

The Koenigsgartens & the Kindertransport

Ilse's Story of Survival

Time: 60-90 minutes

Audience: 5th & 6th grade

Student Outcomes: By the end of this lesson, students will...

- Gain a greater understanding of Holocaust history as it applies to Jewish children on the Kindertransport.
- Develop a greater appreciation for non-traditional Holocaust narratives.
- Be able to define and explain the Kindertransport and Kristallnacht.
- Apply empathy to the case study through a protagonist who is around their own age.
- Begin to think critically about their own world and contemporary injustice.

Aligned Standards (California Common Core):

- RI.5.3–4 – Explain the relationships or interactions between individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical text; determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.
- W.5.9 – Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- RH.6–8.1–7, RH.6–8.10 – Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources; determine central ideas and summarize distinct from prior knowledge or opinions; identify key steps in historical processes; determine the meaning of words and phrases in context; describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally); identify aspects of a text that reveal author's point of view or purpose; integrate visual information with written sources; Read and comprehend history/social studies texts independently and proficiently.
- W.6.1–3, W.6.9 – Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence; Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content; Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences; Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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Context: Ilse Königsgarten, was a 10-year-old Jewish girl who fled Nazi Germany in 1939 as part of the Kindertransport—a rescue effort that brought nearly 10,000 unaccompanied children from Nazi-occupied territories to safety in Great Britain. Through a narrative packet based on Ilse’s life and a supplemental map packet illustrating her multi-continent journey, students engage with a historically grounded, age-appropriate case study of survival and resilience. Comprehension and reflection questions support critical thinking, empathy, and historical analysis, encouraging students to connect one individual’s experience to the broader context of the Holocaust and global displacement.

Materials:

- [Student Packet](#)
- [Map Packet \(can be printed and handed out or projected\)](#)

** Please note that the maps included represent modern-day borders.*

*** It is recommended to project the map and discuss it during or after the story as supplemental material.*

**** Map Packet is best experienced in color.*

Assessment(s): Student Packet Responses (5 Comprehension Questions, 3 Reflection Questions)

Glossary:

Antisemitism: Prejudice or discrimination against Jews. Antisemitism can be based on hatred against Jews because of their religious beliefs or their group membership (ethnicity), but also on the erroneous belief that Jews are a race. Nazi antisemitism was racial in nature; Jews were viewed as ethnically inferior to Aryans and destructive of the world order.

Aryan: "Aryan" was originally applied to people who spoke any Indo-European language. The Nazis, however, primarily applied the term to people of northern European racial background.

Kindertransport: The Kindertransport (Children's Transport) was the informal name of a series of rescue efforts between 1938 and 1940 to bring thousands of refugee children to Great Britain from Nazi Germany-occupied areas (at this time, this included Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia).

Kristallnacht (Crystal Night, or The Night of Broken Glass): On November 9-10, 1938, the Nazis unleashed a wave of violence against German Jews, destroying hundreds of Jewish businesses, synagogues, and private homes. Tens of thousands of Jews were arrested.

Nazi: Short for National Socialist, or a member of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP), the political party that emerged in Munich after World War I. The party was taken over by Adolf Hitler in the early 1920s. Antisemitism was at the core of the Nazi Party’s platform.

Nuremberg Laws: The laws that first deprived German Jews of their citizenship and all pertinent, related rights. These laws effectively removed Jews from all spheres of German political, social, and economic life and established definitions of Jewishness based on bloodlines.

Synagogue: A meeting place for worship and religious study in the Jewish faith.

Educator Notes: This lesson is not to be used as a stand alone unit. The class must have had at least a few sessions of general Holocaust education prior to the use of this lesson, as students may have large questions. The history demonstrated in this lesson is about a unique and small group of children who were saved, but was not the fate of the majority of child victims of the Holocaust. This lesson is appropriate for students from 5th grade and older.

Before this lesson, it is recommended to assess and explore students' previous understanding through the question: What do you currently know about the Holocaust and/or World War II? You can talk about films, books, other media, past classroom lessons, or other knowledge. The more background they have on Holocaust history – especially leading up to the war, with racialized laws against Jewish people – the more your students will learn from this lesson. JFCS recommends a study of the history of Jewish people prior to introducing a unit on the Holocaust.

Due to the themes of hatred and discrimination that this lesson touches on, it is recommended that families receive advanced notice of the challenging nature of the subject. Frame the lesson as a continuing conversation, and remind students of their options if they feel they need to take a break.

Suggested Resource: [An annotated bibliography](#) for introducing the Holocaust to Children published by the JFCS Holocaust Center.

Next Steps? History comes alive through primary sources like those seen in this lesson. To learn about our programming for students and teachers, please visit <https://holocaustcenter.jfcs.org> or contact the JFCS Holocaust Center (holocaustcenter@jfcs.org).

Supplemental Resources:

All resources listed below are available at the JFCS Holocaust Center's Tauber Library & Archives.

Drucker, Olga Levy. *Kindertransport*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1992.

Eden, Thea. *A Transported Life: Memories of Kindertransport*. Edited by Irene Reti and Valerie Jean Chase. Santa Cruz, CA: HerBooks, 1995.

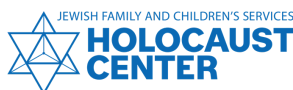
Fast, Vera K. *Children's Exodus: A History of the Kindertransport*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010.

Foner, Henry. *Postcards to a Little Boy: A Kindertransport Story*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Publications, 2013.

Fox, Anne L., and Eva Abraham-Podietz. *Ten Thousand Children: True Stories Told by Children Who Escaped the Holocaust on the Kindertransport*. Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 1999.

Golabek, Mona, and Lee Cohen. *The Children of Willesden Lane: A Memoir of Music, Love, and Survival*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2003.

Hacker, Melissa, director. *My Knees Were Jumping: Remembering the Kindertransports*. New York: Direct Cinema Limited, 1996. DVD.



Harris, Mark Jonathan, director. *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*. Produced by Deborah Oppenheimer. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2000. DVD.

Leverton, Bertha, ed. *I Came Alone: The Stories of the Kindertransports*. Lewes, UK: Book Guild Publishing, 1990.

Milton, Edith. *The Tiger in the Attic: Memories of the Kindertransport and Growing Up English*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

We Were Children Just Like You. Center for Holocaust Studies, Documentation and Research, 1990.

References:

Blum, Morgan N. *Kindertransport Curriculum*. San Francisco: Holocaust Center of Northern California, May 2010.

Herz, Willow. *Family History and Knowledge of the Herz Family* (unpublished personal account), 2025.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *Kindertransport, 1938–40*.
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/kindertransport-1938-40>.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *Kristallnacht*.
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/kristallnacht>.

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FreeWorldMaps.net. "Western Europe Map."
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Gamma-Keystone via Getty Images. 2018. *Jewish Kindertransport children arriving in London in February 1939*. Photograph. In Moss, Stephen. "The Kindertransport children 80 years on: 'We thought we were going on an adventure'." *The Guardian*, November 6, 2018.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/06/the-kindertransport-children-80-years-on-we-thought-we-were-going-on-an-adventure>.Wikipedia+2

Quakers in Britain. *Jewish Refugee Children 1938*. Photograph. In "Quakers and the Kindertransport." <https://quaker.org/quakers-and-the-kindertransport/>.

Sevilla, Puri Vico. *Geographic Coordinates*. Educaplay.
https://cloud.educaplay.com/recursos/250/8006256/imagen_1_1609178853.jpg

WorldAtlas. *How Many Countries Are In South America?*
<https://www.worldatlas.com/r/w1300/upload/9a/04/e2/south-america-map.png>