

# TEACHING ABOUT **GRENFELL**

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS





# Why Teach Disaster Justice?

Disasters like the Grenfell Tower fire do not happen by chance. They reveal how inequalities, ignored warnings and failures in care can cost lives. Schools play a vital role in helping young people understand:

What happened

Why it happened

How injustices can be challenged

What ethical responsibilities they hold as future citizens and professionals

This guide supports educators to approach this work safely, sensitively and constructively. It centres the voices of the Grenfell community, who co-developed the insights that underpin this framework.



# Education for disaster justice: Core principles

These core principles outline how to teach about Grenfell safely, ethically and meaningfully, guiding educators to centre humanity, amplify community voices, address systemic injustice and create emotionally supportive spaces for learning.

## Start with humanity, not the horror

Show who lived in Grenfell Tower: families, friendships, cultures, everyday joys. Humanity must come before analysis of the tragedy.

## Honour lived experience

Treat survivors' and bereaved families' insights as foundational knowledge. Avoid sensationalism or retraumatisation.

## Situate events in social and structural context

Help students see how inequality, housing conditions, governance and ignored warnings shaped the disaster, understanding Grenfell as systemic failure.

## Emphasise justice, not just memory

Highlight ongoing accountability, centre community voices, and connect learning to structural causes so students view remembrance as an active commitment to justice.

## Support emotional safety and dialogue

Create structured, compassionate spaces for discussion, normalise varied emotional responses, and provide alternatives for participation so students can engage safely and respectfully with difficult content.

# What Learners Should Know

## LEARNING AIMS

Students should develop:

- Empathy for those who lived in the Tower
- Understanding of Grenfell as a vibrant, multicultural community
- Awareness that disasters affect real people whose lives continue long after media coverage ends



## The Human Story & Community Context

## TEACHING APPROACHES

Use activities such as:

- “Life in the Tower: What do we learn about this community?”
- Mapping the diversity of cultures, languages and family experiences

Avoid using distressing images or asking students to relive the night of the fire.

## KEY MESSAGES

- Grenfell was a home full of diversity, connection and memory.
- Students must appreciate the value of what was lost before examining why the loss occurred.

## LEARNING AIMS

Students should understand:

- The disaster was preventable
- Corporate, regulatory and political decisions contributed directly
- Warnings from residents were repeatedly ignored
- Justice is not yet achieved and remains a living issue



## Systemic Failures & the Fight for Justice

## TEACHING APPROACHES

Explore cause and effect using accessible timelines or case studies.

Use questions such as:

- What were residents asking for before the fire?
- Why were their concerns not acted upon?
- Who holds responsibility in systems like housing, safety, construction?

## KEY MESSAGES

- Disaster injustice emerges when people’s voices are not heard.
- Profit, cost-cutting and unequal treatment shaped the conditions that allowed Grenfell to happen.

# What Learners Should Be Able to Do

Learners should develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions to analyse injustice, make ethical decisions, understand others' experiences and participate confidently in actions that promote safety, accountability and community wellbeing.

1

## Decision Making

Develop the ability to evaluate complex choices, recognise ethical tensions, and challenge unsafe or unjust decisions.



2

## Professional Ethics

Understand professional responsibilities and learn to uphold safety, accountability and integrity across future careers.



3

## Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

Build respectful communication skills, recognise others' emotions, and respond sensitively to trauma and loss.



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### **Active Listening**

4

Practise attentive, respectful listening that values unheard voices and prevents misunderstandings with negative consequences.

### **Community Action**

5

Recognise the power of collective effort and learn to participate confidently in civic and community initiatives.

### **Critical Media Literacy**

6

Analyse media narratives critically, identify bias or misinformation, and seek accurate, respectful representations of events.

# Curriculum Examples

There are multiple opportunities across the curriculum to address Grenfell in meaningful, age-appropriate ways. Different school subjects can illuminate different dimensions of the disaster, supporting holistic understanding, critical thinking and the development of justice-focused knowledge, skills and dispositions in students.

## EXAMPLE 1

### Holding Power to Account after Grenfell (KS3 Citizenship)

#### LINK TO NATIONAL CURRICULUM

- Understand the nature of rules and laws and the justice system, including the role of public institutions
- Explore the ways citizens work together to improve their communities and participate in democratic processes

#### LINK TO EDJ PRINCIPLES

This lesson foregrounds systemic failures, democratic accountability and the importance of listening to community voices. It supports learners to connect civic responsibility with action and understand how marginalised groups can be excluded from decision-making processes.

#### LESSON OUTLINE

- **Starter:** Students examine a short resident quote raising safety concerns.
- **Input:** Teacher explains how different institutions responded before and after the fire.
- **Task:** Groups map responsibilities across government, housing bodies and businesses.
- **Plenary:** Whole-class reflection on how citizens can hold authorities to account.

#### RESOURCES

- Simplified inquiry excerpts
- Community testimony
- Short media segments illustrating civic action

EXAMPLE 2

## Critically Reading Testimony and Media Accounts of Grenfell (KS4 English)

### LINK TO NATIONAL CURRICULUM

- Distinguish between statements that are supported by evidence and those that are not, and identify bias and misuse of evidence
- Make critical comparisons, referring to the contexts, themes, characterisation, style and literary quality of texts

### LINK TO EDJ PRINCIPLES

This lesson foregrounds critical media literacy and justice-oriented reading. Students learn how language, framing and selective evidence shape public understanding of Grenfell, and why evaluating context and perspective is essential for recognising marginalised voices and systemic failures.

### LESSON OUTLINE

- **Starter:** Students read two brief contrasting texts about Grenfell (one community-authored, one from national media) and annotate differences in tone, emphasis and perspective.
- **Input:** Teacher models how to identify unsupported claims, selective evidence and subtle bias, explaining how context and audience influence representation. Brief reference is made to why community testimony often highlights systemic failure and lived experience.
- **Task:** Students evaluate which statements are evidence-based, which rely on assumptions, and how each text constructs its narrative. Groups produce a short comparative explanation focusing on evidence, bias and context.
- **Plenary:** Discuss how critical reading helps challenge misinformation and supports justice.

### RESOURCES

- Paired non-fiction extracts (inquiry summary, community statement, news article).
- Media headline collections showing how different outlets frame the same event.
- Op-eds or commentary pieces with contrasting viewpoints to support bias identification.



### EXAMPLE 3

## Evaluating Safety Claims and Evidence (KS4 Science)

### LINK TO NATIONAL CURRICULUM

- Evaluate risks... including perception of risk; appreciate the power and limitations of science and consider ethical issues
- Evaluate claims based on science through critical analysis of methodology, evidence and conclusions

### LINK TO EDJ PRINCIPLES

This lesson develops scientific reasoning, risk evaluation and evidence scrutiny—skills central to understanding how safety claims, testing procedures and scientific communication affected decision-making before Grenfell. It supports ethical judgement, critical evaluation and an understanding of how scientific evidence can be misused, ignored or limited by systemic factors.

### LESSON OUTLINE

- **Starter:** Present two short, simplified summaries describing how the cladding used on Grenfell Tower was tested prior to installation. One suggests compliance; the other highlights limitations in the testing method. Students highlight what counts as evidence in each extract.
- **Input:** Teacher introduces how scientific testing works (controlled conditions, variables, repeatability) and explains how limitations in testing can lead to misleading safety claims. Briefly link to how cladding tests before Grenfell were criticised for not reflecting real-world conditions.
- **Task:** Groups evaluate which statement uses stronger scientific evidence. They identify missing data, assumptions, possible sources of error, and risks that were underestimated or ignored.
- **Plenary:** Discuss how scientific evidence should inform public safety decisions and what happens when it is overlooked.

### RESOURCES

- Simplified cladding test summaries.
- Case excerpts on fire risk assessment.
- Worksheets for analysing evidence quality.



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## Acknowledgements

Harry Russell  
ESRC Impact Acceleration Account  
The Grenfell Foundation (<https://www.grenfellfoundation.org.uk/>)  
Grenfell United (<https://grenfellunited.org.uk/>)  
Grenfell Tower Memorial Commission (<https://www.grenfelltowermemorial.co.uk/>)  
The SPACE and Space Youth (<https://www.214space.org/>)

## How to cite this report

Park, W., Fancourt, N., Schulz, J. & Wahabi, H. (2026). Teaching about Grenfell: A guide for teachers. [INSERT DOI]