

The Kindertransport

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Who are refugees?
- What are different experiences people face on their refugee journeys?
- What types of challenges do refugees experience when attempting to relocate to safe places?
- How can people help refugees feel welcomed and supported in their communities despite the challenges they face?
- What ways can people create welcoming spaces for new community members?

Overview

This activity is designed to support *Lisa of Willesden Lane* and engages students in a discussion of why people must sometimes move to other places. Students will:

- Brainstorm and list challenges people face when they move.
- Read excerpts from *Lisa of Willesden Lane* and view USC Shoah Foundation testimony to identify unique challenges confronted by refugees, or people who are forced to move.
- Demonstrate social awareness skills by creating posters to persuade British citizens to support the Kindertransport.
- Conduct research on local efforts to support refugee individuals and families.

Target Audience

Grades 3–5

Activity Duration

Two-three 45–60 minute class periods

Enduring Understandings

- Events sometimes force people to move from one place to another. Refugees are people who move to another country to seek protection from being mistreated, from war, or other difficult circumstances.
- Refugees confront significant challenges, both when traveling and upon arrival at their destinations.
- Individuals and organized relief efforts help refugees confront challenges.
- New members of a community, including refugees, bring unique experiences and diverse strengths that help enrich a community.
- A key competency of social-emotional learning is social awareness, which includes considering others' perspectives, demonstrating empathy and compassion.

Materials

- Images that represent people moving (for display)
- “Challenges of living somewhere new” handout (one per student)
- Key vocabulary terms (optional for display)
- Kindertransport Routes and historical timeline (for display)
- Who are refugees and what was the Kindertransport? (for display)
- “Providing support for Lisa” handout (for display)
- “Creating Welcoming Communities” handout (one per student group)
- “Creating Welcoming Communities” poster guide (2 per page)

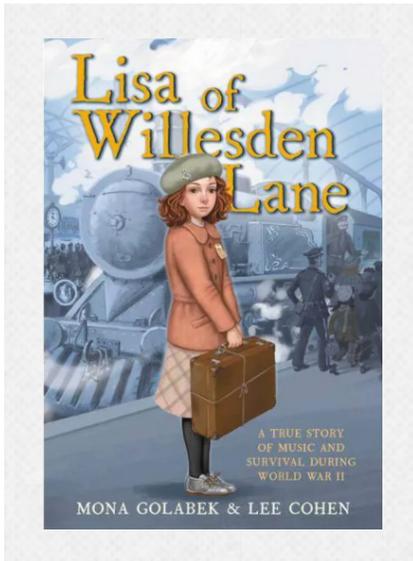
Historical Background for Educator Kindertransport and Refugees

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 Kindertransport 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 today have no choice but to flee their homes when they are threatened by conflict and persecution. They often encounter immense challenges and adversity in their journeys, 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** To begin class, show students a few images that represent people moving to new places. Images might include a moving van, a “for sale” sign in front of a house, people carrying furniture, and packing and unpacking their belongings. It may be helpful to use images included in the handouts at the end of this activity or find pictures specific to your community. Next, ask students what the images have in common, and then ask them to brainstorm a list of reasons why people might move to a new place. Be sure that students identify that sometimes people move because they do not have a choice or are forced to move because of challenging circumstances.
- 2** To help students develop the skill of considering others’ perspectives, and building empathy, ask students to make a list of challenges people confront when they move to a new place. Students can record responses in the left-hand “General Challenges” column of the “Challenges of Moving to a New Place” handout. Anticipated responses might include:
 - *It’s a lot of work to pack up and move all belongings.*
 - *Sometimes people move far away from family and friends.*
 - *People need to learn about the new place where they are moving to become comfortable.*
- 3** As students finish, have them consider how new students in a classroom, or families in a neighborhood, can enrich the community. Students might consider how new students or families bring different experiences, languages, traditions, activities, and other opportunities to enrich and strengthen new communities.
- 4** When finished, ask students how the topic of moving relates to the book *Lisa of Willesden Lane*. It may be helpful to briefly review the cover of the text and the setting for the beginning of *Lisa of Willesden Lane*. To do so:
 - a. Share the map of Kindertransport routes and 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.)
 - b. Remind students that the story begins in Vienna, Austria during the late 1930s.
 - c. Be sure students are aware that *Lisa of Willesden Lane* is a true story co-written by Lisa Jura’s daughter Mona Golabek.
 - d. As needed, you can also review with students the background of the story and a selection of key vocabulary terms from the book that help build understanding using the *Lisa of Willesden Lane* vocabulary handout.

Analyze

- 5 Display the reading journal question, “Why was Lisa forced to leave her home?” and ask students to copy the question into their notebooks. Next, provide students the opportunity to read Chapters 1 and 2 (pgs. 1–24) individually or with a partner and direct students to collect or recall details from the story that provide information for answering this question. (This may also be done as a read aloud with the class stopping to note examples in their reading journal.)
- 6 After the detail list is completed, ask students to share clues from the story about why Lisa was forced to leave her home in Austria. Next, ask students if they are familiar with the term “refugee.” Allow students a few moments to share their thoughts. To help make connections, explain to students that Lisa is a refugee—a person who is forced to move to a new place for safety or protection. Display the term *refugee*, along with its definition, for students’ reference.
- 7 Next, announce that the students are about to watch a former refugee recalling her experiences leaving her home around the same time that Lisa was forced to leave hers. As students may not be familiar with a testimony, share with students that the speaker is retelling her own experience and to pay close attention to not only her words, but also how she tells her story.
- 8 Next, play an excerpt from the [testimony of Vera Gissing](#), who describes saying good-bye to her parents at the train station when she departed Prague, Czechoslovakia in June of 1939.
- 9 Return to the list of moving challenges the class created at the beginning of the lesson and continue to develop students’ social awareness skills by asking them to list specific challenges that Lisa and Vera confronted when they were forced to move. As needed, direct the students back to Chapter 2 of *Lisa from Willesden Lane*. Students can record Lisa and Vera’s challenges in the remaining columns of the “Challenges of Moving to a New Place” handout. Place a check next to general challenges in the left-hand column that Lisa and Vera also confronted.
- 10 Display the term “Kindertransport” and the lesson-embedded excerpt “What was the Kindertransport?” which also appears on page 14 of *Lisa of Willesden Lane*. Instruct the class to read it and then ask, “How did different individuals and groups of people help to make the Kindertransport possible?”
- 11 Next, display the “Providing Support for Lisa” handout and explain to students they will be working as a class to revisit specific parts of the text listed on the handout to identify how each person helped Lisa overcome the challenges of being a refugee. As a class work through different parts of the story to build understanding of how many different people of all ages helped Lisa through her difficult time.

Apply

- 12 Distribute the “Creating Welcoming Communities” handout. Engage students in a brief discussion of the three questions on the handout:
 - a. How can we help newcomers get settled and feel welcomed?
 - b. Why might it be difficult for newcomers to feel accepted in the community?
 - c. Why is it important to create space for newcomers to share their stories, skills, talents, and culture?

- 13 Put students into pairs and instruct them to list ways they can support individuals who have recently moved to their community.
- 14 Facilitate a full class discussion, and ask students to share their lists, ensuring that ideas are listed for each category. Provide support if students seem to struggle with generating ideas.
- 15 Inform the students that many people in Great Britain volunteered time and money to help the children on the Kindertransport. Private citizens and groups even paid for each refugee's emigration, childcare, and education. To help connect student learning and apply it to their own lives, students will use their class ideas on how to support refugees to create persuasive and informative posters that encourage people to support refugees in their own community or encourage others to think about the importance of understanding and empathizing with refugees.

Act

- 16 With the teacher's assistance, students can conduct research and gather information about organizations in the community that provide relief to refugees today that may be attending their school or living in their community. They could then brainstorm ways to take direct action and provide support to one or more of these efforts.

Connections

Connect to Student Lives	Connection to Contemporary Events	Connection to the Future
Students will brainstorm challenges they or others they know might have experienced during a move and then conduct research about local efforts to help refugees.	Students will connect the experiences of Jewish refugees during the 1930s with the experiences of refugees today.	Students will brainstorm ways to take direct action to provide support for local efforts to help refugees confront challenges of moving and resettlement.

Clips of Testimony

- **Vera Gissing**, Jewish survivor, describes saying goodbye to her parents at the train station in Prague and the journey to England on the Kindertransport.

National Standards

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

D2.Civ.7.3-5 Apply civic virtues and democratic principles in school settings.

D4.2.3-5 Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data.

D.4.7.3-5 Explain different strategies and approaches students and others could take in working alone and together to address local, regional, and global problems, and predict possible results of their actions.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

RI.5.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 4–5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

SL.5.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.5.2 Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

W.5.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CASEL's SEL Framework

SOCIAL-AWARENESS: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. Such as:

- Taking others' perspectives
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others
- Recognizing situational demands and opportunities

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.](#)

Lisa of Willesden Lane:

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Images of Families Moving



STUDENT HANDOUT



Challenges of Living Somewhere New



General Challenges	Lisa's Challenges	Vera's Challenges
	<i>From Chapter 2</i>	

Key Vocabulary:
Lisa of Willesden Lane



Word	Definition
Nazis	
Anti-Semitism	
Kristallnacht	
Kindertransport	

Key Vocabulary:
Lisa of Willesden Lane



Word and Definition	Sentence
<p>Nazis</p> <p>Members of the anti-Semitic German Socialist Workers Party and followers of Adolf Hitler.</p>	<p>Nazis who took control of Austria passed strict laws against the country's Jewish population.</p>
<p>Anti-Semitism</p> <p>Prejudice against, and hatred of, Jewish people.</p>	<p>Many Jews who lived in Austria in the late 1930s left the country because of growing anti-Semitism.</p>
<p>Kristallnacht</p> <p>Translated as "the night of broken glass," refers to a wave of violence against Jews that took place in Nazi Germany and German-held territory on the night of November 9-10, 1938.</p>	<p>Many German Jews responded to Kristallnacht by attempting to move out of Germany to safety.</p>
<p>Kindertransport</p> <p>An organized effort to evacuate Jewish children from German-controlled areas to the United Kingdom between 1938 and 1940.</p>	<p>Many British families provided money and assistance to help Jewish children relocate to England on the Kindertransport.</p>

Kindertransport Routes and Historical Timeline



STUDENT HANDOUT

FPO



Who are Refugees?

Refugees are people who move to another country to seek protection from being mistreated, from war, or other difficult circumstances.

What was the Kindertransport?*

The Kindertransport was a series of actions by British organizations and others to rescue Jewish children from Greater Germany following Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass. Ten thousand children were allowed by the British government to enter Great Britain, and on December 2, 1938, the first train with two hundred children arrived. Of the ten thousand children rescued, over seven thousand were Jewish. Many of the children became citizens of Great Britain or immigrated to other countries. Most of them would never see their parents again.

**Explanation of the Kindertransport taken directly from Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen, Lisa of Willesden Lane, Little, Brown, and Company, 2021, p. 14.*

Providing Support for Lisa



Directions: Using specific points in the story, identify how each person or group provided support for Lisa while she was a refugee.

Chapter and Pages	Person or Group	Type of Support
Chapter 3 Page 27-29	Alfred Hardesty	
Chapter 3 Pages 31-33	Captain Richmond	
Chapter 4 Pages 41-45	Ms. Cohen	
Chapter 6 Pages 65-68	Hans Cohen	



How can we help newcomers get settled and feel welcomed?

Why might it be difficult for newcomers to feel accepted in the community?

Why is it important to create space for newcomers to share their stories, skills, talents, and culture?

Creating Welcoming Communities Poster



STUDENT HANDOUT

What to Consider When Designing Your Poster!

Headline or Title:

- What will you title your poster to capture people's attention to the topic?

Appropriate Images or Graphics:

- What images best fit the poster's message?

1-2 Ways to Support:

- How will the reader know how to support newcomers?

Tone:

- What feelings are you trying to get across in your poster?
- Does your information, images, and wording give people that feeling?

Spelling/Grammar

- Does your poster have any spelling errors?
 - Do the words make sense to the reader?
-

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Survivor Biography for Educator Background



STUDENT HANDOUT

Vera Gissing, Jewish survivor, was born in 1928 in Prague, Czechoslovakia. In her early life, she lived with her parents and sister in a town outside of Prague. After Germany invaded and occupied Czechoslovakia in 1939, Gissing's family was forced to house a German commandant, who treated them with cruelty. During that time, Gissing's mother searched for a way to send her two daughters to safety. She was able to arrange through Nicholas Winton to have them move to England on the Kindertransport. Winton paid families 50 pounds each to care for children until they reached the age of 17. Once in England, Vera and her sister lived with separate foster families, with Vera settling in Liverpool and eventually attending a school for Czech refugees in Wales. Both of Gissing's parents died in the Holocaust. After the war, Gissing briefly moved back to Prague but resettled in England. She used her diaries from her World War II experiences to write the book *Pearls of Childhood*. She worked as a translator, interpreter, and editor for several publishers. She cared for Winton until his death in 2015 and collaborated on his biography.