

## UNIT 6 Responsibility

What kind of responsibilities do people have?



### 6.1. Responsibilities at home

People experience conflicts of loyalty – how should they decide?

### 6.2. Why should people obey the law?

What are the best reasons for obeying the law?

### 6.3. Whose problem is it?

How are social responsibilities shared?

### 6.4. Why do people become active citizens?

Why do people want to change society and how can they do it?

## **UNIT 6: Responsibility**

### **What kind of responsibilities do people have?**

#### **Legal responsibility**

Citizens of any state are entitled to know what their rights are in law and also to appreciate the extent of their legal responsibilities to the state and to other citizens. The responsibilities of citizens of democracies are sometimes summed up in three main duties, namely to vote, pay taxes and obey the law.

Responsibilities are often the obverse of rights. For example, the right to free speech brings with it the responsibility to allow the same right to others. However, people who commit crimes do not necessarily lose the rights they denied to others (as in the case of killing or discrimination). Equally, people often have obligations which are not reciprocal, for example, responsibilities towards children.

#### **Moral responsibility**

In EDC it is very important to nurture young people's capacity to think morally. Without this capacity, there can be no critical evaluation of society's laws or social structures in terms of whether they are fair (just). For this reason, when students are taught about laws which affect them, they should also be encouraged to critically evaluate their function and purpose and whether they should be changed in any way.

#### **Teaching for responsibility**

By examining the reasons why people behave in a pro-social way, or highlighting the extent of other people's needs, teachers can help students become more aware of the needs and rights of others. It is also important for teachers to demonstrate attitudes of responsibility in front of students.

Students learn to become responsible citizens not only through study in the classroom, but also through being given the opportunity to learn from experience. In this respect, the good EDC school will be keen to encourage students to be involved in the life of the school and the wider community, for example, through school councils.

#### **In this unit students will:**

- explore the range of responsibilities experienced by citizens in society;
- explore the nature of people's legal responsibilities;
- consider the shared nature of social responsibilities;
- consider why people take personal responsibility to bring about social change.

## UNIT 6: Responsibility

### What kind of responsibilities do people have?

Lesson title	Objectives	Student tasks	Resources	Method
Lesson 1: Responsibilities at home	<p>To explore the range of responsibilities people have.</p> <p>To understand that responsibilities can come into conflict with each other.</p>	<p>Students analyse the moral dilemma.</p> <p>Students discuss alternative analyses.</p> <p>Students make individual statements.</p>	<p>Copies of the story “Milan makes a choice”.</p> <p>Paper for written tasks.</p>	<p>Individual and small group discussion.</p> <p>Plenary discussion.</p> <p>Individual written work.</p>
Lesson 2: Why should people obey the law?	<p>To explore the moral reasoning underlying decisions about conflicts of responsibility.</p>	<p>Students analyse a moral dilemma.</p> <p>Students critically evaluate reasons for legal obedience.</p> <p>Students suggest situations in which a moral duty might override the duty to obey the law.</p>	<p>Copies of the story “Schmitt’s Dilemma”.</p> <p>Paper for written tasks.</p> <p>Blackboard</p>	<p>Shared analysis of moral dilemma.</p> <p>Teacher-supported analysis.</p> <p>Story writing.</p> <p>Plenary discussion.</p>
Lesson 3: Whose problem is it?	<p>To explore the nature of people’s legal responsibilities.</p> <p>To explore the distinction between moral and legal obligations.</p>	<p>Students discuss responsibility for certain social problems.</p> <p>Students complete a thinking frame.</p> <p>Students produce written responses to the issues raised.</p>	<p>Copies of the “letter”.</p> <p>Blackboard</p> <p>Paper for individual student writing.</p>	<p>Structured critical analysis.</p> <p>Small group analysis and discussion.</p> <p>Consensus reaching and negotiation.</p> <p>Personal writing.</p>
Lesson 4: Why do people become active citizens?	<p>To consider the shared nature of responsibility for social problems.</p> <p>To consider reasons why people accept responsibility for other people’s suffering.</p> <p>To explore the role of NGOs in civil society.</p>	<p>Students work in groups to piece together a narrative.</p> <p>Students hypothesise on the reasons for socially motivated behaviour.</p> <p>Students consider the role of NGOs.</p> <p>In groups, students research the work of an NGO or a social campaigner.</p> <p>In groups, students present their findings.</p>	<p>Copies of the slips about Jelena Santic (student handout 6.4), already cut up.</p> <p>Resources to support student research.</p> <p>Resources for group presentations, e.g. large sheets of paper, coloured pens.</p>	<p>Group work.</p> <p>Negotiation.</p> <p>Moral reasoning.</p> <p>Critical evaluation.</p> <p>Research.</p> <p>Group presentation.</p>

## Lesson 1

### Responsibilities at home

People experience conflicts of loyalty – how should they decide?

Learning objectives	To explore the range of responsibilities people have. To understand that responsibilities can come into conflict with each other. To explore the moral reasoning underlying decisions about conflicts of responsibility.
Student tasks	Students analyse the moral dilemma. Students discuss alternative analyses. Students make individual statements.
Resources	Copies of the story “Milan makes a choice”. Paper for written tasks.
Methods	Individual and small group discussion. Plenary discussion. Individual written work.

### Conceptual learning

**Responsibility:** Something people have to do – responsibilities can be legal, moral or social, depending on how they arise.

**Moral conflict:** The conflict people experience when they have to decide between two or more courses of action.

**Civic responsibility:** People’s duties to the wider community. These responsibilities arise because membership of a community brings rights in return for responsibilities.

## The lesson

The teacher introduces the idea that everyone has responsibilities of some kind and that problems can arise when people put some responsibilities above others. There are difficult choices to make. The teacher reads the story “Milan makes a choice” to the class and asks students to think about the following issues. Some questions could be discussed in pairs before answers are finalised. With others, students could usefully make notes before sharing their ideas with the class.

1. What does the story say about the kind of responsibilities Milan has? How many different kinds of responsibility can you see (responsibility to himself, to his family, to the school, to the local community or to the wider world)?
2. What do you think Milan should do and why? Does everyone in the class agree?
3. How difficult a decision do you think Milan has? What makes it difficult?
4. What responsibilities does Milan’s father have in the story? How many can you see?
5. Do you think that Milan’s father was right to ask him to stay at home?
6. How serious would it be if Milan disobeyed his father? Would this be a difficult decision for Milan to make? Give reasons for your answer.

## Written task

In your own words, write down what you think Milan wrote to his father. Compare your version with those of others in the class. The students share their ideas with the class.

## Generalisation

Perhaps the students have already addressed some general aspects of moral conflict.

The teacher responds to these thoughts or asks the class to think more generally about the kinds of responsibility people have towards:

- themselves;
- their family;
- their local community;
- the national community;
- the wider world.

The students work in groups again. They could use a table to set out the different responsibilities. The reasons why people disagree about the extent to which people have responsibilities for others and for the community are then discussed in class.

## Individual statements

The teacher should then give the following information to the students. “In the story some of Milan’s responsibilities come into conflict with each other. Think of some examples of your own where people’s responsibilities might conflict. Take some specific examples and talk about how you think people resolve such conflicts of responsibility.”

If students find this difficult to think about, the teacher should provide some specific examples, drawing on local context.

## Lesson 2

### Why should people obey the law?

#### What are the best reasons for obeying the law?

Learning objectives	To explore the nature of people’s legal responsibilities. To explore the distinction between moral and legal obligations.
Student tasks	Students analyse a moral dilemma in a plenary discussion. Students critically evaluate reasons for legal obedience. Students suggest situations in which a moral duty might override the duty to obey the law.
Resources	Copies of the story “Schmitt’s Dilemma”. Paper for written tasks. Blackboard.
Methods	Shared analysis of moral dilemma. Teacher-supported analysis. Story writing. Plenary discussion.

### Conceptual learning

**Law:** A rule made by local or national government.

**Rule of law:** In democratic societies, governments and those in power are subject to the law of the land. Power changes hands democratically according to the rules of the country’s constitution, not as the result of force or war. People have a general duty to obey the law because it is democratically decided.

**Legal duty:** The obligations people have put upon them by the law.

**Moral responsibility:** The personal obligations people feel based on their beliefs about what is right and wrong.

## The lesson

The teacher introduces the story “Schmitt’s Dilemma” and asks students to work in pairs to consider whether Schmitt should break the law and steal the money or not. The teacher writes different opinions on the blackboard as to whether Schmitt should steal the money.

The teacher asks the students to choose an opinion they agree with and add their own reason in writing:

- Schmitt should steal the money because...
- Schmitt should not steal the money because...

The teacher notes the range of reasons suggested by the students on the blackboard. For example,

“He should steal the money because his daughter’s life is more important than the law against stealing”;

“He should not steal the money because he could get caught”; or

“He should not steal because it is wrong to break the law”.

The different reasons are then discussed in class. Why are they different? Are some reasons better than others? The teacher then asks the students to complete this sentence:

“It is generally wrong to break the law because...”

Alternatively the teacher could ask the class to think of as many reasons as they can as to why it is wrong to break the law. Typically, in answer to this question, people come up with a range of replies, including the following:

“It is wrong to break the law because:

- you could get caught and be punished;
- the law protects people from harm and it is wrong to harm other people;
- everyone would go wild if the law did not stop them;
- law-breaking undermines trust between people;
- society needs law and order to survive, without laws there will be chaos;
- law-breaking violates individual people’s rights, such as their rights to property or to life.”

The teacher points out to the class that people have a range of reasons for obeying the law. Some of these have to do with self-interest, other reasons show concern for other people and some show a concern for the well-being of society as a whole (see note below).

To illustrate these concepts, the teacher could draw a series of three concentric rings on the blackboard with “self”, “others” and “society” written in each ring, starting from the inner ring. The different reasons should be written in the appropriate area.

The teacher stresses that legal obedience of itself is not necessarily a sign of a “good citizen”. Many wrong deeds have been committed by people who were in fact obeying the law, saying they were only “doing their duty”. On the other hand, the story shows that from time to time even good people might have to consider breaking a particular law for a morally good reason.

To support the students’ understanding of the difficult balance between legal duties and moral responsibilities, the teacher then asks the students to write their own short stories in which people (for good reasons) consider breaking the law. Examples might be breaking the speed limit in an emergency or defying a law because it is bad or unjust.

Some of the students read their examples aloud in the plenary discussion. The teacher then underlines the distinction between moral responsibilities (which people take upon themselves as part of their own values and beliefs) and legal duties, which are imposed by governments. The

tensions between these two kinds of responsibility may lead citizens to criticise some laws they disagree with and to work to change them. They may even, on occasion, decide to break some laws for morally positive reasons. History offers many examples of situations in which people have broken laws in order to protest against them or to rebel against tyrannical governments. The teacher should illustrate this with some local examples. The teacher should stress that such actions should not be taken lightly because of the danger of undermining the rule of law, upon which stable democracies depend.

## Note

The moral dilemma offered in this lesson is not unlike the famous “Heinz Dilemma” devised by Lawrence Kohlberg, the American psychologist, in the 1950s. This was one of a number of dilemmas Kohlberg and his colleagues put to young people every three years or so between the ages of 10 and 25. It was found that over time young people, on average, progressed from using self-centred reasoning when they were young to using more person-centred reasoning in early adolescence. Then, in mid-adolescence, most of them showed a progression towards using society-centred reasoning, though the context and the type of dilemma can influence which type of reasoning people use at any one time. Younger children have been shown to regard rules and laws as inflexible and based not on social purpose but solely on the authority of the rule maker. By adolescence, young people are more aware that laws have social purposes, which can be reviewed, questioned and criticised as being morally wrong or unfair.



### Lesson 3

## Whose problem is it?

### How are social responsibilities shared?

Learning objective	To consider the shared nature of responsibility for social problems.
Student tasks	Students discuss responsibility for certain social problems. Students complete a thinking frame. Students produce written responses to the issues raised.
Resources	Copies of the “letter”. Blackboard. Paper for individual student writing.
Methods	Structured critical analysis. Small group analysis and discussion. Consensus reaching and negotiation. Personal writing.

### Conceptual learning

**Social problem:** A problem experienced by all or many members of a community the responsibility for which is shared by different parts of the community or by the community as a whole. Responsibility for a social problem is not necessarily shared equally between the parties involved.

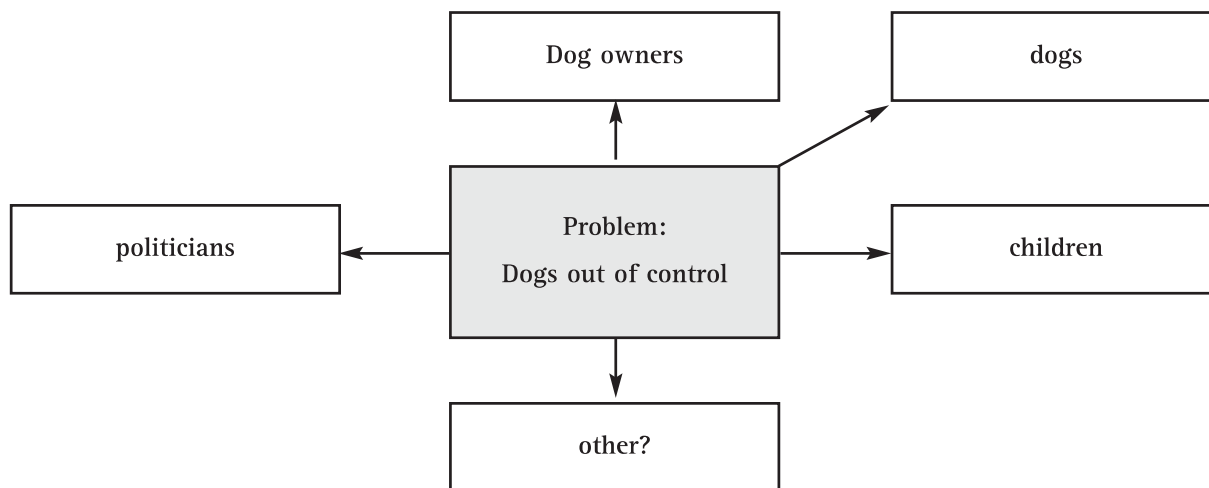
**Degree of responsibility:** The extent to which someone may be responsible for a social problem.

## The lesson

The teacher introduces the imaginary letter to the local newspaper. This contains complaints about two social problems worrying the residents of a town.

The teacher asks the students as a class to: a) identify the issues and b) make a list (for both issues) of those people who might have responsibility. The teacher can assist this process by drawing a thinking frame on the blackboard as shown below.

Who is involved in this problem in any way?



## Group work

### Step 1

Divide the class into groups of three or four. Give each person in the group a number of points equal to the number of parties involved.

### Step 2

Each member of the group first divides up the points between the parties according to how they think the responsibility for the problem should be shared. For example, the children and dogs might get no points, but dog owners and politicians could share the points between them or one of these might get more points than the other.

### Step 3

When each member of the group has made his or her own decision, they take it in turns to share their ideas with each other, giving their reasons. Students can change their minds at this stage. Finally, each group totals the points awarded to each party. This represents how the group as a whole thinks the responsibility for this problem should be shared.

The teacher discusses with the whole class the conclusions reached by the different groups. The teacher explores the different views put forward, eliciting from the students their underlying reasons for these judgments.

If time allows, repeat the exercise with the problem of litter and rubbish. Or substitute a problem more relevant to the locality of the school or more challenging to the ability of the group.

## Note

The problems given in these examples are suitable for students who are not yet very experienced in discussing political problems. This is because they are concrete, visible and relatively easy to understand (although they are still quite hard to solve). Older or more able classes should be asked

to discuss more sophisticated problems, such as unemployment or racism, using the same kind of thinking frame.

**Step 4: Discussion arising from the exercise**

In the final plenary session, the teacher asks the students to consider whether people generally take enough responsibility for their actions. If not, consider how they might be persuaded to do this. Will education help in any way? Or is it necessary to create new laws or introduce stiffer penalties? If local or national government should accept responsibility for certain problems, ask students about the likely cost and how this should be paid for. The teacher could also ask the class to consider the role of young people in addressing social problems of this kind. Should they be excused from responsibility because of their age? Is it right for young people to leave problems in the community to adults? Such issues could form the basis of a personal written task.

The teacher explains the need for local and national politicians to be aware of problems as they develop. Politics is often about tackling shared problems as a community. This does not mean that governments can solve every problem, and many problems would not even arise if people took more responsibility for the consequences of their actions in the first place.

## Lesson 4

### Why do people become active citizens?

#### Why do people want to change society and how can they do it?

Learning objectives	To consider reasons why people accept responsibility for other people's suffering. To explore the role of NGOs in civil society.
Student tasks	Students work in groups to piece together a narrative. Students hypothesise on the reasons for socially motivated behaviour. Students consider the role of NGOs. In groups, students research the work of an NGO or a social campaigner. In groups, students present their findings.
Resources	Copies of the slips about Jelena Santic (student handout 6.4), already cut up. Resources to support student research. Resources for group presentations e.g. large sheets of paper, coloured pens.
Methods	Group work. Negotiation. Moral reasoning. Critical evaluation. Research. Group presentation.

### Conceptual learning

**Social action:** Action taken by citizens or members of a community to tackle a social problem.

**Citizen:** Someone who has legal membership (citizenship) of a national community. Citizenship brings rights and duties, though people differ in the extent to which they feel responsibility for what happens in the community.

**Active citizen:** Someone who takes public action in response to a social or community problem.

**Non-governmental organisation (NGO):** An organisation set up and supported by citizens (not government) to tackle a social problem. NGOs are public, not secret, and work within the structures of a society to bring about change. They often address issues in which people's rights are not adequately protected or recognised by government. NGOs may work with governments or in opposition to them. Democratic societies have laws which allow NGOs to exist and have legal rights and protections.

**Civil society:** People and organisations who take social action, outside of the work done by the government, are said to be part of civil society. Civil society forms part of the link between individual citizens and governments.

## The lesson

The teacher divides the class into groups of around four students. He/she then gives out the information about Jelena Santic (student handout 6.4). Ideally this should be cut into separate slips of paper. The teacher asks the group to share the slips randomly amongst the group members. Each group member takes it in turn to read out their slip to the other members of the group. The group then arranges the slips in an order which makes the best sense.

The teacher then asks the students to discuss the following questions as a group and, as far as possible, to arrive at a group answer. The teacher stresses that group members may disagree, but sharing ideas produces better answers. Individual students should write down their own answers. The teacher then discusses key issues with the class, suggested by the questions below.

### Questions

- What do you think were the main reasons why Jelena Santic got involved in Group 484?
- From what you know about Jelena Santic, what words would you use to describe her?
- Why do you think Jelena Santic and Group 484 did not leave the work they wanted to do to the government?
- What kinds of need does Group 484 try to meet?
- What kind of society did Jelena Santic and Group 484 hope to build?
- How important do you think non-governmental organisations (like Group 484) are in society? What do you think they can achieve? Think about their role in relation to the work of governments, as well as in relation to meeting the needs (rights) of people.
- Think about your own society. What needs are you aware of which could be helped by active individuals or by NGOs taking responsibility?

To give an example, the teacher then reads the following quotation from an international report for 2003 on NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

“The NGO sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to make positive contributions to the process of building democracy and civil society. [...] There are currently 7 874 non-governmental organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the old and the new registration laws. [...]

The NGO sector showed that it was capable of conducting large public campaigns that advocated for change on issues vital to Bosnian society, including youth, gender equality, environment, minority rights protection, etc. Great numbers of NGOs continue to offer services in the fields of health care and social welfare, reconstruction, human rights protection, environmental protection, and minority protection.”<sup>22</sup>

The teacher discusses this quotation with the students. First they should consider whether the areas of work mentioned in the report apply to their country as well. Then the teacher asks them to think of examples of the kinds of projects which could come under these different areas of work.

### Questions

As a final piece of work in this unit, each group could take one of these areas and prepare a presentation about it, based on the lesson. Alternatively, if research facilities are available, the lives of other active citizens in the country could be researched and could form the subject of the group presentation. The students could also include international figures such as Mother Theresa and Nelson Mandela.

22. Source: USAID report entitled “2003 NGO Sustainability Index, Europe and Eurasia” pp. 42 and 43; [www.usaid.gov/locations/europe\\_eurasia/dem\\_gov/ngoindex/2003/bosnia.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/dem_gov/ngoindex/2003/bosnia.pdf)

## Student handout 6.1

### Milan makes a choice

Milan was nearly ready to leave for school when his father came into the kitchen.

“Milan, I really need your help today in the fields. Can’t you stay at home and not go to school? The crops will be damaged if we leave them any longer.”

Milan was not happy.

“Dad, I need to go to school today,” he said, “it’s the first meeting of the student council and I’ve just been elected as one of the 8th grade representatives.”

“But you won’t be the only one, will you?” said his father, “it won’t matter if you don’t go. There are other 8th grade reps, aren’t there?”

“Yes, but I’ll be letting down the people who elected me if I don’t go. Besides, we have our science lesson today. I don’t want to miss it. I have got to pass my exams if I’m going to get to university.”

Milan’s father grunted unhappily.

“You talk about going to university as if your family doesn’t matter. Why can’t you see that we need you at home? What help will you be to us if you go away to university? And where will you go when you have got your qualifications? You aren’t likely to come back here, that’s for sure.”

“You should be pleased that I want to get on in life,” Milan shouted angrily, “unlike most of the boys round here. They have got no ambition. They’ll end up doing what their fathers did.”

“There’s nothing wrong with a bit of respect for the older generation,” Milan’s father replied, his temper rising. “All this talk of education these days, it makes me sick. It seems to me you have forgotten some of the old values, where we all pulled together. You’re just out for yourself.”

Milan sighed. He had heard all this before.

“Dad, if I do get a good job, I won’t forget you and the family. How could you think I’d do that? Do you really want me to leave school and not achieve what I know I’m capable of? All my teachers say I could be a good scientist. Maybe one day I’ll make discoveries that will help everyone in the world.”

Milan’s father banged the table.

“Your first duty is to the family and this community, especially now times are so hard. You’re filling your head with dreams. What do you care about the real world?”

This hurt Milan but he didn’t want to show it. For a second he stared at his father in silent defiance. Then the old man turned round and left the house, slamming the door as he went.

Milan sat down and sighed. He thought for a minute and then made up his mind. He picked up his school bag and turned towards the door. Then he stopped, took out a sheet of paper and sat down to write a note to his father. It was the hardest thing he had done in his life.

## Student handout 6.2

### Schmitt's dilemma

Schmitt's only daughter is very ill. She needs an operation urgently but the only doctors in the area who can do it need money before they will treat anyone. Schmitt doesn't know what to do. He and his wife have some savings which they were hoping would help them buy a small shop. They will gladly give all this to save their daughter, but it is not nearly enough.

Schmitt begs the doctors to do the operation for less, but they say they cannot do this, as it would be unfair on everyone else who has to pay full price. Schmitt asks his family and friends to lend him some money, but this raises only a little more. And all the time Schmitt's daughter is growing weaker and weaker.

In desperation, Schmitt considers stealing the rest of the money to save his daughter's life.

## Student handout 6.3

### Things are getting out of control!

Consider the following letter, which appeared in a local paper.

*As a group of local residents, we are very concerned about a number of problems which seem to arise because people are not prepared to take responsibility for their own behaviour.*

*Many dogs are running wild. Their owners either don't know or don't care about this. The dogs leave their mess on the streets, which is not only unpleasant but can also be a health hazard. Some dogs are roaming in packs and are vicious. They need to be kept under strict control, especially when there are children playing nearby.*

*We also think there is too much rubbish left lying around in the town and on the outskirts. This is because people are too lazy to dispose of it properly. It is ugly, and attracts rats and encourages the spread of disease. When people leave old tins of paint and chemicals around, these can get into streams and rivers and affect the supply of drinking water.*

*Why don't people think about the effects of their actions more? And why don't politicians do something about these problems?*

*Yours sincerely,*



## Student handout 6.4

### Card sort: the life of Jelena Santic

1. Jelena Santic was born in 1944. She was Serbian.	2. Jelena Santic died of cancer in 2000.
3. After Jelena died, some of her friends took a stone from a bombed building in Belgrade. It was decorated by refugee children who had come from Kosovo. Then the stone was taken to the Jelena Santic Park of Peace in Berlin as a symbol.	4. Jelena Santic and Group 484 ran Project Pakrac in Croatia, which helped to build trust between Serbs and Croats after the war in 1991. She was joined by volunteers from both sides and from the international community in this project.
5. Jelena Santic was a founder member and leader of an organisation called Group 484. Group 484 is a non-governmental organisation (NGO). Group 484 encourages non-violent conflict resolution, toleration and co-operation as the basis for building humane societies.	6. Jelena wrote articles against nationalism and racism, which were published internationally. She was awarded an international peace prize for her work by an organisation called Pax Christi.
7. In Berlin, there is a park of peace named after Jelena Santic, in recognition of her work. Jelena had spoken at a public meeting in this park.	8. Jelena Santic became an internationally famous ballerina and ballet teacher.
9. Jelena Santic was an anti-war campaigner and she fought for the human rights of all people. She and her organisation worked hard to bring help to the refugees that flooded into Serbia.	10. Group 484 got its name because one of its first projects worked with 484 families from Croatia who had been made homeless by war. Group 484 gave the refugees help, comfort and advice about their rights.