

Damage and Repair: 20 years of Restorative Justice

Student Resource Pack

Curriculum subjects:

Business Studies, Citizenship, Criminology, Economics, Extended Project Qualification, Film Studies, Geography, Higher Project Qualification, History, Law, Media Studies, Philosophy, Psychology, Politics, Religious Studies, Sociology

Suitable for:

GCSE, A level, IB and undergraduate level.

Introduction to the project:

The [Why me?](#) captures 20 years of Restorative Justice stories to archive in the British Library. Restorative Justice is a process that allows someone who has been harmed to have a dialogue with the person that harmed them. This could be through a face-to-face meeting or indirectly through letters or a shuttle process. Restorative Justice is completely voluntary and allows participants to get their questions answered, have a chance to have their say and find a positive way forward. The process is managed by trained experts and won't go ahead unless they decide it is safe

The project gathers oral history interviews of people who have been through the process, and a small selection of professionals in the field. As well as the British Library archive, the testimonies will be used to create podcasts, radio shows, a web archive, short clips for communications and educational workshops for school children. This will help platform key voices in the sector whilst simultaneously capturing the heritage of 20 years of Restorative Justice.

The aims of this resource pack are:

- to introduce learners and teachers to the concepts of restorative justice and oral history
- to critically engage with a range of oral history testimonies from those directly involved in the restorative justice process
- to encourage learners and teachers to create further resources building on this work to share in their schools and wider communities

How to use this resource pack:

The resource pack will give you a series of questions and activities to develop thinking around both restorative justice and oral history. It also gives guided answers to support responses and deepen understanding. You can use the Damage and Repair interviews, and clips from those interviews to share real life stories of people who have been through the restorative justice process after being a victim of crime, or committing a crime. Please note these recordings contain sensitive content about crime and can be distressing so please remember to listen with care. Finally, there is a list of additional resources at the end of the pack to support further learning.

Introduction to restorative justice

1. What do the words 'restorative' and 'justice' mean to you?

2. Have you come across the term restorative justice before? If so, in what context(s)? If not, based on your answer to number 1, what do you think a restorative justice process might involve?

3. Think about a time in your life when you've been harmed by someone else. If you could speak to the person who caused the harm (either in a letter or face to face), what would you say?

4. Think about a time in your life when you've caused harm to someone else. If you could speak to the person who you harmed (either in a letter or face to face), what would you say?

5. Have a read of these statements and identify all the ones that you think are common misconceptions of restorative justice (clue: it might be more than one statement)
 - i. If a perpetrator takes part in a restorative justice process, they are more likely to have a reduced sentence for good behaviour
 - ii. A restorative justice process can only be used effectively for petty crimes
 - iii. A restorative justice process needs to happen soon after the crime was committed if it is going to be effective
 - iii. A restorative justice process can only happen when it is deemed safe and both the harmer and harmed voluntarily agree to take part
 - iv. Restorative justice means when a perpetrator wants to meet a victim to say sorry

Introducing the concepts - Oral history, restorative justice, or both?

1. Colour code each of the statements according to whether it is:
 - i. Only relevant to restorative justice
 - ii. could be relevant to both but more relevant to rj
 - iii. could be relevant to both but more relevant to oh
 - iv. only relevant to oral history
 2. Choose a selection of statements that you're interested in. Jot down some thoughts, ideas and questions ready to discuss
 3. Choose a selection of statements that you'd like to know more about. What kind of research could you do to find out more about these areas?
 4. Be ready to feedback to the rest of the group
- a. Involves people in a room in conversation with each other
 - b. Involves a trained practitioner to facilitate the conversation
 - c. An attempt to gain a greater understanding between harmer and harmed to try and seek repair
 - d. An opportunity to come to terms with life-changing events in the past and seek resolution
 - e. Typically something that is done towards the end of someone's life and might take many hours over the course of multiple interviews
 - f. It recognises the power of dialogue as a way to reflect on past events to seek understanding
 - g. It requires deep trust, willingness to tell the truth and non-judgemental listening
 - h. It has the potential to foster deeper human connections through talking in honest and open ways about meaningful life events
 - i. Emphasises the importance of personal testimony, giving individuals a voice and the agency to tell a story in their own words
 - j. The conversation is recorded and kept permanently in an archive, although the recording might not be listened to until years after it was made
 - k. The process has the potential to have a wider impact on government policy
 - l. A grassroots, person-centred approach that seeks to open up discourse beyond a state-centred narrative
 - m. Whilst existing in a modern framework, it draws on ancient and deep-seated ideas
 - n. The impact of engaging in a meaningful human encounter has the potential to be healing for both parties and the wider community
 - o. A process that's purpose is to bring about positive social change

Oral history are recorded interviews with people who have lived through historical events, undertaken for a particular purpose and with a view to archive and preserve for public access. The oral history interview is a collaboration of both interviewer and interviewee and is based on ethical standards and informed consent.

Some questions to get us started:

1. Have you had any previous experiences with oral history? E.g. hearing someone give a personal testimony in school, interviewing a family member for a project

2. What are some of the strengths and limitations of oral history?

3. Why do you think there has been an oral history project of Why me?

4. What strengths and limitations are there for doing this oral history project?

5. Who are we expecting to hear from? What might we expect them to talk about?

6. What makes for a good oral history interview?

Listening to the interviews - interactive listening

As we listen, we're going to follow a technique called interactive listening. This is designed to try and create deep engagement with the listening process through mentally putting yourself into the conversation in order to be actively present with the encounter.

The thoughts that you note down can be private and there's no expectation that it'll be shared, but you might want to contribute your reflections after we've had a chance to listen, based on what you've noted down and thought about.

Before we listen to each clip

- based on the contextual information, what kind of things are you expecting to hear?

As we listen

- You might want to note down any key words and phrases
- You might want to draw as you listen

After you've listened

- What did you find out?
- How far was it in line with your expectations?
- Were there any surprises? Any interesting omissions?
- What follow up questions would you like to have asked?
- What connections can you find between the clips?

After you've listened to all the interviews:

1. What role (if any) did the interviewer play in the clips we listened to / How far do you think they shaped the conversation?
2. Which interview(s) sparked the most interest for you and why?
3. What follow up work / research might you want to do here?

Based on what you've heard:

4. What do you think are some of the opportunities for using restorative justice? How and where could it be used?
5. What further questions do you have about the restorative justice process?

Taking it further

You might want to write an extension essay (for the IB) or for Higher Project Qualification or Extended Project Qualification (GCSE or A level) to develop your research and understanding about restorative justice. You might want to develop a group HPQ/EPQ, each examining restorative justice through a different lens. Some suggested questions are below:

How have practices in Canada, New Zealand, Australia and other Indigenous communities influenced the thinking and development behind restorative justice in the U.K.?

How do different political and philosophical perspectives interpret and understand restorative justice?

How do different religious beliefs understand restorative justice?

How has indigenous knowledge contributed to the development and understanding of restorative justice?

How far do you agree with the view that people are morally redeemable?

Why do people stop committing crime?

How successfully has restorative justice been used within the criminal justice system in the U.K.?

How successfully has restorative justice been used in schools and communities in the U.K.?

How does the use of restorative justice within and beyond the criminal justice system compare across countries?

What are the arguments for and against using restorative justice in different settings?

How has restorative justice been used in areas of conflict such as Northern Ireland?

How has restorative justice been used in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa following the end of apartheid?

How has restorative justice been represented in the U.K. media and / or film and literature?

Taking it even further

In addition to academic writing, you might also be interested in presenting learning in more creative formats, such as writing a blog on your experiences of listening to the interviews, doing some creative writing around themes of justice, forgiveness, damage and repair, creating your own oral history project, and / or making your own podcast, documentary or screenplay. If you're completing an HPQ / EPQ, this creative output could become the artifact for your research project.

You can find out more about Restorative Justice on the Why me? website: www.why-me.org

For those interested in podcasting, here's the link to the Damage and Repair project - [Damage and Repair: 20 years of Restorative Justice](#) which features extracts of testimonies with a range of those involved in the project. Linked to this, Why me? have made a series of podcasts called [Restorative Talks](#).

Episode 3 features the interview with Nick Dawson - <https://open.spotify.com/show/47hBhmd7qaGDbKDpBID03U>

This episode of the Secret Life of Prisons features an interview with Khamran Uddin - <https://pod.link/1481971681/episode/NjdjMWYwOTkzNzgyZDdjOWU1MTAyZDI2>

The Secret Life of Lifers is made by the Prison Radio Association. This episode focuses on what it's like to receive a life sentence, and features interviews with those who have had this experience, as well as two criminologists who discuss their research - [The Secret Life of Lifers: Part 1 - Life After Prison | Podcast on Spotify](#)

Finally, BBC sounds has three excellent radio programmes that all deal with themes of restorative justice.

[BBC Radio 4 - Archive on 4, Damage and Repair](#) - this features extracts drawing on the Damage and Repair project and is useful for anyone interested in developing their understanding

[BBC Radio 4 - Life Changing. I shook hands with the man who nearly killed me](#) - really interesting interview with an M.P. who had direct experience with restorative justice

[Beyond Belief, Restorative Justice - BBC Radio 4](#) - this is excellent for anyone interested in the religious angle to restorative justice (particularly interesting disagreement on this at 19 mins) and includes the views of Tim Newell, former Governor of the therapeutic prison Grendon (discussed in Nick Dawson's interview) as well as the the history of indigenous practices in Canada (at 25 mins)

[BBC Radio 4 - Thinking Allowed, Life Imprisonment](#) - great for any Sociology or Criminology students, this programme considers the impact of life imprisonment on prisoners and society.

For those interested in blogging and / or carrying out your own oral history project, have a look at the Oral History Society website - <https://www.ohs.org.uk/blog/>
Plus here's a dedicated page for schools and young people:
<https://www.ohs.org.uk/for-schools-main-page/>

Plus here's a free, downloadable copy of the Oral History Journal from 2023, with a specific focus on the Life Story in Oral History Practice:

[THE LIFE STORY IN ORAL HISTORY PRACTICE](#)

For those interested in watching and / or making films and documentaries, you might be interested in: the film Red Dust (2004), a fictional drama based on South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Committee. It's freely available on the BBC iplayer: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/b00ftflp/red-dust>

Finally, here's a short selection of readings and articles to help develop your thinking:

This Guardian article introduces concepts of intergenerational justice and transcendent goals [‘We look deeper’: the Native court settling cases outside the justice system | Native Americans | The Guardian](#)

This Guardian article explores the therapeutic prison Grendon and asks whether this form of rehabilitation works: [Life inside a therapeutic prison: ‘Look, we’ve done some terrible things ...’](#)

Crewe, B., Hulley, S., Wright, S. [Life imprisonment from young adulthood: a longitudinal follow-up study | Prisons Research Centre](#)

Maruna, S. (2016). Desistance and restorative justice: it's now or never. Restorative Justice, 4(3), 289–301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20504721.2016.1243853>

Shapland, J., Buchan, J., Kirkwood, S., & Zinsstag, E. (2024). Creating a people-centred view of risk and restorative justice. Criminology & Criminal Justice, 24(5), 1047-1068. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17488958241269018> (Original work published 2024)