:

- Each actor walks onto stage enters individually, building the image person by person.
- As a group, all the actors converge onto the stage and create the image.

Ask the group what they can do to support this movement and make it dramatically more effective?

- Incorporate the words or phrases that each group wrote down in activity 2.
- Use a narrator to read out a speech written from the perspective of one of the characters.
- Experiment using different ways of moving onto the stage. For instance, what might be the different effects created by entering quickly, whilst looking directly at the audience or, alternatively, moving in a slow deliberate manner with heads bowed?
- Experiment with vocal effects such as chanting, whispering or singing. Text can be selected from any of the work covered so far and might include extracts from the leaflets of The White Rose, facts or dates that the students have learnt or words actually spoken in drama created by the students themselves.
- Play recorded music that evokes the time or theme and creates an atmosphere.
- Use live percussion or instruments.
- Introduce lighting to emphasize and highlight different areas of the stage.

The scene could involve one group creating the first image; another forming the second and so on until three or four images are presented. Again, all the different ways of supporting the scene could be discussed and tried out.

## ACTIVITY 6

Gather the students into a circle. Ask them to imagine the very first meeting of The White Rose. What dangers might they have faced? It is important to emphasize the extreme risks that these young people were taking just by discussing any sort of protest. Using resource sheets 4a and 4b, ask the students to consider the following:

- *Where do you think they might have met?*
- *As it was so dangerous to openly criticize the Hitler and the Nazi Party, how do you think the idea of a resistance movement was first proposed?*
- *What do you think the group actually wanted to achieve?*
- *How did they arrive at the idea of printing and distributing leaflets?*
- *As it would take only one person to inform on the others, did they take an oath of secrecy to protect each other's names?*
- *What worries might the group have had?*
- *Was everyone willing to take such a personal risk and defy the authorities?*

Write the words 'dramatic tension' on the board. Again, reinforce the idea that the young people of The White Rose were taking enormous personal risks in embarking upon their course of passive resistance. If caught, they would face imprisonment and even death. Any improvisation showing this imagined first meeting must create a sense of tension for the audience. You may need to help define dramatic tension for the students. A 'checklist' (resource sheet 8), is provided that may be helpful in explaining how tension in drama is created. In addition there are a number of children's games with which the class may be familiar which are based on the principal of dramatic tension:

- *Grandmother's Footsteps.*
- *Wink Murder.*
- *Blind Man's Buff*
- *Keeper of the Keys.*

Once the content and context of the improvisation have been explored, ask the students to consider the dramatic elements of the scene, explaining that they are to use naturalistic drama as a style.

*Naturalistic theatre came about as some playwrights and directors wanted to accurately reproduce the social world on stage – with all the problems and complexities that that entails. It is often described as showing a 'slice of life' on stage. The acting style means that actors try to show their emotions and feelings in as real and believable manner as possible. Thinking about this particular scene:*

- *How are you going to portray your characters?*
- *How much of this characterization is to be based on fact, and how much is imagination?*
- *How can your group introduce tension in to the scene?*

- *How will the scene start and finish? How will this influence the tension created in the scene?*

Ask the students to form mixed gender groups of 5. Explain that they will have 15 minutes to develop the scene that should last around 3 minutes.

Once the pupils have shared the work, evaluate and discuss.

- What are the difficulties faced by actors and directors who have to portray people who actually lived?
- Do we have a responsibility to be as accurate as possible when we are representing them on stage?

## ACTIVITY 7

Explain to the students that in this workshop they will be looking at ways of representing the spreading of the ideas in The White Rose leaflets and building an understanding of the risks the group members were taking at the time. Present to the class some of the quotations from the actual leaflets (resource sheet 5). Explain that in the early years of World War II, much of Germany was in a state of confusion. Many people were fearful of their lives and their livelihood and many ordinary Germans had had to make difficult decisions as to where their allegiances lay.

If there are sufficient numbers in the class, the students could divide into four groups, each devising different prepared improvisations and then finding a way of linking the drama into a complete scene involving everyone. Alternatively, the whole group could tackle each improvisation in turn.

*Some of these scenes will use stylized drama, which attempts to represent characters or events in a symbolic or abstract manner. Mime and movement are often features of stylized drama, as is using language in a creative way – perhaps through choral speaking or creating a soundscape. In this form of theatre, the relationship between the actor and audience is often different to that found in realistic drama.*

Group 1:

*The members of The White Rose used a hand operated duplicating machine to print their leaflets. This was a dangerous business and had to be done in complete secrecy. Often working at night and in secret locations, they would print thousands of leaflets to distribute. Some of the leaflets were left in places where lots of people gathered. Some of them were posted to people picked out of the telephone directory. They often targeting village and town pubs as well as universities as places where they thought their ideas might be discussed.*

Explain that the students are to create a stylized improvisation of the different parts of the hand operated duplicating machine using mime and movement. These could be the turning of the hand crank, inking the typeset, loading paper, folding, addressing and posting the leaflets to different areas in Germany.

- Using resource sheet 5, how could they include quotations from the actual leaflets into their stylized scene?
- How could they ensure that there is a sense of tension in the scene? For instance, how might they imply the fear of informers, of being discovered, being followed to the secret location, or of having to work quickly and quietly?

Group 2:

*The members of The White Rose would copy, at random, names from telephone directories and use the postal system to spread their ideas all over Germany. Remembering that it was both illegal and very dangerous to criticize Hitler and his policies, imagine what it might have felt like to receive one of the leaflets. Would people be frightened of being associated with The White Rose – in case they were called traitors? Would some people be angry, seeing it as being unpatriotic and against Germany? Or do you think some people might agree with the leaflets and be glad that people were finally speaking out?*

Ask the group to create a prepared improvisation that shows a number of different reactions to people picking up or receiving the leaflets in the post.

- Using resource sheet 5, how could they incorporate quotations from the actual leaflets into their scene?
- If the group organises itself by breaking down into pairs or threes to show the different reactions, how could they link these elements of the scene? By using still images? By using the same statement from the leaflets repeated in each reaction? By using a single piece of paper passed from pair to pair to symbolize the leaflet?

Group 3:

A few months before they were finally arrested, Hans Scholl, Alexander Schmorell and Willi Graff staged a daring protest. Over 3 nights they used bitumen paint and brushes to daub slogans on the sides of houses on one of the main roads near Munich University. They wrote 'Down With Hitler', 'Hitler Mass Murderer', 'Freedom', and drew crossed-out swastikas. They did this despite the fact that the police had redoubled their efforts to catch the protesters and were patrolling the streets. If they were caught it would mean certain arrest and very possibly execution, but their gesture very publicly presented their ideas.

- Ask the students to consider how they could represent these events. Considering the dangers involved, there is great scope in this scene to explore

the creation of dramatic tension. For instance, splitting the action on stage between the authorities and the three men of The White Rose might give opportunities to build tension by showing events happening at the same time: one group might show an officer briefing a patrol, while the other shows the protestors quickly daubing paint.

#### Group 4:

Once the dangerous activity of printing the leaflets had been accomplished, an even more hazardous activity – that of distribution - had to be undertaken. The group would often pack leaflets into suitcases and travel by train to outlying towns and villages. In the event of the train being searched by the police, they would place the suitcases on the luggage rack and hide in the toilet or move to another compartment. These journeys could become very risky and sometimes extremely tense affairs.

- How could the students show the imagined inner thoughts of the people involved in their drama? The action could freeze at points, allowing a few characters to ‘step out’ of the action and briefly speak their thoughts directly to the audience before moving back into the action. This technique is often referred to as ‘stepping out.’

Once the students are happy with each improvisation and they have been refined and developed through rehearsal and evaluation, they can be considered to be viable scenes in the play.

The group working as directors need to consider the following:

- Are all the scenes to be included? Are some scenes more relevant than others? Are some more dramatically effective than others? Does each scene communicate something to the audience, or are some parts confusing or not clear? Sometimes improvisations created in the exploration phases will not make it through to the performance phase.
- What would be a successful order for the scenes to follow? Although the scenes should create an overall picture when put together, they do not develop one chronological narrative that grows event by event. The improvisations stand alone and are like a *montage* – a collection of thematically linked scenes that support each other to create a dramatic whole. To create links between the individual scenes, the technique of cross cutting can be used to move to different moments in different scenes.

*Now we have created a series of scenes, we can make links between them by using a technique called cross-cutting. This is when we re-order the events in the scenes by 'cutting' forwards and backwards to different moments. If there is a moment that we really want to emphasize to the audience, we can repeat it at different times. We could also place two contrasting events side by side to highlight the differences to the audience. This is called juxtaposition.*

It is probably useful to use a large piece of sugar paper to plan out the cross-cutting sequences. Identify the running order of the scenes using a key word or title and write in the cue lines for the next section. This visual aid might help make the concept clear to the students and make rehearsing the complete scene easier.

### ACTIVITY 8

Introduce the idea that in order for the pupils to understand what The White Rose movement was attempting to achieve, the group ought to look at the people who were responsible for trying to stop them.

This opens up a whole area of discussion on how the students might portray the perceived 'heroes' and 'villains' in this true story.

- Ask the pupils to make a list of fictional villains they have come across in films, television and books. How are they portrayed? Are there examples of common traits that these villains share – physical appearance, behaviour, gestures, voice, accent, gender? Can the group develop a stereotyped image of a villain? Is this image accurate? Can anyone think of a villain that is portrayed as being a 'normal' person?

*To continue this exploration further, we are going to use hot-seating. By directly questioning someone in role, we will be able to build up a picture of the character or the event we are exploring. We might use this information to create a scene or to help us understand and portray characters in more detail.*

Explain that you are going to take on the role of a high-ranking Gestapo officer called Mohr, who was trying to track down the members of The White Rose. Reminding them of their previous discussion about stereotypes, ask the group to direct you in acting out the role. Once the group has established how the character should be portrayed, allow them some time for them to formulate some questions they will ask.

Place a chair in the circle and conduct the hot-seating session. It may be useful to evaluate the exercise at the end:

- *Did it help us to understand more about why the authorities wanted The White Rose stopped?*
- *Were the questions answered truthfully?*
- *Do you think that is what the real Mohr might have been like?*

## ACTIVITY 9

*Perhaps it was always inevitable that the young members of The White Rose would get caught. For this part of the workshop we are going to create a scene that shows the authorities and their attempts to find The White Rose members. There are a number of different ways that we can show this.*

*As a whole group we are now going to use stylized or symbolic theatre to represent the authorities and their quest to capture the Scholls and the other members of the group.*

Ask the group to consider children's games as a starting point for this improvisation. Can they list games that include chases or involve hiding or finding people? In the game *What's the Time, Mr. Wolf?* one player stands facing a wall with her back to the 'wolves'. Their objective is to creep forward and grab their victim, but every time she turns round, the wolves have to freeze. Anyone moving is sent to the back to start again.

*Is there a way that we could adapt a children's game to show the authorities closing in on The White Rose? The real danger for the young people of The White Rose would contrast well with the innocence of a children's game.*

*How are we going to portray the Gestapo and members of the Nazi party – as faceless, anonymous figures or as 'real' people? Perhaps we could use the space in an imaginative manner to show their power and status? Perhaps they have a gesture, movement or chant that is repeated as they move in to surround The White Rose?*

Once the pupils have created their improvisations, share the work.

*How could we improve the way in which the audience is drawn through the action of the scene? Tension is linked with pace, so could we introduce a way of varying the pace of the scene from start to finish? Perhaps by using percussion, sound, words or movement that builds steadily during the scene?*

## ACTIVITY 10

Read out the following account that details the capture of Hans and Sophie Scholl as they secretly left leaflets in the University of Munich:

*On Thursday February 18<sup>th</sup> 1943, Hans and Sophie Scholl made their way to the University of Munich buildings carrying a suitcase of White Rose leaflets. As they made their way through the building, they dropped leaflets in the deserted corridors. Knowing that any minute students would come flooding out of their lectures, they made their way out of the building. Outside they found a stack of leaflets at the bottom of their suitcase. Taking an enormous risk, they headed back into the University and*

*climbed a staircase that overlooked the inner courtyard. Hurling the leaflets into the air, they fell to the ground below just as the students arrived. Unfortunately, the University handyman Jakob Schmidt, who was a Nazi Party member, had spotted them. He alerted the authorities and the couple were easily arrested and taken away by the Gestapo for questioning.*

Ask the group to consider ways to represent this sequence of events in a stylized, physical way. How could they show the Scholls hurriedly walking down corridors, depositing their leaflets?

Possible ideas that students might develop further are:

- The majority of the group form a corridor, while two students in role as Hans and Sophie walk between them ‘dropping leaflets’;
- Using stage blocks at various levels to represent Hans and Sophie on the staircase;
- Using sheets of paper to represent the leaflets showering down upon the students below;
- The rest of the group form a still image of the students coming out of their lectures. As the leaflets settle, the still image could change from being a group of students, to the police who make the arrest.

Using still image as a controlling device in this sequence should avoid a 'chase and arrest' scene but will need careful structuring so that the narrative thread is clear to the audience.

For the final section it may be appropriate to introduce a narrator. Ask a student to take on the role of Jakob Schmidt, the university handyman who alerted the authorities. He or she could describe the events from their point of view as the 'hero of the hour'. An example of a possible speech is suggested in resource sheet 6.

## ACTIVITY 11

*We are going to look at a scene from a play that is based on the events of The White Rose. In this scene, the captive Sophie Scholl is interrogated for the first time by Mohr, a high-ranking Gestapo officer.*

Organize the group into a circle and invite three students who will read the parts of Sophie Scholl, Mohr and Bauer. Instruct the students playing Mohr and Bauer (the guard) to perform in the circle. Place a chair for the student playing Sophie Scholl.

*As you watch the scene, see if you can decide which character has the highest status: who has most power over the situation or the other characters in the scene?*

Allow the actors to perform the extract (resource sheet 7) from start to finish. Hand out copies of the script to the rest of the group and discuss the scene.

- What does the group think the author is trying to achieve in this scene? What is she trying to communicate to the audience? What is the style of the scene – is it ‘naturalistic’ or ‘stylized’ theatre?
- Who has the highest status in the scene? The situation suggests that it should be Mohr as he is in charge and asking all the questions. Are there moments when the status changes, perhaps when Sophie Scholl manages to evade the questions, explains the empty suitcase or quotes (in uncomfortable detail) from the leaflets’ description of Hitler?
  - What does the group think of Mohr’s attitude towards his young female captive? What clues are there to show his prejudices about young women and the kind of activities that are suitable for them?
  - How does Sophie use Mohr’s preconceptions about women to gain the upper hand?
  - At the end of the scene, who seems to have the most status?
  - In the scene Mohr has not been able to get Sophie to admit to the crime: she has explained her actions, called Hitler a mass murderer, and remained pleasant and seemingly naive about the graveness of her situation. What effect does this seem to have on Mohr?

Ask the students to consider how they would portray the characters on stage. For instance, should Sophie be portrayed as:

- Apologetic?
- Frightened?
- Anxious?
- Agitated?
- Calm?
- At ease?
- Pretending to be as helpful as she can?

Does her demeanour change at points in the scene? Can the students identify these key ‘transitions’?

Alternatively, should Mohr be played as:

- Angry?
- Forceful?
- Aggressive?
- Flustered?
- Relaxed and composed?
- Conciliatory?

What effect might these different interpretations have upon the scene?

Does his attitude towards Sophie change during the scene? Can the students pinpoint these changes, and suggest why they have occurred?

Are there moments in the scene when the pace of the action changes? What is implied by the pauses in the dialogue? How do all these factors affect the atmosphere and mood of the scene?

*There are many different ways that this scene could be interpreted and performed. In theatre, this is often achieved through the actor and the director working together. One of the jobs of the director is to help the actor make decisions about how best to present their character on stage. Working in groups of four, assign one person to be the director and create your own version of this scene.*

Allow the groups some time to prepare their work. You may wish to divide the scene into sections and assign each group a section to perform.

#### ACTIVITY 12

Explain that the group is now going to conclude the exploration of The White Rose.

*Along with Hans and Sophie Scholl, Christoph Probst was arrested. After four days of intensive interrogation they faced their accusers in court. The trial lasted only a few hours and as the three defendants had admitted their involvement, no witnesses were called. Proceedings ended with Roland Freisler, Chief Justice of the Peoples Court of the Greater German Reich pronouncing all three guilty of treason. Their sentence was the death penalty.*

*The accused were taken back to prison where Hans and Sophie were allowed a final visit from their parents. All three prisoners then met briefly before they were individually led to the guillotine.*

*To cement their victory and make sure that all resistance was crushed, the Gestapo continued to investigate The White Rose. As they gathered information, more arrests and executions were made.*

Ask the group to imagine that they are a cinema production team who have been making a film about The White Rose. They must now consider what to include as the final scene of the film.

- Why is the final scene of any play or film important?
- How important is it to communicate a mood or atmosphere to an audience?
- Do they want to leave the audience with a sense of despair, or hope and well being?
- How might they achieve an ‘uplifting’ ending when the end of The White Rose was so tragic?

Can the students make links with other groups or individuals who have protested passively or made sacrifices against injustice or intolerance? These could be

contemporary examples that remind us that struggle and protest against oppression are not just confined to history.

- Is there scope to return to an earlier image or scene and use this as the closing sequence of the piece?
- Considering the style of the scene, would the group favour a broadly stylized or more realistic approach?

Once the students have discussed these issues and considered different approaches, allow them time to shape the scene, either working as a whole group or in smaller groups. An effective way of concluding this work while allowing the students to work in a different medium is to use a video camera to record the finished scene. If the students are presenting their work in a final performance, this short video extract could be incorporated into the live performance – perhaps as an ‘epilogue’.

### ACTIVITY 13

This final activity – the creation of a communal poem based on a montage of ‘texts’ already explored in the drama - may enable pupils to reflect upon the meaning of their work, and give a degree of ‘closure’ to the unit of work.

Ask each student to select a word or phrase – significant to them – from all of the work so far explored in The White Rose unit, and to write their phrase on a separate sheet of paper using capital letters and a broad felt tip.

The sheets are now arranged in a single line on the floor. In this way a kind of random ‘poem’ has been created.

Explain to the group that the class will now re-arrange the order of the phrases that make up the poem, in order to create something more structured and intentional. Each pupil is, however, only allowed to make two ‘moves’. If necessary the ‘poem’ can be split into two or three sections in order to make adjustments easier to manage. Once the pupils have made their adjustments to the poem, the sheets are numbered in order to record the final order.

Each pupil reclaims their original sheet that is now numbered, and standing in a circle, the class collaboratively read their poem. This reading can be then polished in various ways:

- Pupils can learn their phrases, and by memorizing which pupil reads before them, the sheets can be discarded;
- The group can experiment with dynamics, tone, pitch, rhythm etc., in order to create mood and atmosphere;
- By ‘framing’ the reading of the poem (as part of a *memorial service* or as an *elegy*, for instance) aspects of ritual can be explored.

As a final moment which might provide a suitably atmospheric end to the unit, experiment with a ritualised performance of the poem whilst re-enacting the memorials to The White Rose created in activity 4.

Insert The White Rose unit map here.

INSERT The White Rose student self assessment sheet here.

White Rose  
Resource Sheet 1

Insert image of Jewish people forced to clean streets

## THE WHITE ROSE

### Resource Sheet 2

‘Long Live Freedom’.

These are the words that Hans Scholl uttered just before his execution by the Nazis in February 1942. At the same time, his sister Sophie was also executed along with their friend Christoph Probst.

What make their deaths unusual at a time when thousands of people were dying on the battlefields of the Second World War was that they were educated young Germans protesting against what their leader Adolf Hitler and his government was doing to their country.

Between the summer of 1942 and February 1943, Hans and Sophie Scholl, with a small group of friends, began to write and distribute a series of pamphlets called *The Leaflets of The White Rose*. These leaflets encouraged ordinary Germans to resist Hitler and to stand up against a government that they thought was sending thousands of Germans needlessly to their deaths.

This was a very dangerous thing to do. It was illegal to openly criticize Hitler or any of his policies. Hitler’s police - the *Gestapo* - were everywhere, and anyone who dared to speak out knew they risked being arrested, tortured and even executed if they were caught.

Meeting secretly, the members of *The White Rose* would use a hand powered duplicating machine to print out thousands of copies of the leaflets. These would be posted to people all over Germany, or left in places where many people could see them. At the bottom of each leaflet they would ask people to ‘make as many copies of this leaflet as you can and distribute them.’

Some members of the movement would even go out late at night and paint graffiti like ‘Down with Hitler’ and ‘Hitler the Mass Murderer’ in large letters on buildings in Munich.

As The White Rose started to gather public support, the Gestapo increased its efforts to find the ringleaders. Eventually they were successful. A member of the Nazi party saw Hans and Sophie Scholl throwing leaflets from the balcony of a large hall in Munich’s university.

After being arrested, they were interrogated by the Gestapo for four days and then tried for treason. They were found to be guilty by the court and sentenced to death.

The execution was carried out almost immediately. Other deaths followed as the Gestapo tried to remove all trace of *The White Rose* and the resistance it represented.

Today, in modern Germany, it is a different story. Germans celebrate the strength and courage of The White Rose movement. A square at the University of Munich is named after Hans and Sophie Scholl and there are schools and streets all over Germany named for each member of the group.

## THE WHITE ROSE

### Resource Sheet 3

*[This resource sheet presents fragments of The White Rose story to be used in exercise 3. The incidents are presented in chronological order from the Scholl's family life in the small town of Ulm, to the arrest and subsequent execution of Hans and Sophie.]*

1. As a teenager, Hans joins the Hitler Youth. He soon becomes unhappy with their condemnation of all things 'non-German'. At one meeting he has an argument and hits a senior official from the Hitler Youth organization he belongs to.
2. The Gestapo, alerted by the children's connection with an outlawed youth organization, arrive at the family home. As the men search the house, Frau Scholl makes the excuse of 'going to the bakers'. She quickly hides incriminating books in her basket and takes them to a neighbour. Nevertheless, Sophie, with her younger sister Inge, and older brother Werner, are arrested and taken away. Hans is arrested later and remains in custody for 5 weeks.
3. In a symbolic gesture, Werner Scholl leaves the Hitler Youth. To show the blindness of the regime he later ties a swastika scarf around the eyes of a statue standing in front of the town's Law Courts. Werner is eventually to die serving as a soldier at the Russian Front.
4. Hans Scholl is conscripted into the German army. Serving as a soldier, he sees Russian and Jewish prisoners being treated badly. In a gesture of solidarity, he gives an old man his tobacco ration. To a young Jewish girl he offers his food. She throws it back. He offers it again, this time with a flower. She accepts and puts the flower in her hair.
5. In another incident Hans shakes hands with Jewish prisoners as they are loaded on to cattle trucks bound for concentration camps.
6. Students at Munich University throw a Nazi speaker out of the lecture hall after he makes lewd comments regarding female members of the student audience. That afternoon there is an anti Nazi protest on the streets of Munich - reportedly the only public demonstration against the Nazis in the history of the Third Reich.
7. Hans, Sophie and Elisabeth Scholl arrive at Munich University for a lecture by Kurt Huber. Along with the other students, they are confronted

with the word 'Freedom' daubed on the wall in thick paint. Some students are angry and speculate as to who is responsible for such an act of defiance, the members of The White Rose, who are present, smile to themselves.

8. On Thursday 18 February 1943, Hans and Sophie hurry through the corridors of the University depositing copies of the sixth and final leaflet. They leave the main building. Finding some spare copies in their suitcase, they re-enter the university, heading for the main staircase. They tip the remaining leaflets into the courtyard below, just as the students stream into the square. Seeing this act, the university's caretaker and Nazi party member, Jakob Schmid, challenges them and seizes each of them by the arm. The Gestapo is called and the Scholls are taken away in handcuffs.
9. Christoph Probst is arrested the next day and stands trial with the Scholls. Despite being a family man with 3 children, he like the others is sentenced to death.
10. At the trial of Sophie and Hans, their father Robert Scholl has to be escorted from the room after standing up and denouncing the court proceedings.
11. During her four days of interrogation, Sophie Scholl's leg is hurt so badly she needs crutches to walk to the execution scaffold. Despite the pain, she climbs the steps to the guillotine unaided.
12. As Hans Scholl is escorted to the guillotine, he shouts one last defiant sentence 'Es lebe die Freiheit!' - 'Long live freedom'.
13. Some days later, Professor Huber, a university lecturer and a significant supporter of The White Rose is arrested and executed along with a number of other students linked to the cause.
14. Copies of The White Rose leaflets eventually find their way to England. They are re-printed and dropped by the thousands by the Royal Air Force during bombing raids over mainland Germany.

## THE WHITE ROSE

### Resource Sheet 4a

#### *The Meeting*

These are the characters you might wish to include in your scene. Use the descriptions to help you make decisions about how to portray them in your acting.

**Hans Scholl:** Age 25. As a corporal in the German medical core, he saw the realities of modern warfare and the destructive policies of Hitler. A founder member of The White Rose he was executed with his sister on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1943.

**Sophie Scholl:** Age 22. Like her brother, Sophie became disillusioned with the fanatical support of Hitler and National Socialism. A keen reader and talented artist, she attended the same university as her brother and there became active with The White Rose.

**Alexander Schmorell:** Age 26. Called *Alex* or *Shurik* by his friends, he was a doctor who had served in the German army at the Russian front. A keen artist, musician and sculptor he first met Hans Scholl in High School. He was executed on July 13<sup>th</sup> 1943.

**Kurt Huber:** Age 40. A philosophy lecturer and Associate Professor at the Munich University, he was approached by members of The White Rose for advice. He became involved in the movement and edited the final 2 leaflets. He was executed with Alexander Schmorell.

**Jurgen Wittenstein:** Age 26. Jurgen introduced Hans and Alexander and became a very active member of the movement, editing and distributing the leaflets. He escaped the arrests by serving in the front lines of the war. He is still alive and lives in America.

**Christoph Probst:** Age 24. A medical student and German soldier, Christoph was married with 3 children. He would write much of the content included in the leaflets. He was tried with Hans and Sophie and executed with them on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1943 without seeing his new-born third daughter.

**Willi Graff:** Age 25. Willi was an extremely active member of the group who would write a number of the leaflets. Willi also would paint slogans and graffiti on buildings at night. He was executed on October 12<sup>th</sup> 1943 after being interrogated for months by the Gestapo.

## THE WHITE ROSE

### Resource Sheet 4b

#### *The Meeting*

As a group decide on the following:

- Where are you going to *set* your scene? Where do you think it would have been safest to meet and discuss such things when they were risking their lives even talking about such matters?
- As it was so dangerous to openly criticize the Hitler and the Nazi Party, how do you think they started to discuss the idea of a resistance movement?
- As it would take only person to inform on the others, did they take an oath of secrecy to protect each other's names?
- What worries might the group have had?
- Was everyone willing to take such a personal risk and defy the authorities?

Try and include the following facts in the scene.

- The aim of The White Rose was to get ordinary citizens to question what Hitler and Germany's leaders were actually doing.
  - They thought that by printing and distributing leaflets their message would be spread across the country.
  - Being arrested would mean death or being sent to a concentration camp.
- 
- How can you introduce *tension* into the scene?
  - How will the scene start and finish?
  - What are you trying to *communicate* to the audience in the scene?

## THE WHITE ROSE

### Resource Sheet 5

#### Extracts from *The White Rose* Leaflets

It is certain that today every honest German is ashamed of his government.

-----

Who among us has any conception of the dimensions of shame that will befall us and our children when one day the veil has fallen from our eyes and the most horrible of crimes - crimes that infinitely outdistance every human measure - reach the light of day?

-----

Since the conquest of Poland three hundred thousand Jews have been murdered in this country in the most bestial way.

-----

Jews, too, are human beings.

-----

Why do German people behave so apathetically in the face of all these abominable crimes?

-----

The meaning and the goal of passive resistance is to topple National Socialism, and in this struggle we must not recoil from any course, any action, whatever its nature.

-----

At all points we must oppose National Socialism, wherever it is open to attack. We must soon bring this monster of a state to an end. A victory of fascist Germany in this war would have immeasurable, frightful consequences.

-----

The defeat of the Nazis must unconditionally be the first order of business.

-----

Sabotage in armament plants and war industries, sabotage at all gatherings, rallies, public ceremonies, and organisations of the National Socialist Party.

-----

Neither Hitler nor Goebbels can have counted the dead.

-----  
Every word that comes from Hitler's mouth is a lie.

-----  
Has God not given you the strength, the will to fight? We must attack evil where it is strongest, and it is strongest in the power of Hitler.

-----  
Germans! Do you and your children want to suffer the same fate that befell the Jews?

-----  
For us there is but one slogan: fight against the party! We will not be silent. We are your bad conscience. The White Rose will not leave you in peace!

## THE WHITE ROSE

### Resource sheet 6

I remember it very well. It was Thursday the 18<sup>th</sup> of February and of course the year was 1943. I was going about my duties, as I always do when I saw the man and woman walking down the corridors. The unusual thing that drew my attention was the suitcase they had with them, they also seemed to be nervous – acting in a strange manner and they were hurrying, as if they were late for a train or something.

A few minutes later, when I saw them at the top of the staircase, I knew something was very wrong. In front of my very eyes I saw them tip up their suitcase and dozens of pieces of paper began falling through the air to the ground below. All this happened just as the students came out of their lectures and poured into the courtyard. Some of the students caught the leaflets as they fell to the ground and began reading them.

I knew what I had to do, after phoning the police, I started locking the doors so that they could not escape. It was over in minutes. They were arrested immediately and taken away. Even then, I had no idea that it was the people who call themselves The White Rose.

THE WHITE ROSE  
Resource Sheet 7

**The White Rose by Lillian Garrett-Groag**

**ACT 1 SCENE 3**

*Bauer in brown-shirt uniform, an unthinking face and anodyne grin, escorts Sophie Scholl in. Mohr indicates a chair for her to sit on, and continues to look through the reports while he talks.*

**MOHR** Name?

**SOPHIE** Sophie Scholl.

**MOHR** Age?

**SOPHIE** Twenty-one.

**MOHR** Occupation?

**SOPHIE** Student at the University of Munich.

**MOHR** What do you study?

**SOPHIE** Biology and philosophy.

**MOHR** I thought girls went for literature courses.

**SOPHIE** Oh, I read a lot of...

**MOHR** What?

**SOPHIE** ...things. Whatever is allowed -- available.

**MOHR** Love stories and such?

**SOPHIE** *(Pause)* Yes.

**MOHR** Do you know what you're accused of?

**SOPHIE** Something about some leaflets?

**MOHR** You are suspected of co-authoring and distributing a set of pamphlets hostile in the extreme to the Führer, the Reich and the German War effort.

**SOPHIE** Goodness.

**MOHR** These pamphlets are, naturally, anonymous, and titled ‘The White Rose.’

**SOPHIE** I know nothing about it, sir. (*Pause*)

**MOHR** What were you doing in school? You've no classes today according to your schedule here.

**SOPHIE** We decided to go home tonight. To Ulm. We had to let some friends know. (*Beat*) Do you think we'll be able to catch the five o'clock train, sir? If not, I have to call home.

**MOHR** You... *suddenly* decided to go to Ulm? Why?

**SOPHIE** Oh, mother... you know how it is.

**MOHR** And your entire luggage consists of an empty suitcase.

**SOPHIE** What?

**MOHR** When you were arrested, you were carrying an empty suitcase.

**SOPHIE** Oh, for the laundry.

**MOHR** The laundry.

**SOPHIE** Mother does our laundry and we pick it up from her. (*Privately*) Hans never washes his own clothes. Disgusting.

**MOHR** Yes, well. Sophie... is it?

**SOPHIE** Yes, sir. (*Very clearly*) Sophia Magdalene Scholl.

**MOHR** Sophie, do you know the contents of the pamphlets in question?

**SOPHIE** I've seen them around. Everybody has. So I have an idea.

**MOHR** And you know what they say.

**SOPHIE** ...I believe they call the Führer a ... charlatan, and a... well, a mass murderer, and a –

**MOHR** Ah... yes, I –

**SOPHIE** ...and a gangster, and –

**MOHR** Yes, that's not what I –

**SOPHIE** ...a sub-human, ...let's see, what else...

**MOHR**        (*Quickly*) There's no need to be specific –

**SOPHIE**        ...since you asked...

**MOHR**        (*Overriding her*) I am talking about the political implications of the ideas expressed.

**SOPHIE**        Politics? I don't know anything about politics.

**MOHR**        (*Looks at her for a moment*) No... (*Outside, the church bells toll the half hour*)

**SOPHIE**        Church bells, next door! I love them!

**MOHR**        They give me a headache.

## THE WHITE ROSE

### Resource Sheet 8

## DRAMATIC TENSION - A CHECKLIST

### FROM THE CHARACTERS POINT OF VIEW:

#### WHAT DO THEY WANT TO **ACHIEVE**?

- to succeed at a task?
- to gain power?
- to fall in love?
- to get out of a difficult situation?
- to make sense of what is happening to them?
- to seek revenge?
- to help someone?

#### WHAT **PRESSURES** ARE THEY UNDER?

- the pressure of time?
- the pressure of competition?
- the pressure of the task?
- the pressure of responsibility?
- the pressure to make sense of what is happening?
- the pressure to make a choice?

#### WHAT **CONSTRAINTS** AFFECT THEM?

- constrained by space?
- constrained by relationships with others?
- constrained by a misunderstanding?
- constrained by lack of knowledge?
- constrained by personal inadequacy?
- constrained by conflict?
- constrained by protocol or ritual?
- constrained by an inability to make a decision?

### FROM THE AUDIENCE'S POINT OF VIEW:

- how far do we identify with a character's situation?
- how far do we feel what they are feeling?
- do we share their frustrations when things go wrong?
- do we want to know what happens next?
- are we surprised or shocked by what happens?
- are we relieved when something finally happens?
- do we 'know' something that a character does not?
- is the fictional world depicted in the drama causing tension with something in our 'real life'?
- are we excited by the performers' skill?

(Adapted From Morgan And Saxton, 1987 & O'Toole And Haseman, 1986)