

Sophie Scholl



1 LEAD IN Discuss the following questions in small groups.

1 Can just one person, or a handful of people, really make a difference to the world? What examples can you think of where this has been the case?

2 Imagine you were a student living in Nazi Germany during the Second World War (1938-1945). Would you, or could you, have done anything to prevent what was happening in the concentration camps?

2 VIDEO Watch the trailer for a film about Sophie Scholl, who was a key member of a student-led resistance group in Germany during the War, called The White Rose. What did Sophie do to try and prevent the crimes of the Nazi government? What do you think happened to her as a result?



3 READING Read the article about Sophie Scholl and the White Rose and check your ideas.

Growing up in Nazi Germany, Sophie Scholl had automatically become a member of the girl's branch of Hitler Youth, the League of German Girls, at the age of twelve, and she was soon promoted to Squad Leader. However, as discrimination against the Jews grew, Sophie began to question what she was being told. When two of her Jewish friends were **barred** from joining the League, Sophie protested and as she grew older she became more and more **disillusioned** by the Nazi Party.

¹Her father was a secret anti-Nazi and he encouraged her and her brother to question everything, once saying that all he wanted was for them to walk straight and free through life, even when it was hard. Eventually he was arrested after a co-worker overheard him criticising Hitler. ²As Sophie became more fully aware of the **atrocities** being committed by the Nazis, she reached the point where her very understandable sense of self-preservation was overcome by her determination to do the right thing.

In June 1942 Sophie had been sitting in a lecture theatre at the University of Munich when a slip of paper on the floor caught her eye. She picked it up and began to read: "Who among us has any **conception** of the shame that will befall us and our children when one day the veil has fallen from our eyes and the most horrible crimes...reach light of day?" Sophie knew enough to realise that this message referred to the mass **deportation** of Jews and other prisoners to concentration camps, and she had also heard the rumours of the fate that awaited them there. But even being in possession of such a message was illegal and could put her in danger. It was her duty to report it.

Unsure what to do, she went in search of her older brother, Hans, who was also a student at the university. Hans was not in his room, so while she waited for him to return, she leafed through a book on Hans' desk, by the poet Schiller. She turned a page and saw that Hans had underlined a quote with the exact words she had read on the slip of paper. When he returned she **confronted** him and he admitted to having joined an underground **resistance** group, The White Rose. The siblings discussed the responsibility of the individual to follow their **conscience**, even under a dictatorship and eventually Sophie decided to join the group as well.

The White Rose was well-organized. ³They bought stamps and paper from different post offices to avoid detection and they produced five more pamphlets, helping to open people's eyes to the lies and misinformation being spread by the Nazi propaganda machine. ⁴Hearing from the battlefield that the German Army was struggling against the Soviets **emboldened** them, and they believed that the Nazis were **disintegrating** and that war would soon be over. Overconfident, Hans and Sophie brought suitcases full of copies of the sixth pamphlet to the university and distributed them everywhere. ⁵Sophie went to a balcony which overlooked a huge courtyard and let the pamphlets flutter down just as the students were leaving class.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, a janitor spotted what they were doing and reported them. They were arrested and tried four days later. The **siblings** were denied the opportunity to defend themselves, but Sophie spoke out nonetheless, saying, 'Somebody, after all, had to make a start. What we wrote and said is also believed by many others. They just don't dare express themselves as we did.'

Within hours, Sophie, Hans and another member of their resistance group, Christoph Probst, had been executed. Sophie's last words were, 'How can we expect righteousness to prevail when there is hardly anyone willing to give himself up individually to a righteous cause? Such a fine, sunny day, and I have to go, but what does my death matter, if through us, thousands of people are awakened and stirred to action?'

Today hundreds of German schools are called after her, recognizing the extraordinary bravery she and her fellow resistance members showed in the face of great danger. Their actions are a perfect example of what is often called moral courage- the ability to take the right action even when one has doubts or fears about the **consequences**.

4 Complete the notes below. Write no more than three words from the article in each gap.

- 1 Sophie spoke out when she encountered [R2] within the League of German Girls.
- 2 Sophie's father was taken into custody on the testimony of [R2].
- 3 Sophie realised that the message was about what was going on in the [R2]
- 4 The fact that Hans had [R2] was proof he had written the message.
- 5 The siblings were sure that the war was close to the end because of the news from[R2].
- 6 Hans and Sophie were not allowed to [R2] in court.
- 7 Sophie said in court that it was important that someone should [R2].
- 8 She believed that her fate was unimportant if people were [R2] as a result.

- 9 Sophie and her fellow White Rose activists showed both physical and [R2] bravery.



5 Match the highlighted words in the text (1-12) with the definitions (A-L) below.

- A to make someone feel braver
- B the (negative) results of a situation.
- C becoming weaker, falling apart
- D dealt with a difficult situation.
- E extremely cruel or violent acts
- F idea or notion
- G disappointed because you have discovered the truth
- H brothers and sisters
- I forbidden
- J forcing someone to leave a country
- K the part of you that judges what is right and wrong
- L an organisation that fights against an enemy which has control.

6 SPEAKING Discuss the following questions in pairs or small groups.

- 1 Having seen the trailer and read the article, would you now like to watch the film? Why/why not?
- 2 Do you think that what Sophie and the other members of the White Rose did made a difference to the world, either then or now? Why/why not?
- 3 What present day heroes can you think of who have risked their lives to speak the truth?



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

Key

4

- 1 discrimination
- 2 a co-worker
- 3 concentration camps
- 4 underlined a passage
- 5 the battlefield
- 6 defend themselves
- 7 make a start
- 8 awakened/stirred to action
- 9 moral

5

- A embolden
- B consequences
- C disintegrating
- D confronted
- E atrocities
- F conception
- G disillusioned
- H siblings
- I barred
- J deportation
- K conscience
- L resistance