

Lisa of Willesden Lane and SEL Skills

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How can the stories of others help me become more resilient?
- How can better understanding my identity strengthen me?
- In what ways can I show empathy to support others?

Overview

This lesson plan pairs the story of Lisa Jura with mutually supporting social-emotional learning competencies from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. During this lesson, students use the themes from Lisa's story to connect with their own lived experiences using the five competencies of Self-Management, Responsible Decision-Making, Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, and Relationship Skills. This framework, paired with testimony, provides additional support for the class throughout the school year by using impactful themes from the story with social-emotional learning skills.

Target Audience

Grade 3-5

Activity Duration

Two 45-60 minute class periods

Enduring Understandings

- Refugee stories, such as children involved in the Kindertransport, can help students connect to important skills and themes of self-awareness such as resilience, persistence, courage, and hope.
- Social awareness skills help build understanding of individuals, their emotions, experiences, and perspectives through a cross-cultural lens.
- Social-emotional learning is most powerful when it is culturally affirming, empowering, and guides students in developing a critical consciousness of the world around them.

Materials

- Copies of *Lisa of Willesden Lane*
- Connection to Resilience Handout
- Map and Timeline from *Lisa of Willesden Lane*
- Connecting with SEL Handout

Background Information

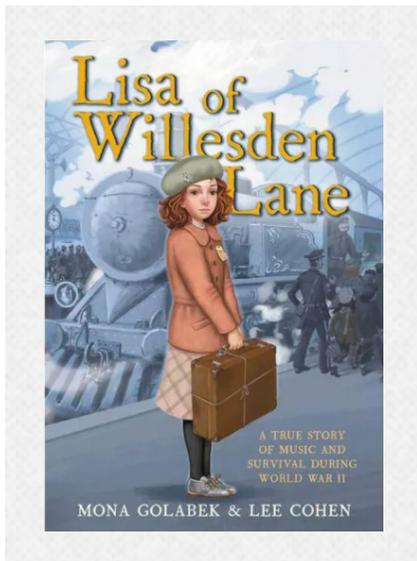
Kindertransport and Refugees

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.

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.

Similar to the experience of Jews living in Nazi-controlled areas before World War II, refugees have no choice but to flee their homes because they are threatened by conflict and persecution. They often encounter immense challenges and adversity, including exposure to extreme weather conditions; lack of access to proper food, shelter, education, and job opportunities.

Because they are forced to confront difficult circumstances and trauma, studying the stories of refugees and genocide survivors can offer students valuable case studies on skills and character traits they can develop for overcoming adversity in their own lives. For example, Lisa Jura’s dedication to musical performance gave her a sense of purpose and helped her maintain the resilience needed to overcome adversity as a Holocaust survivor and refugee.



Sources

- <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-jewish-refugees-1933-1939>
- <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/teaching-about-refugees.html>
- https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf
- <https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>

Social-Emotional Learning

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning is the leading organization advancing the promotion of integrated academic, social, and emotional learning for children in Pre-K through Grade 12. This organization has developed the following five interrelated core competencies for effective social and emotional learning:

- **Self-Awareness** concentrates on understanding your emotions and thoughts and how they influence your behavior. Skills include self-perception, self-confidence, and self-efficacy.
- **Self-Management** emphasizes your ability to regulate your emotions and behaviors in different situations, as well as how to set and work toward goals. Skills include impulse control, executive function, stress-management, and self-discipline.
- **Responsible Decision-Making** highlights your ability to make positive choices and take responsibility for positive and negative outcomes. Skills include identifying problems, analyzing situations, solving problems, and reflection.
- **Social Awareness** focuses on your ability to empathize with others. Skills include empathy, appreciating differences, and respect.
- **Relationship Skills** revolve around your ability to relate well to others. Skills include communicating clearly, listening, cooperation, resisting negative pressure, resolving conflicts, and supporting one another.

These competencies, viewed through the lens of human rights education, can play an important part in engaging students in understanding how their social, emotional, and academic learning connect with the social and historical contexts in their communities and larger society. This lens of SEL, sometimes



labeled “transformative” SEL, positions students as co-creators in their own learning and encourages students to use their constructed knowledge to address issues of equity, power, injustice, and privilege.

Procedure

Ask

- 1 As class begins, invite students to consider what might be happening or questions they have about the cover of the book of *Lisa of Willesden Lane*, this can be done by projecting the cover on the board or by having students examine their individual copy. After a few moments, ask students to share answers and thoughts. To guide the responses, help students connect the image on the cover with feelings and emotions that might come to mind. For example, “the young girl looks confident” or “why are there are no parents, are they afraid?”
- 2 Next, ask students if they are familiar with the word “resilient.” As students consider the word, ask them to share what they think it might mean. As students share a few ideas, post or display the *Connections to Resilience* handout on the board. Next, read the definition to the class and ask them to share out a few other words similar to “resilient” or even examples they can think of based on the definition. When student begin to share, be sure to write down the examples on the board around the word using connecting lines from the handout. When finished, explain to the class that one way to describe Lisa on the cover of the text is “resilient” and they will be learning more about her story.
- 3 Share with the class that the theme of “resilience” is just one part of the story and they will be using Lisa Jura’s journey to connect how they can better understand important parts of their own identity, manage emotions and relationships, and be more supportive of others by applying the themes of the story to their own life.
- 4 It may be helpful to briefly review the setting for the beginning of *Lisa of Willesden Lane* by sharing the map of Kindertransport routes with students as well as the historical timeline of the Holocaust from the book. *This map and timeline are also located as a display at the end of the activity.* Remind students that the story begins in Vienna, Austria, during the late 1930s. Also, be sure students are aware that *Lisa of Willesden Lane* is a true story by Mona Golabek, Lisa Jura’s daughter. As needed, the teacher can also help students to review the background of the story and a selection of key vocabulary terms from the book that help build understanding using the embedded *Lisa of Willesden Lane* vocabulary handout.

Analyze

Before reviewing excerpts from the story listed in the *Connecting with SEL* handout, help students understand how they can connect to important themes by introducing a few social-emotional learning skills the class will use to deepen their understanding and create relevance. Using larger pieces of chart paper or other material, post the five skills from CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) around the room with a short explanation of what they are.

- **Self-Management:** Being able to manage your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations and to achieve goals.
- **Self-Awareness:** Understand your own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence your behavior.
- **Responsible Decision Making:** Make caring and responsible choices about your behavior and interactions with others across situations.
- **Relationship Skills:** Establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships to work well with others.
- **Social Awareness:** Understand the perspectives of—and empathize—with others.

5 This may be the first-time students have worked with applying or verbalizing these skills. To help establish context, divide students into small groups and instruct them to write examples of what the skill might look like in action at your school or your community. Students can also draw or write examples of times when they have demonstrated the skill. After all groups have had time at their assigned poster, invite each group to share out their drawings and examples of what the skill might look like to the rest of the class. As each group shares out, this will give students time to process each of the skills and an opportunity to reflect on their own. After reviewing the skills with students and leaving the posters around the room, direct students' attention back to *Lisa of Willesden Lane*. Ensure that each student has a copy of the text and the *Connecting with SEL* handout. Help students understand that Lisa's story can teach us about how we can better understand important parts about ourselves, our relationships with others, and living in the world around us by applying a few of the skills that were just discussed.

6 Students will then use the *Connecting with SEL* handout to read or revisit parts of the story and explain how Lisa demonstrated important elements of each skill as she was forced to leave her home on the Kindertransport during World War II. To support student understanding for this complex topic, have students work in small groups with a single excerpt and skill for more discussion and to share ideas. To begin, assign each group an excerpt and paired SEL skill to look for and have the groups read and discuss. As students are working, some groups may need additional support for building context or applying the skills to the excerpt. When groups have completed their discussion, you can choose to have them move to another excerpt or ask the class to consider a few of the questions below based off their shared understanding.

- Describe how Lisa demonstrated resilience. How so?
- How did Lisa's understanding of herself change?
- What ways did Lisa respond to conflict or challenging circumstances?

- Why were Lisa's community and friends so important to her?
- What circumstances were in her control? Which were out of her control?

Apply

- 7 Next, students will apply what they have learned about social-emotional learning skills to the testimony of another Kindertransport survivor David Fertig (25:00–28:00). Using the *Connecting to SEL* handout again, instruct students that they will be viewing an eyewitness testimony to gather information about experiences on the Kindertransport and how young children demonstrated great resilience in the face of adversity, much like in Lisa's story. Students will then use the testimony to highlight social-emotional skills that are present in David's testimony using the far-right column of the handout after they view the testimony.
- 8 Help support students' ability to connect to the testimony by reminding students that this visual testimony is a first-hand account of the person's lived experience. Remind students to not only listen to the testimony, but to also pay attention to how David speaks, his body language, and how his tone or emotion changes. You might also ask students to think about how the passing of time may impact how and what testimony is shared.
- 9 After viewing the testimony, give students a few moments to consider social-emotional learning connections. To help students make the connections, complete David's sections of the *Connecting to SEL* handout together as a class. You can invite students to share their thoughts and questions about what they heard and saw from the testimony for each SEL skill. You may also have students reference the posters they completed earlier in the lesson for greater support. Finally, ask students to consider what David's story can teach us about resilience and empathy.
- 10 To help students pull together the themes from Lisa's story and David's testimony, students will consider how they can use the themes, along with important social-emotional learning skills, to develop resilience and empathy.

Act

- 11 To expand students' understanding of their own experience during the lesson and to bring in new perspectives for the student, encourage students to take their Connections to Resilience Handout home to share with their family and add any additional experiences that emerge from their family conversation.
- 12 Also, students may choose to work as a class to translate their learning experience into an actionable plan to share with others in their school about the importance of being socially-emotionally aware and consider ways to build upon those skills to create a more supportive and inclusive environment.

Connections

Connect to Student Lives	Connection to Contemporary Events	Connection to the Future
Students will consider people important to them and then reflect on ways to expand their circle of human concern.	Students will connect character traits and skills for overcoming adversity displayed by Jewish refugees in the World War II era to skills they can apply to their own life.	Students will recognize the importance of skills and identity traits for overcoming adversity they might face in the future.

Clips of Testimony

■ David Fertig

David Fertig recalls his experience as a child during the Kindertransport. During his testimony, David shares the shock of leaving his family for a new home.

Lisa of Willesden Lane:

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National Standards and Frameworks

College, Career and Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards

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

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.

D4.4.6-8 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.8.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

The Willesden Project is a global initiative that expands the reach of Lisa Jura's story of survival, resilience, and triumph as she struggles to come of age separated from her family during World War II, as originally shared by her daughter, author and concert pianist Mona Golabek, in *The Children of Willesden Lane* books and musical performances. [Learn more at The Willesden Project.](#)



RESILIENT

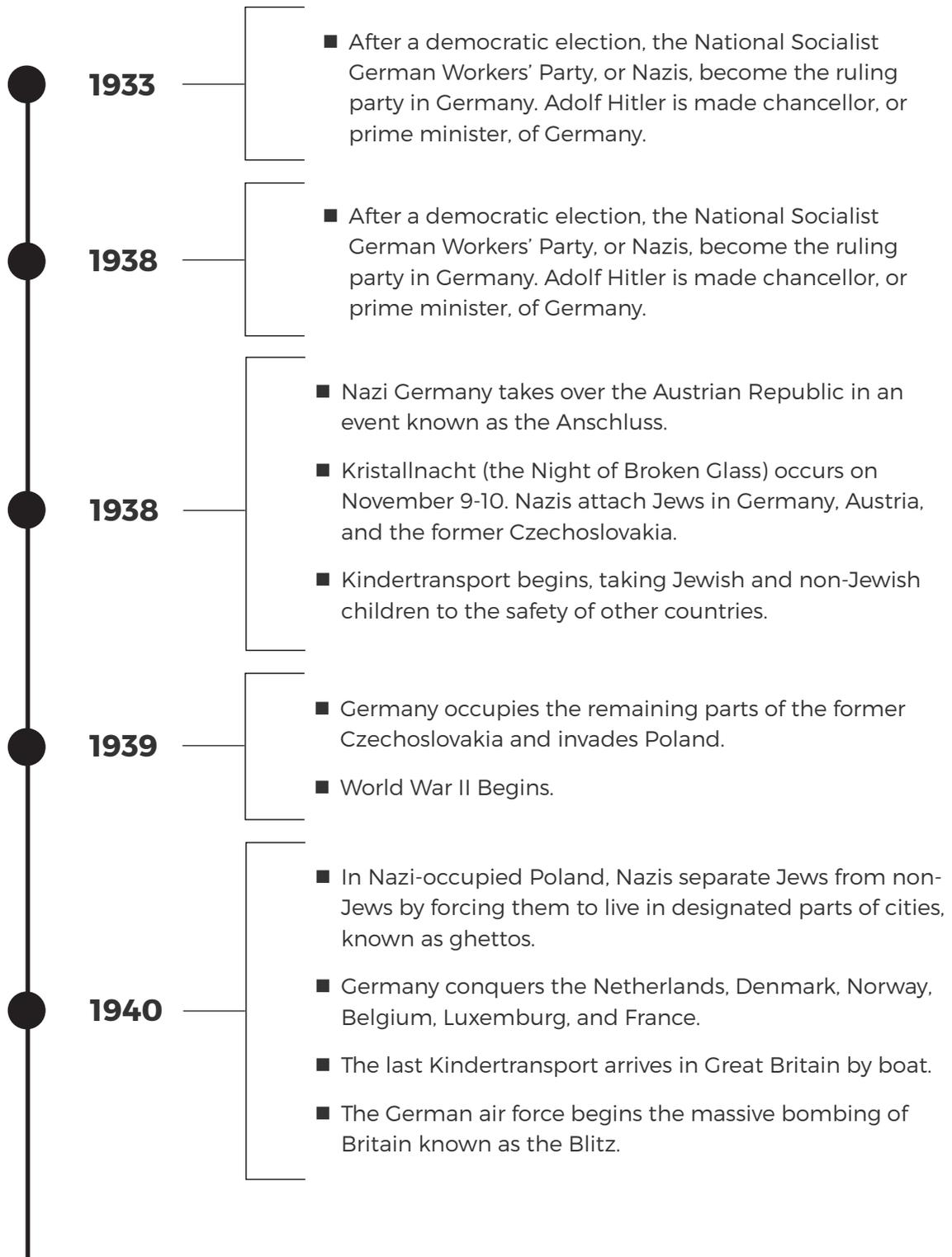
*Able to Recover from Difficult
Situations or Conditions*



Kindertransport Routes



Map and Timeline from *Lisa of Willesden Lane*

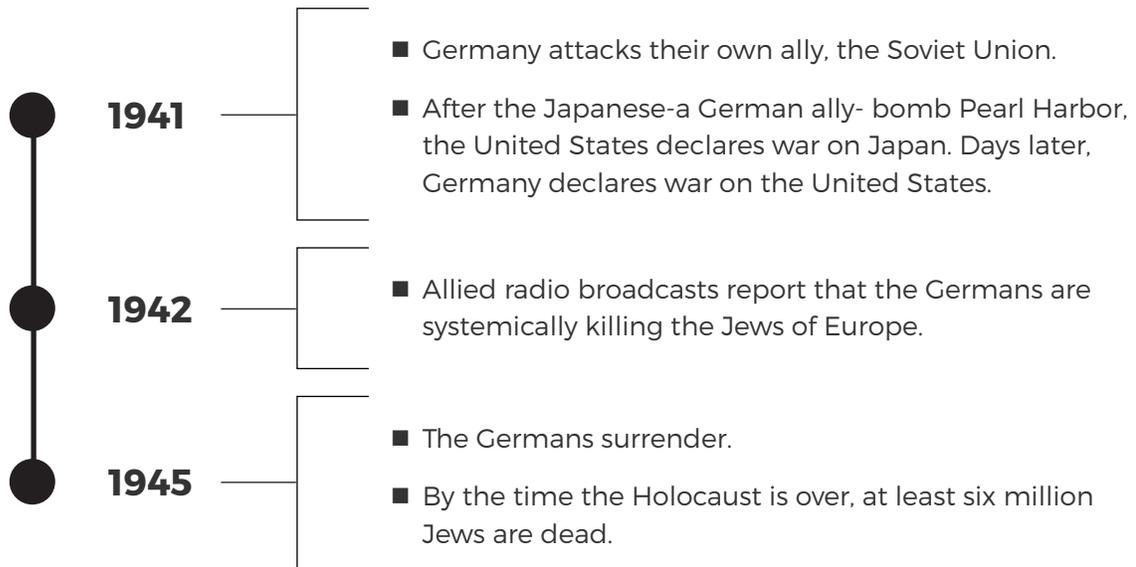


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Map and Timeline from *Lisa of Willesden Lane*



STUDENT HANDOUT





SEL Skill	<i>Lisa of Willesden Lane</i> Background	Lisa Jura Explain how Lisa might have used or experienced the skill	David Fertig Explain how David might have used or experienced the skill
Self-Management	Background: Lisa's family takes her to the train station to depart alone to England. Pages 18-19		
Self-Awareness	Background: As bombs fall around the house on Willesden Lane, Lisa continues to play the piano. Pages 74-76		
Social Awareness	Background: An older Lisa performs her piano recital as the war ends and friends are in the audience. Pages 128-129		
Responsible Decision-Making	Background: Lisa begins to prepare for her audition with the help of friends. Pages 88-89		
Relationship Skills	Background: Lisa is concerned that her sister Sonia has not yet found someone to sponsor her for the Kindertransport. Pages 55-58		