

# Immigration & Emigration

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What causes refugees to leave their countries of origin and immigrate elsewhere?
- What causes individuals to assist refugees fleeing religious and political persecution?
- What are the experiences of emigration and immigration like for these refugees?

## Overview

In this activity, students explore the concepts of refugeeism and the *Kindertransport* during the Holocaust. They will view eyewitness testimonies to analyze how becoming a refugee impacted some Jewish children and what motivated an individual to help rescue the children. They then research a current instance of refugeeism and apply their learning in creating presentations that educate others in their school and community about the experiences of refugees around the world.

## Target Audience

Middle School Social Studies

## Activity Duration

Two 45–60 minute class periods

## Enduring Understandings

- Refugees leave their countries of origin for a variety of reasons, including religious and political persecution.
- Refugees often require assistance in leaving their countries of origin and settling in new countries.
- Refugees often endure significant hardships as they leave one country and seek to rebuild their lives in another.

## Background Information/Links

### Refugees in America

In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. led the effort to help displaced persons. Part of the solution was to resettle to the U.S. hundreds of thousands of Europeans displaced from the war.

### MATERIALS

- Computer with Internet connection and a projector
- Refugee resources:
  - [The United Nations Refugee Agency's Population Statistics Map](#)
  - [Refugees International Reports](#)
  - [Amnesty International: The World's Refugees in Numbers](#)
- If available, devices with Internet access, one per student or student pair
- Handouts, one copy per student
  - Understanding the Refugee Experience
- Ideally, the teacher will have placed the clips in a location accessible to students prior to the lesson.

Following the admission of over 250,000 displaced Europeans, the first refugee legislation enacted by the U.S. Congress was the Displaced Persons Act of 1948. This legislation provided for the admission of an additional 400,000 displaced Europeans.

This leadership continued throughout the Cold War period, with the U.S. resettling numerous refugees from Southeast Asia, people fleeing from the former Soviet Union, and from Cuba. In 1975 the U.S. resettled hundreds of thousands of Southeast Asian refugees through an ad hoc Refugee Task Force with temporary funding. This experience prompted Congress to pass the Refugee Act of 1980, which incorporated the United Nations definition of "refugee" and standardized the resettlement services for all refugees admitted to the U.S. The Refugee Act provides the legal basis for today's U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. funded programs that helped victims of gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, provided educational opportunities to Burmese refugees in Thailand, and helped hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees to return to their homes. In recent years, the U.S. has resettled Darfuri refugees fleeing genocide and violence, Bhutanese forced out of their country, Syrian, Iraqi, Afghan refugees displaced by war, and many other populations in need of lifesaving protection. Since October 2001, more than 895,000 refugees have settled in the U.S., typically after being referred by the United Nations and vetted by the State Department in a process that takes at least 18 months.

### Kindertransport

*Kindertransport*, a German term meaning children's transport, was the informal name of a series of rescue efforts that brought thousands of refugee Jewish Children to Great Britain from Nazi-held lands between 1938 and 1940. After *Kristallnacht*, an organized massacre of German Jews, the British government eased immigration restrictions to allow children under the age of 17 to enter Great Britain from Germany and German-annexed territories (Austria and Czechoslovakia).

Private citizens or organizations had to guarantee payment for each child's care, education, and eventual emigration from Britain. In return, the British government agreed to allow unaccompanied refugee children to enter the country on temporary travel visas. It was understood that parents or guardians could not accompany the children, but once the war ended, the children would return to their families.

# Teaching with Testimony

## Middle School Activity | Immigration & Emigration



The last transport from Germany left on September 1, 1939, just as World War II began. The last transport from the Netherlands left for Britain on May 14, 1940, the same day that the Dutch army surrendered to German forces. In all, the rescue operation brought about 9,000-10,000 children from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland to Great Britain. Some 7,500 of these children were Jewish. Many children from the children's transport program became citizens of Great Britain, or emigrated to Israel, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Most of them would never again see their parents, who had been murdered during the Holocaust.

Sources:

- <http://www.rcusa.org/>
- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/by-numbers-united-states-refugees-180962487/>
- <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/kindertransport-1938-40>

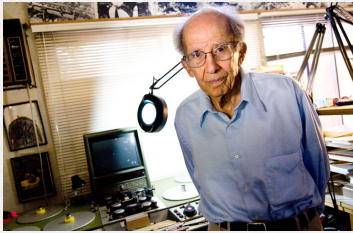
## Procedure

### Ask

- 1 The teacher will ask one or more student volunteers to define the term “refugee.” Students will share their current knowledge. The teacher will then ask students if they know any refugees personally. Responses will differ.
- 2 The teacher will explain that many young people became refugees during the Holocaust. The teacher will introduce the term “Kindertransport” and ask if students are familiar with it. If so, s/he will solicit their ideas.
- 3 The teacher will explain that the Kindertransport was a rescue operation during the Holocaust that involved individual British families agreeing to “host” Jewish children from Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic. Depending on the level of students’ background knowledge, the teacher may also explain why children were forced to emigrate during the Holocaust.
- 4 Students will view clips of three eyewitness testimonies about the Kindertransport experience:
  - Vera Gissing on the Kindertransport
  - Dave Lux on the Kindertransport
  - Sir Nicholas Winton on his decision to save over 600 children

# Teaching with Testimony

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- 5 Students will complete a graphic organizer that helps them understand the Kindertransport experience from the perspectives of children who were rescued and the man who organized the operation.
- 6 The teacher will lead a class discussion, emphasizing the young people's motivations and feelings regarding emigration and Sir Nicholas Winton's motivation and feelings about organizing the Kindertransport.

### Analyze

- 7 The teacher will explain that students are going to complete a brief writing exercise. The teacher will ask students to choose one person's story and respond to the following writing prompts, in order:
  - What about her/his story had the biggest impact on you? Why?
  - Based on what the individual shared in her/his testimony, what do you think was the most difficult for them?
  - What did her/his story help you understand about the refugee experience?

- 8 The teacher will ask students to pair up with a neighbor to share their responses. Students may volunteer to share their thoughts with the larger group.

### Apply

- 9 The teacher will explain to students that refugees have shaped and defined the United States since its beginning. S/he will ask students if any of their relatives, or if they themselves, came to the United States as refugees and, if so, from where. Responses will vary.
- 10 The teacher will explain that students will continue to explore the experience of refugees by studying current refugee issues.

### Act

- 11 Working individually or in pairs, students will identify a group of refugees to study—with a focus on the reasons the refugees must leave their country of origin, where they go, and why. If students are able to find profiles/first-person accounts, they can also include information on how the refugees feel about the experience. Students can use tools like the [UNHCR's Population Statistics Map](#) to identify populations at risk.
- 12 Students will create presentations (posters, web pages, videos, podcasts) and share them with others in the class. If desired, students can share their presentations with the larger community.

## Connections

Connection to Student Lives	Connection to Contemporary Events	Connection to the Future
<p>Students will consider how current issues faced by individuals who have been placed in a position of having to flee their homes, connect to the experience of the many Jewish children were forced to do during the Holocaust.</p>	<p>Students will investigate and communicate the experiences of current refugees around the world.</p>	<p>Students will develop their own sense of how they should feel towards and treat refugees, which will guide their future actions.</p>

## Clips of Testimony

### ■ Vera Gissing

Vera Gissing remembers her parents' decision to send her and her sister Eva on the Kindertransport from Czechoslovakia to England in May 1939. She also describes their farewell at the train station in Prague and the journey to England.

### ■ Dave Lux

Dave Lux survived the Holocaust as a child because of Nicholas Winton, who orchestrated the Czech Kindertransport, saving hundreds of Jewish children by transporting them to England. Lux remembers leaving his parents and thinking he's going on a field trip.

### ■ Sir Nicholas Winton

Sir Nicholas Winton, responsible for organizing the Kindertransport that saved the lives of 669 Jewish children, passed away at the age of 106. Here is his message to the future.

# Survivor and Witness Biographies



STUDENT HANDOUT

**Vera Gissing** (née Diamant) was born on July 4, 1928, in Prague, Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic). Her father owned a wine and spirits business, and her mother Irma ran the business office. She had a sister, Eva, four years her senior. On March 15, 1939, Celakovice was occupied by the German armed forces. Unbeknownst to the rest of the family, Irma put Vera and Eva's names down on the list for Kindertransport. Leaving in June 1939, the sisters were separated: Vera was placed in a foster family in Liverpool, and Eva went to a school in Dorset. While in Liverpool, Vera started attending a school for Czech refugee children in Whitchurch, England. After the war, Vera freelanced as an interpreter, translator, and editor for various British publishers and wrote children's books and an autobiography, *Pearls of Childhood* (1988). She is known for her work on *The Power of Good: Nicholas Winton* (2002), *All My Loved Ones* (1999) and *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* (2000).

**Dave Lux** was born on April 12, 1933, in Negrovec, Czechoslovakia and had an older brother, Yaakov. In March 1939, Germany invaded Czechoslovakia, and the family resettled in a crowded building with other refugee families. While living there, Lux said a woman approached the refugee parents to ask who was willing to entrust her with their children. Lux said his parents were the only ones. Lux didn't realize that he and his brother were being sent to live in England indefinitely without their parents. After the war ended, Dave and Yaakov moved to Israel, where Dave served in the military. In 1958 he moved to the United States, where he married and had three children, and eventually five grandchildren. In the last few years of his life, Lux frequently told his story to honor the courage and sacrifice of his brave parents. He was interviewed on March 14, 1996, in Northridge, CA.

**Sir Nicholas Winton** was born in London, England, on May 19, 1909. During December 1938, Winton visited a friend who was working with refugees in an area of Czechoslovakia that had fallen under German control. He witnessed the dire situation of the country's refugee camps, which were overfilled with Jewish families and other political prisoners. Appalled by what he saw, and aware that an effort was underway to organize evacuation of Jewish children to England, Winton moved quickly to replicate a similar rescue effort. Winton found adoptive parents in England, secured entry permits, and raised funds to cover the costs of the children's transit. In all, 669 children made it to safety. In 2003, Queen Elizabeth II knighted him, and in 2010 he received a Hero of the Holocaust medal. In addition, several films were made about Winton and his work to save the kids who came to be known as Winton's Children. It is estimated that over 6,000 people in the world are alive today because of his actions. This interview took place on September 17, 2013 in Maidenhead, Berkshire, in the UK.

# Understanding the Refugee Experience



<b>Testimony</b>	What did the witness understand about the separation from his/her parents?	How did the witness feel about becoming a refugee at the time?	How did the witness feel about becoming a refugee after the fact?
<b>Vera Gissing</b>			
<b>Dave Lux</b>			

<b>Testimony</b>	How did the witness respond to the atrocities he witnessed during the Holocaust?	Why did the witness respond in the way he did?	What can the witness' response teach us?
<b>Sir Nicholas Winton</b>			

## National Standards

### College, Career & Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards

D2.Civ.7.6.8 Apply civic virtues and democratic principles in school and community settings.

D2.Civ.10.6-8 Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

D2.His.4.6-8. Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D4.2.6-8 Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples and details with relevant information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations.

D.4.4.6-8 Draw on multiple disciplinary lenses to analyze how a specific problem can manifest itself at local, regional, and global levels over time, identifying its characteristics and causes, and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address the problem.

D4.7.6-8 Assess their individual and collective capabilities to take action to address local, regional, and global problems, taking into account a range of possible levers of power, strategies, and potential outcomes.

D4.8.6-8 Apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms and schools, and in out-of-school civic contexts.

### Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

RI.8.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.8.2 Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

W.8.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

W.8.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.