

# Testimony and Artistic Expression

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How can personal testimony inform our understanding of historical events?
- What role does artistic expression play as a form of testimony?
- How can the themes of perseverance and resilience found in artistic expression connect to your life?

## Overview

In this lesson, students will develop a greater understanding of the link between testimony and artistic expression. By analyzing excerpts from *The Children of Willesden Lane* and pieces of artistic expression from genocide survivors, students will build upon their sense of empathy, historical understanding, and discipline-specific literacies. Throughout the lesson, students will analyze clips of testimony and different forms of artistic expression through the lens of perseverance and resilience. As students build on their understanding, they will reflect on how they have used forms of artistic expression to persevere. Finally, students will apply what they have learned by researching and reflecting on modern examples of artistic expression as a form of testimony from people belonging to groups who have experienced oppression.

## Target Audience

Middle School and High School

## Lesson Duration

Two class periods of 60–90 minutes

## Enduring Understandings

- Artistic representation offers valuable insight into understanding traumatic experiences such as genocide.
- Stories of resilience, hope, and perseverance provide important historical context for future generations.
- Connecting testimonies with personal experience is critical for building empathy and connections from the past to present.

### Handouts

- *See Think Wonder* Handout
- *The Children Of Willesden Lane* Excerpts (with room for student notes)
- *Step Inside* Guiding Questions Handout (two per page)
- *Chalk Talk* Instructions
- *Testimony as Artistic Expression Step* Inside Questions
- *Artistic Expression Compare and Contrast* Handout
- *Art as Testimony Personal Reflection* Handout
- *Modern Artistic Expression* Handout

## Background Information/Links

### ***The Children of Willesden Lane***

*The Children of Willesden Lane* is a powerful memoir of music, hope, and survival set in Europe during the Holocaust. In the book, authors Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen tell the story of Lisa Jura, Golabek's mother. In 1938, 14-year-old Lisa was an amazing young musician who dreamed of becoming a concert pianist. When Hitler's army invaded the family's hometown of Vienna, Austria, Lisa's parents made the difficult decision to send her to London as part of the Kindertransport, a rescue mission that took nearly 10,000 Jewish children to safety in Britain. There, separated from her family, Lisa built a community with other refugees in a children's hostel on Willesden Lane and fought to realize her dreams against a backdrop of war, loss, and despair. Her music became a lifeline—not only for herself, but also for those around her—and helped form a web of support and connection that enabled people of all ages to maintain hope, endure tragedy, and rebuild their lives.

### **Kindertransport**

Kindertransport, a German term meaning children's transport, was the informal name of a series of rescue efforts that brought thousands of Jewish refugee 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 (including 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

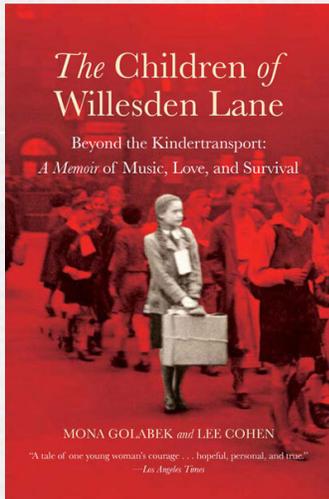


Britain, or emigrated to Israel, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Most of them would never again see their parents, many of whom had been murdered during the Holocaust.

## Procedure

### Ask

- 1 The teacher will begin the lesson by inviting students to participate in a visible thinking routine that will help them create their own questions and begin considering the role of artistic expression and testimony. To begin, distribute copies of the handout called *See, Think, Wonder*.
- 2 Using art from Holocaust survivor Samul Willenburg as a question focus, students will take a moment to reflect by writing the following on their handout.
  - **See:** what do you see in the image?
  - **Think:** what do you think about what you see?
  - **Wonder:** what do you wonder about?
- 3 As students begin, project an image of the sculpture on the board and provide about two minutes for students to complete each section of the handout. As the class begins to finish writing, explain that they will now take a moment to share their reflections and observations. Be sure to take time for students to share from each of the three sections in order to help make connections and develop questions.
- 4 As students discuss, share with the class that the name of the piece of art is “A Father Helping His Son Take Off His Shoes” and that it was created from an eyewitness account of a Holocaust survivor. It will be important to help students see the piece of art as a form of testimony, and that for many survivors, commemorating and memorializing their experience in the Holocaust becomes possible through art rather than words. To help students make this connection, provide students time to discuss the following questions.
  - How might the act of creating a form of artistic expression from this eye-witness account demonstrate perseverance and resilience?
  - Why do you think Samul Willenburg used the artistic medium of sculpting to convey his eye-witness account?
- 5 Next, explain that students are going to be analyzing pieces of artistic expression from genocide survivors and working to understand the transformative nature of art and answer the question, What role does artistic expression play as a form of testimony?



### Analyze

- 1 After hearing student reflections on an example of art as testimony, the teacher will introduce and guide the class to the themes of resilience and perseverance that can be found in the testimony and art from genocide survivors.
- 2 To help introduce these themes, students will learn more about the Kindertransport. To begin, the teacher will ask students what they know about the Kindertransport. After listening to students share what they know or are unfamiliar with, the teacher will provide a brief overview and explain that the class will be analyzing excerpts from the book *The Children of Willesden Lane*. The teacher will provide context by explaining that the book is about a teenage girl and Holocaust survivor named Lisa Jura who was sent on a Kindertransport. The book, as a form of artistic expression, can serve as an important case study in closely examining the themes of resilience and perseverance during the Holocaust.
- 3 After introducing the book to students, explain that they will now analyze the historical background of the Kindertransport and several excerpts from *The Children of Willesden Lane*.
- 4 To help analyze the text excerpts, students will take part in an activity that helps them use perspective taking to collaboratively understand the themes of perseverance and resilience in artistic forms of testimony. Remind students of the essential questions about the connections between art as testimony and that the focus of the activity is to find examples of perseverance and resilience.
- 5 Distribute copies of the *Step Inside* handout, one for each student. Before starting, be sure that copies of the excerpts from the text are stationed around the room. It may be helpful to print out the excerpts and attach them to chart paper on the wall for students to write on.
- 6 Next, display the directions on the board and instruct students that they will be moving around the room to analyze the excerpts. To do so, students will read the excerpt and, without talking, and use the space around the excerpt to write their thoughts using some of the *Step Inside* prompts from their handout. Explain to students that this is meant to be a silent, yet collaborative activity, in which they will rotate to read other excerpts and reflections before writing their own.

# Teaching with Testimony

## Lesson Plan



- 7 As students are reading and writing, rotate around the room gathering feedback from students by reading their reflections from the text. After students have finished reading and sharing their own thoughts, take a few moments to discuss a few of the essential questions.
  - How can personal testimony inform our understanding of historical events?
  - What role does artistic expression play as a form of testimony?
- 8 To help the class make connections, debrief with students the importance of works of young adult literature like *The Children of Willesden Lane* in helping document the struggle of genocide survivors.

### Apply

- 1 To help apply what students have learned about artistic expression, perseverance, and the centrality of art as testimony, post the quote from Lisa Jura's mother at the train station when she says goodbye to Lisa and tells her to "Hold on to your music."
  - 2 Invite the students to discuss the meaning of the quote based on their understanding of the historical context and excerpts they just read. Help guide students' understanding that Lisa used her music as a tool for perseverance and resilience in the face of extreme distress and challenging circumstances.
  - 3 Next, explain that the USC Shoah Foundation has collected videotaped testimonies of genocide survivors where they share their experience and how artistic expression has played a role in survival and remembrance. Before showing the clips of testimony, explain to students that they will be using the *Step Inside* protocol again to deepen their understanding of artistic expression and testimony. Distribute the *Testimony as Artistic Expression Step Inside Questions* and the *Artistic Expression Compare and Contrast* graphic organizer to each student. With the handout, consider posing the following guiding questions:
    - How does the survivor's choice of artistic expression serve as a form of testimony?
    - How can the themes of perseverance and resilience be found in their forms of artistic expression?
  - 4 Students will examine clips of testimony from the following survivors:
    - **Elise Taft:** Importance of writing about genocide
    - **Judith Goldstein:** Songs learned while living in the ghetto
    - **Yehudah Bakon:** Drawings as reflections from time in the concentration camps

# Teaching with Testimony

## Lesson Plan



- 5 Before watching each clip, share with students each individual's short biography. Then, as students watch the clips of testimony, they will use the *Testimony as Artistic Expression Step Inside Questions* to highlight the ways in which the speakers share their different experiences through a variety of artistic mediums.

*Note:* it may be helpful to show a clip a second time to ensure that students have captured all the information.

- 6 When students have analyzed the three clips of testimony, take a moment to allow students to compare and contrast the artistic mediums used by each survivor using the *Artistic Expression Compare and Contrast* graphic organizer. As students begin, it may be helpful to the guiding questions.
- How does the survivor's choice of artistic expression serve as a form of testimony?
  - How can the themes of perseverance and resilience be found in their forms of artistic expression?

- 7 Provide students with time to debrief by facilitating a discussion on the different experiences for each survivor and how artistic expression has served as a form of a testimony.
- 8 Next, students will consider the essential question "How can the themes of perseverance and resilience found in artistic expression connect to your life?" To help facilitate the activity, students will apply what they have learned by analyzing and reflecting on the quote from Mona Golabek about the power of music (artistic expression) and resilience "If you have something to hold on to in the darkest of times, you will make it through."
- 9 Introduce the exercise to the class by explaining that students should consider the story of Lisa Jura and the forms of artistic expression from the three clips of testimony to apply the themes of resilience and perseverance to their own lives. To help students capture their thoughts, distribute the *Art as Testimony Personal Reflection* handout. Students will complete a personal reflection that asks them to consider how music, poetry, literature, or any other form of artistic expression has helped carry them through a challenging time in their life.

*Note:* The artistic expression does not need to be something that the student created.

## Act

- 1 Students will use their new knowledge to research contemporary works of artistic expression that serve as testimony for individual/collective agency in the face of oppression.
- Note:* one example could be Black Lives Matter murals that have been created in many cities.

- 2 Distribute copies of the *Modern Artistic Expression and Testimony* handout for students to use while researching.
- 3 After notetaking the theme and context of the piece of artistic expression, students will write an article that explains the context of the work and the connection between art and testimony.
- 4 To extend the work, students could advocate for their school/community to visit or bring an exhibit to their area. Students may also write to the creator of the work and create an open dialogue about the themes of the work and contemporary issues specific groups face today.
- 5 If time allows, you may choose to engage students in discussing the role testimony as artistic expression plays as a catalyst for social movements and their role in public spaces.

### Connections

Connect to Student Lives	Connect to Contemporary Events	Connect to the Future
<p>Students will read excerpts from <i>The Children of Willesden Lane</i> and view clips of testimony from genocide survivors to understand the role art plays in sharing testimony. Students will then reflect on the impact artistic expression has in conveying the themes of perseverance and resilience in their own lives and the experiences of others.</p>	<p>Students will analyze primary and secondary sources to document contemporary examples of artistic expression as testimony in the face of oppression.</p>	<p>As students investigate contemporary works of testimony as artistic expression, students will analyze current events and trace the impact of historical events on the understanding of the present and the future.</p>

### 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.

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.

D.4.7.6-8 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.

D.4.8.6-8 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.

# Survivor Biographies



STUDENT HANDOUT

**Elise Hagopian Taft** was born in 1906 in the city of Bandirma in Western Turkey, near the Sea of Marmara. In 1915, Elise and her immediate family of five were targeted by the Ottoman government and forcibly displaced from their home to the Syrian Desert, along with many other Armenian exiles across the Ottoman Empire. In her testimony, Elise reflects on how she and her family were transported by train through the interior of Turkey, then they were made to walk on foot for the rest of the journey. She describes the hardships both she and her family endured while in transit—the death of her four-year-old sister, the inhospitable conditions that pervaded the death march, and the endless abuse those around her suffered at the hands of government soldiers. After surviving through these experiences, Elise experienced another threat to her life in September of 1922 in Smyrna (Izmir, Turkey). Elise survived, the event known as *The Great Fire of Smyrna*, as she was saved by American rescuers. Elise was then relocated to Greece. She eventually immigrated to the United States and would publish her memoir titled *Rebirth: the Story of an Armenian girl who survived the Genocide and found Rebirth in America*. As a mother to sons, she was determined to preserve and share her experiences with future generations. Her interview took place on April 23, 1984 in Syracuse, New York.

**Judith Goldstein**, daughter of Chaim and Yetta Shapiro, was born on October 11, 1932, in Vilna, Poland (now Vilnius, Lithuania). Chaim was a mechanical engineer and Yetta was a clothing designer. Judith had an older brother, Meir. As a child, Judith attended public school. On September 1, 1939, German forces invaded Poland. Later that month, the Soviet Union occupied Eastern Poland, including the region of Vilna. The city remained under Soviet occupation until June 1941, when the German army occupied Vilna. Life changed dramatically after the German occupation of Vilna. Judith's family, along with the other Jews in the city, were forced to live in the Vilna ghetto. Judith was in the ghetto from September 1941 through October 1943. Judith was then sent to

concentration camps in Nazi-occupied Poland. She spent the remainder of the war in concentration camps, and was liberated by Soviet Armed Forces. Judith's mother and brother survived the war. Judith lived in displaced persons' camps until 1949, when she emigrated to the United States. She met and married her husband, Harry, and they had two daughters. This interview was conducted on June 30, 1995, in New Rochelle, New York.

**Yehudah Bakon** son of Esther and Israel, was born on July 28, 1929, in Moravská Ostrava, Czechoslovakia. Yehudah grew up in a lower-middle class family, and had two older sisters, Rivkah and Hani. After the German occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1939, conditions deteriorated and restrictions for Jews increased. In 1942, Yehudah and his family deported to the Theresienstadt camp-ghetto. There, Yehudah was put in a youth barrack where he was taught by former university professors. These classes were illegal. Yehudah learned from Otto Ungar and Leo Haas, artists who encouraged Yehudah to pursue his "special gift." Towards the end of 1943, Yehudah and his family were deported to the Auschwitz camp complex in Nazi-occupied Poland. Upon arrival, Yehudah was placed in a block for children under 14 years old. Yehudah was one of about 80 young boys kept alive for forced labor. Yehudah transported wood and ashes throughout the camp. When Auschwitz was evacuated in mid-January of 1945, Yehudah was sent on a death march that took him to the Blechhammer, Mauthausen and Gunskirchen concentration camps. Yehudah was liberated at Gunskirchen by the American Army. After the war, Yehudah emigrated to Israel, where he became an artist. Yehudah was a witness at the Eichmann Trial. This interview was conducted on December 26, 1996, in Jerusalem, Israel.

# See, Think, Wonder



STUDENT HANDOUT

<b>See</b>	<b>Think</b>	<b>Wonder</b>
<p>What do you see in this sculpture? Be sure to only make observations of what you see.</p>	<p>What connections can you make to prior knowledge? Be sure to make inferences about what you think is happening.</p>	<p>What questions do you have? List as many questions as you can that come to mind when you see this sculpture.</p>

## Step Inside Guiding Questions



STUDENT HANDOUT

I am thinking of “*perseverance*” from the perspective of Lisa Jura.

What can this person see, observe, or notice?

What might this person know, understand, hold true, or believe?

What might this person care deeply about?

What might this person wonder about or question?



## Step Inside Guiding Questions

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# Chalk Talk Instructions



STUDENT HANDOUT

Share your thoughts without speaking by writing on the paper.

Everyone gets a chance to be “heard.”

Rotate to the next text excerpt when signaled.

You may comment, elaborate, question, and politely disagree with what you read from others.

You may not criticize with the intent to offend someone else’s thoughts or words.

Use may draw or use symbols when appropriate.

Remember to use your *Step Inside* guiding questions to help reflect on Lisa’s experience as you read.

# Step Inside Guiding Questions



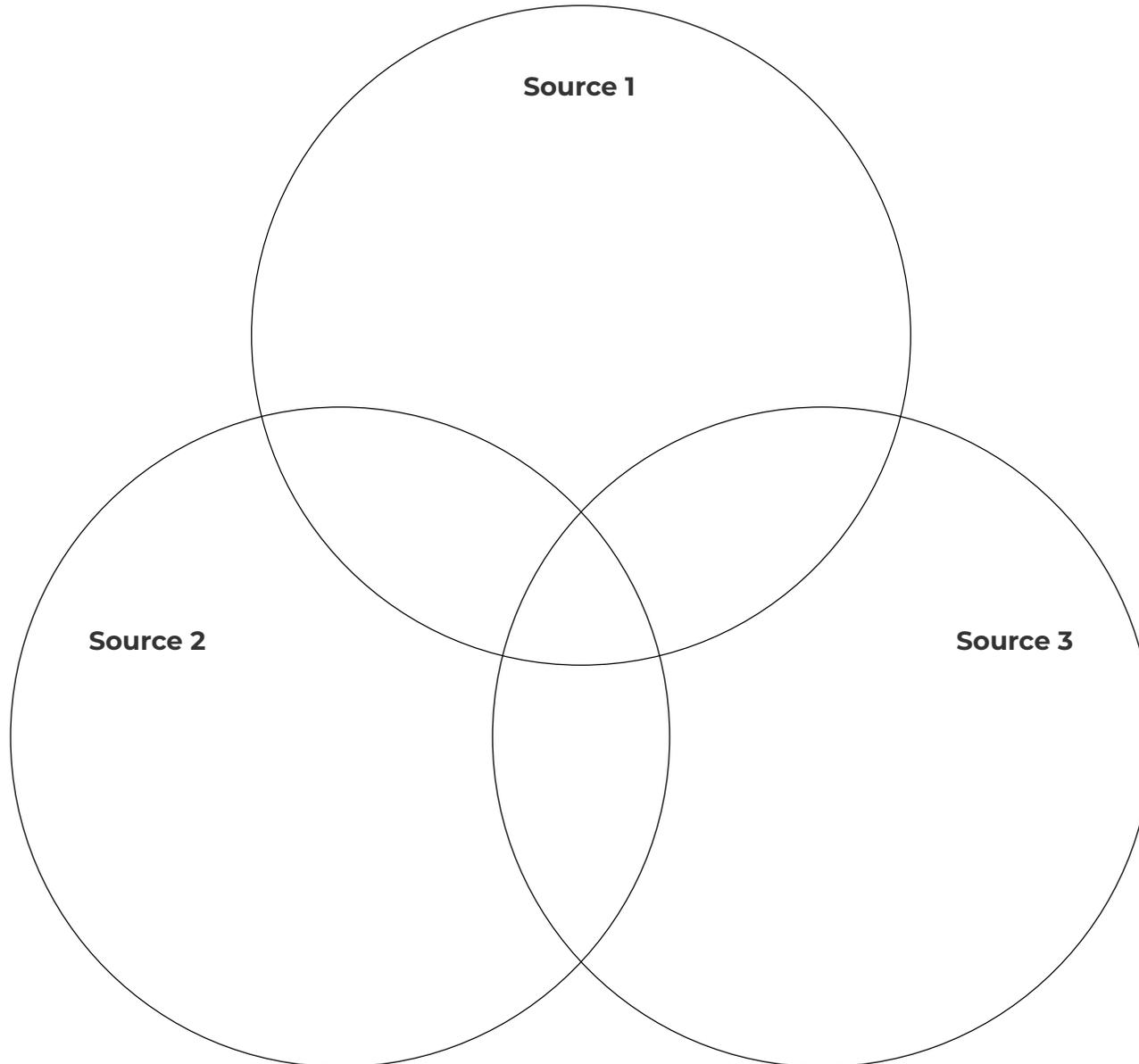
	Speaker #1	Speaker #2	Speaker #3
Form of Expression?			
From the perspective of?			
What can this person see, observe, or notice?			
What might this person know, understand, hold true, or believe?			
What might this person care deeply about?			
What might this person wonder about or question?			

# Artistic Expression Compare and Contrast

**Directions:** After viewing clips of testimony, use the Venn diagram below to compare and contrast the survivors' experiences and use of artistic expression as a form of testimony.



STUDENT HANDOUT







THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

Dresden years ago, and leafed through the worn leather scrapbook of hand-tinted postcards.

**Excerpt  
begins**

Then she stopped at the piano and brushed her fingers in the air above the keys. The copy of "Clair de Lune" was on the piano. Guiltily she rolled it up and put it in her pocket. It was a silly luxury, she thought, since she had so little space, but she couldn't help herself.

Her mother came in from the hall and put on her heavy coat. "It's time to go."

"Mama, will you promise me something?"

Malka smiled at her daughter. "Of course."

"Will you promise me that you won't move anything in this room? That you will leave it all just as it is? I want to know it's still like this when I think about it," Lisa whispered so quietly that her mother could barely hear her.

"I promise, Liseleh." Malka smiled back at her, then took her daughter in her arms and rocked her.

The Westbahnhof station was overflowing with people; Lisa had never seen it so crowded. Hundreds of desperate families rubbed shoulder to shoulder in panic and confusion, and pushed belongings of all shapes and sizes toward the waiting train. At the door to each car Nazi soldiers in long brown coats shouted into bullhorns as they inspected suitcases and documents.

When the crowd became too dense, the Jura family stopped for their final good-byes. It had been decided that Rosie, Sonia, and Abraham would say good-bye first, then Lisa's mother would walk her to the train. Abraham had been carrying the small suitcase for his daughter. When he stopped and handed it to her, Lisa could only clutch the handle and stand frozen. She felt that if anyone moved

THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

from her side, she would fall to pieces like a broken china figurine.

Abraham put his arm around Rosie, easing her toward Lisa, and the two sisters embraced. "Don't forget to take the window seat so we can see you," her beautiful older sister shouted above the noise. "We'll all be together again soon, be brave for us."

Next, Abraham gently pushed his youngest daughter forward. Lisa kissed her, reached into her pocket, and slipped Professor Isseles's tiny gold charm around Sonia's neck. "Close your eyes and picture all of us together soon . . . and keep this for me until I see you again. . . ."

Then Abraham took Lisa in a hug so tight that neither one could breathe. He was crying, something she could never remember seeing him do before, not even on Kristallnacht. Finally, Malka took her hand and guided her through the crowd toward the platform.

The children were lined up, waiting their turn to board. Some of them were Lisa's age, some older, some younger, carrying their cherished toys and dolls. Teary-eyed parents buttoned their coats, brushed their hair, and laced up untied shoes.

"You be on your best behavior. . . ."

"Don't forget to eat your lunch. . . ."

"Don't take your sweater off; you'll catch a cold. . . ."

In front of Lisa and her mother was a little boy of about ten. Along with his suitcase he carried a large red accordion. "You'll have to leave this here," said the guard. "No valuables are to leave the country."

"It's not that valuable," protested the boy. "I need it to practice."

"Show me that you can play it," insisted the guard.

The boy sat down his bag and strapped on the accor-

THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

dion. His head was barely visible behind the huge instrument. He began to play a simple polka—his hands shaking from fear. Its unexpected three-four beat drifted down the platform and for an eerie moment, the clatter of the crowd stopped, as they listened. The guard stared, then motioned for the boy to move forward with his instrument as the clamor of good-byes began again.

Malka looked at her daughter, who was next in line, and held her close. "You must make me a promise."

"What is it, Mama?"

"You must promise me . . . that you will hold on to your music. Please promise me that."

"How can I?" Lisa sobbed. "How can I without you?" She dropped her little suitcase and embraced her mother tightly.

"You can and you will. Remember what I've taught you. Your music will help you through—let it be your best friend, Liseleh. And remember that I love you."

"Move forward now," the guard commanded, and waved Lisa up the steep metal stairs. At that moment Malka slipped a little card into her daughter's hand. Lisa didn't even have a chance to glance at it: Before she knew it, she was separated from her mother and carried along onto the train car.

**Excerpt  
ends**

Pushed up the steps and swept down the long corridor, Lisa moved quickly to a seat by the window. The glass was covered by the condensation of many fevered breaths, and she furiously wiped a patch clear with the sleeve of her coat. She watched as children were wrenched bodily from their mothers and shoved onto the train. Trembling, she searched for her mother's dark hair and black coat. She thought she could see her and waved frantically, but she did not know whether her mother could pick her out.

THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

Excerpt  
begins

"Mr. Hardesty called me to discuss where to send you. I understand that Mrs. Canfield has friends who will take Sonia, but that it might be difficult for them to take you as well."

In the frantic emotions of the past few days, Lisa hadn't even thought about her own future. Things had happened too fast to allow herself the luxury of plans and expectations. She'd almost forgotten that her stay at Willesden Lane was to be temporary.

Mrs. Cohen continued: "I told him that we would be willing to keep you here, even though we'll only be allowed thirty ration books and you would be our thirty-second person. We'd be willing to tighten our belts a little bit, if you'd like to stay."

Lisa bowed her head in gratitude and to hide the tears that were being shed all too often. She nodded yes. "Thank you very much," she whispered.

"That's settled, then. Please close the door behind you."

Lisa went to the door, but Mrs. Cohen called her back. "Wait a moment," she said, opening the doors of the mahogany dresser and lifting out a stack of sheet music. "Would you like to borrow this?"

Lisa's eyes widened at the sight. It was Chopin and Schubert and Tchaikovsky! A name was penciled neatly on the top of each book: "Hans Cohen."

"Thank you so much, ma'am," she cried.

Sonia was due to arrive on the 3:22 train at the Liverpool station that afternoon.

The train station was a madhouse. As fate would have it, the children of London were being evacuated that very weekend, and long lines of English toddlers were being organized by their parents and volunteers. They had tiny

THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

packs strapped to their backs and white paper identification tags fastened with strong twine through buttonholes.

A sign outside the station read: "Southern Railways Special Announcement: Sept 1,2,3 the following steam trains are required for the evacuation of children and will not be available for ordinary passengers: 9:30 A.M., 11:30 A.M., etc. all weekend long."

Lisa located the volunteers from the Bloomsbury House, and they helped her to find Mr. and Mrs. Bates from Norwich, who also spoke with the odd-sounding thees and thous. They offered reassuring words about their farm and about their daughter, who was also Sonia's age, and together they went to look for the special train coming in on track sixteen.

The waiting was an agony for Lisa, but finally the children began to emerge from the Kindertransport. The boys were dressed as Lisa remembered, in their finest wool suits and tiny ties; the girls in woolen dresses. In comparison with the lines of bright-eyed English children she'd seen outside (who had been promised a vacation in the countryside), these girls and boys looked exhausted and terrified.

Sonia was wearing her heavy maroon coat, even though the weather was warm. When Lisa saw the frail and serious thirteen-year-old come down the steep steps, she thought she would crumple on the spot from the rush of emotion and relief. Breaking away from the couple, she ran to meet Sonia, grabbing her tightly in her arms, calling her name over and over. "Sonia, Sonia, you've come, Sonia." Again she was sobbing and couldn't make her voice utter any of the words she had been preparing.

For a long moment they held each other, and it almost seemed she was home in Vienna again.

## THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

Lisa had told herself to be strong and positive to show her sister that everything would be all right, so she forced herself to stop crying. Mr. and Mrs. Bates had tickets on the train back to the north of England, which would leave from Paddington station in two hours, and they'd been lucky to get any seats at all. Lisa was desperate to make good use of every second of the thirty minutes they had been given for their reunion. The two sisters embraced all the way to the first-class café on the second floor of the station, where they were left alone for a private reunion. Grasping her pale sister's hand on top of the white tablecloth, Lisa called the waiter, proudly showing off her English by ordering tea and sandwiches. Sonia politely nibbled at the unfamiliar food, while Lisa opened the package that her sister had brought her from Vienna. Her heart leapt to her throat. Inside was a silver lamé evening purse that had belonged to Malka's grandmother and a book of preludes by Chopin—the one her mother had helped her learn. It seemed like yesterday. She was overwhelmed by emotion.

Opening the letter from her mother, she read: "Your father and I are so comforted to know that you and Sonia are both at last safe in England away from the dreadful place that our home has become. We are putting every effort now to find a way to get Rosie out. Take good care of our littlest treasure, Lisa, and know that all our prayers are for the day when we will be reunited."

**Excerpt  
ends**

Attached to the letter was a photograph of Abraham. She was so grateful to have his picture—for try as she might, it was harder and harder to remember all the details of his beloved face. She stared at the photograph and was shocked to see that his hair was now totally white.

The thirty minutes passed in a heartbeat, and Mr. and

THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

morale by organizing a "musical," a little concert of classical music and popular songs, and invite refugees from another hostel. The matron gave her approval; everyone was very excited. It gave them a sense of patriotic purpose.

Lisa asked for suggestions from Mrs. McRae about popular songs, and people at work donated sheet music. Her favorite was "Oh, Soldier, Who Is Your Lady Love?"

Hans agreed to play his favorite, which he had memorized from the BBC broadcasts, entitled, "When You're Up to Your Neck in Hot Water, Be Like the Kettle and Sing."

Gina wanted to help. "Let me sing the words."

"You can't sing," Lisa said without thinking.

"I can too. You just don't want anyone else to get any attention!"

Gina pouted for several days, until, realizing the program wouldn't be the same without her friend's enthusiasm, Lisa groveled and begged her to sing. They all stayed at the piano practicing until the last seconds of the now daily air raid blast, then had to be dragged by the matron into the shelter, still singing as loudly as they could.

**Excerpt  
begins**

The bombing continued mercilessly—no longer just in the East End but everywhere. The local town council inspected the hostel and announced that it was too risky having the boys' bedrooms on the vulnerable top floor, so the boys began sleeping in the living room and kitchen, where they were precious minutes closer to the bomb shelter.

Lisa understood the importance of this move but found it irritating nonetheless, since the younger boys liked to wrestle and chase each other through the living room and under the piano bench, disrupting her practice.

\* \* \*

THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

No one got much sleep. Every night the sirens sounded, and they would rush to the shelter for two or three hours, then stagger back to bed at the all clear. Some of the children chose to spend the whole night in the shelter, but the trade-off was waking up with frozen fingers and toes. When the bombing was at its worst, Johnny would be called and proudly joined the firemen in all-night stints. Lisa slept less and less and her face took on a drawn, worried look. Night after night she huddled in fear against the cold cement wall, praying for it to be over.

Hanukkah came, and Lisa was disappointed that once again Sonia was not allowed to visit.

Sonia had written her sister every week. The first letter had been almost unreadable, since it was written in English and Sonia hardly knew three words of her new language.

Lisa had responded in German, asking how everything was and telling her all the news of the hostel. But again the response had come in English, only slightly more intelligible than the last one.

When Lisa wrote back insisting that her sister write in their native tongue, she got a harsh reply.

"I promised to never more speak the words of Hitler," came the reply. Her fourteen-year-old sister was as stubborn as Lisa. Willpower seemed to be a family trait.

The musicale was scheduled for New Year's Day 1941. Mrs. Glazer had been hoarding butter so she could make mincemeat pies, and the other hostel forwarded two weeks' ration coupons for sugar. Gina was in good voice, only half joking that she was considering a singing career, and Gunter scrounged up a pair of castanets. Edith borrowed a neighbor's oboe and learned the five most relevant notes, while Johnny beat the time on his metal helmet.

THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

It was only Aaron who didn't join in the festive mood. Lisa asked him to sit next to her as they practiced, but he refused.

"What's wrong, Aaron? Has something happened?" she asked.

"Everything has happened, look around you," he answered bitterly, going back to the sofa and staring at the chess board. Suddenly she noticed that the boy who had whistled the opening bars of the Grieg, founded the committee, and charmed her so was beginning to disappear into a cloud of angry solitude.

A week's lull in the bombing raised everyone's spirits and enabled the entertainers to put the finishing touches on their music program. But on December 29, the air raid siren sounded once again in the middle of evening practice. Everyone moaned and grabbed their books and the chess board and headed underneath the ground. Everyone but Lisa.

She was fed up with the horrible shelter. She needed to keep practicing! The bombs never hit anywhere near them, anyway, she told herself. There were no ammunition dumps in Willesden Green! She hammered the cascading octaves of the cadenza of the Grieg louder and louder to cover the whine of the bombers. Over and over she pounded the keys, and when the chords weren't loud enough, she began to shout the melody—drowning out the sound overhead.

The relentless explosions worked their way inside her head, and soon, without even realizing it, Lisa imagined herself single-handedly fighting a war against the Führer. Matching sound for sound in a pounding frenzy, she hurled chord after chord into the threatening skies, answering each explosion with one of her own. She played feverishly,

THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

her chords her only ammunition. She played with such intensity that she couldn't hear that the bombs were coming ever closer.

Suddenly there was a deafening crash, and the force of the bomb's concussion threw Lisa from the piano and smashed her against the living room wall. The glass of the bay window shattered and sent splinters showering across the room.

Lisa lay on the floor, wondering if she were dead. She looked at her hands first; the fingers moved, and so did the arms! She did a muscle-by-muscle inventory and discovered that everything worked. She was covered in dust and splinters but could discover no blood, so she stood up slowly. Instead of being terrified, she felt suddenly calm. These bombs can't hurt me! she told herself. She was fine; the piano was fine! The door flew open and Aaron and Gunter ran in.

Excerpt  
ends

"Lisa! Are you all right?" they yelled in unison.

"Just fine, you can tell Mr. Hitler I'm just fine!"

"I'll tell Mr. Hitler that you're crazy! Now let's go!"

Aaron shouted angrily. She had never seen him so upset.

Another wave of airplanes was approaching; they each seized one of her arms, lifting her up and over the glass and back to the shelter.

Once underground, Mrs. Cohen grabbed Lisa, clasping her to her chest in relief. Releasing her, Mrs. Cohen scanned her charge from head to toe, making sure she was intact. Satisfied that Lisa was unharmed, she railed: "We are at war, young lady! It is not the time to take foolish risks. I had to send two boys to find you. You could have all been killed! Never, never do that again!"

Lisa apologized, too overcome to try to explain herself, and set about comforting the younger children. The raid

## THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

"It's almost full!" she cried excitedly.

"Don't go out there! They'll see you."

"No, they won't!"

"Yes, they will!" Lisa insisted.

"Relax, the two of you, you're making *me* nervous," said Rosie intervening.

**Excerpt  
begins**

The ornate turn-of-the-century hall, with its red velvet seats, was filling up quickly. Rosie had invited every person she met—people on the street, the butcher at the corner—every last soul in the beauty parlor. She knew instinctively it was important to have a packed concert hall for the full effect of this important night. And of course, the students and faculty of the Royal Academy would also be there.

She had also insisted that Lisa invite the nice French soldier whose address she had come across in Lisa's night table.

"He's probably in Paris, for heaven's sake," Lisa had said.

"You said you'd invite him, so you have to invite him! I'll pay for the telegram. You never know. People get around these days."

Lisa knew he would never come, she'd met him almost a year ago, but it didn't hurt to dream.

Mrs. Cohen had organized an early dinner for everyone at the hostel so they could get to the center of London at seven o'clock sharp. She didn't want anyone's stomach growling during the concert. She helped the youngest ones tie their ties and comb their hair, then clucked and scolded them out of the house at five-thirty, just in case the bus was late.

Lisa's mind raced as she adjusted the straps of her gown. She thought for a moment about how much had changed

## THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

since her childhood fantasies of playing concerts for Viennese royalty. Instead of those adolescent dreams, she tried to focus on this audience, filled with the good people of England, the working people as well as the rich people, the friends as well as the strangers. There would be no dukes and counts, she chided herself.

But this was just a speech she gave herself to calm down. It wasn't working, however, and her heart started beating faster and faster. Her sisters wished her well one last time, and she was left alone. The hush was falling; the curtain was rising.

Lisa walked elegantly onto the stage and was greeted by enthusiastic applause, as she sat at the nine-foot Steinway grand. Its ebony finish was polished to perfection; its lid was fully open, reflecting the gleaming inner workings of the strings.

With a subtle adjustment of her posture, she brought a hush over the audience. Once all was silent, Lisa waited a few breaths until the air of expectation was almost unbearable, then took another deep breath and went inside herself. When she felt the audience disappear, she lifted her hands in a graceful arch and began.

Her first chords were somber but eloquent; she was starting, as she had at the audition, with Beethoven's *Pathétique*. This time, however, her opening was more confident and mature; she had the courage to start quietly, as her mother had often counseled. She began her story with the pianissimo that recalled the quiet despair of the agonizing separation from her family these past six years. The music deepened into thunderous chords retelling the years spent defiantly warding off the Nazi attacks. Lisa searched within herself and found the colors

THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

and shadings to express the depths of her longings and the heights of her triumphs.

As the intensity began to build, she sent her prayer across the footlights into the hearts of the people who had gathered together. The beauty of the music entered their souls, from the refugee to the barrister, from the garment worker to the RAF pilot, from the Resistance hero to the dockworker, and helped to guide them through their deepest, inexpressible emotions.

Mrs. Cohen's eyes were shining and devout as she allowed herself to remember and mourn her husband and sister, surely lost. Hans listened with a joy that surpassed that of any moment he had spent with Lisa in the cellar, the music bringing warmth to his darkness.

In the simple, dignified melody of the Chopin Nocturne in C-sharp Minor, Mrs. Canfield faced the loss of her son, John, reliving the images of his infancy and childhood and hearing in the music the heroism of his service as a medic. In Mrs. Canfield's mind, Lisa imbued the regal tones with her son's life story, one hand taking over from the other as she made the nostalgic notes evoke his life, lost but quietly remembered.

Gina and Gunter held tightly to one another and felt the excitement of their future in the nocturne's tender passages, their hearts rejoicing in the passion of Lisa's playing.

Mrs. McRae, Mr. Dimble, Mrs. Floyd, Mr. Hardesty, all of them in their way shared feelings they could never express in words. Lisa wove their stories through the Chopin and the Rachmaninoff, the music becoming the tale of so many in war-torn London.

She relived her own joys and tragedies, her terrible journey to London, and her passage to adulthood. She

## THE CHILDREN OF WILLESDEN LANE

mourned her lost parents in the tragic tolling of the bells of the Rachmaninoff prelude; then, from its majestic progression of chords, she built a hymn of gratitude—to her parents' love, to their wise devotion, and to every mother and father who had the courage to save their child by saying good-bye.

When enough tears had been shed in the audience, Lisa began the final piece, Chopin's heroic polonaise. This was Lisa's tour de force, and its thunderous exuberance raised the spirits of all assembled as row after row of shining eyes relived their proudest, bravest moments—their courage under the bombing, their unshakable resolve, their ultimate victory.

There were many seconds of awed silence, then the audience erupted in tumultuous applause. Lisa stood up and the applause redoubled. She looked into the audience and took bow after bow before leaving the stage and the glory of the spotlight.

**Excerpt  
ends**

The scene in the dressing room was utterly chaotic. The press of people included all the hostel children, shaking Lisa's hand one by one, ten women from the factory, Mr. Hardesty and the staff of the Jewish Refugee Agency, Mrs. Canfield and five Quaker brethren, and, of course, Sonia and Rosie and Leo and Esther.

Then came Mabel Floyd, towing a well-dressed impresario, who congratulated her profusely and spoke loudly to be heard above the din: "Your professor tells me you play a wonderful Grieg piano concerto!"

Hans sat on a chair near Lisa and drank in the sound of the compliments, nodding his head in delight. Next to him stood Gina and Gunter. When Mrs. Cohen had finished escorting the younger children of the hostel