

Internment of 'enemy aliens': Part 2

Teachers' Notes

In this collection of resources, we explore the internment of Jewish refugees as 'enemy aliens' in 1939.

After the outbreak of war in September 1939, all Germans and Austrians in Britain became 'enemy aliens' and had to register with the police. The Home Office set up internment tribunals throughout the country, to examine all 'enemy aliens' over the age of 16 and classify them as either Category A, B, or C:

- Category A, to be interned.
- Category B, to be exempt from internment but subject to the restrictions decreed by the Special Order.
- Category C, to be exempt from both internment and restrictions.¹

Although most remained at liberty, in the summer of 1940, restrictions tightened due to the risk of German invasion, and tens of thousands were interned regardless of their classification.²

The increase in numbers of those interned exhausted the capacity of existing sites and, although most refugees were interned in camps in Britain, some were deported to other countries, notably Canada and Australia. During war time, these were dangerous voyages. One ship (the SS Arandora Star) carrying over 1,600 people, several hundred of whom were German refugees, was torpedoed by a German submarine on its way to Canada in July 1940. Over 800 people drowned.

For more information, see: [Collar the lot! Britain's policy of internment during the Second World War](#).

For internment of 'enemy aliens' in Canada: ['Enemy Aliens' in Canada](#) and [The little-known saga of Jewish internees in Canada](#), and in Australia: [Wartime internment camps](#).

Using two oral history testimonies, this lesson explores the internment of Jewish Refugees as 'enemy aliens' in the UK and their experience of having been sent to camps on the Isle of Man and in Canada.

Gaby Koppel talks about her father's internment in the Hutchinson Camp on the Isle of Man and about his deportation to Canada.

¹ Robert Kershaw, *Internment of enemy aliens in 1940: The fate of Italians resident in a Britain at war* (2020) <<https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/internment-of-enemy-aliens-in-1940-the-fate-of-italians-resident-in-a-britain-at-war/#:~:text=The%20vast%20majority%20%28some%2066%2C000%29%20of%20enemy%20aliens,as%20Category%20B%20and%20569%20as%20Category%20A>> [accessed 7 June 2022].

² Robert Kershaw, *Collar the lot! Britain's policy of internment during the Second World War* (2015) <<https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/collar-lot-britains-policy-internment-second-world-war/>> [accessed 7 June 2022].

The Hutchinson Camp soon earned a reputation as the ‘artists’ camp’, after the high number of intellectuals and artists who were interned there. The internees put on musical performances, held lectures, and created artworks during their time at the camp. Some sculptors created sculptures using porridge, since there was no other material available.

Evelyn Ruth Kaye talks about her father almost boarding a ship containing refugees that was sunk while en route to Canada (in her testimony she mistakenly refers to Australia).

This is session 2 of 2 on the topic of Internment of ‘enemy aliens’ and it is recommended that teachers use both resources.

Curriculum links

Key Stage 4

History, Literacy skills

Lesson Plan

LEARNING AIMS

- To analyse documents and place their wider meaning in historical context
- To understand the different responses of refugees to their internment
- To explore the morality of internment and deportation

RESOURCES/EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

- Copies of student worksheet.
- Transcript of the audio extracts.³

STARTER

Re-cap learning from Internment of 'enemy aliens' lesson 1.

- **What** does the term internment mean?
- **Why** were the Jewish refugees in Britain interned?
- **When** were they interned?

DEVELOPMENT

Display the image of [Heinrich Pinkus's Internment Exemption Certificate](#)⁴ and ask the students to consider as a group (**TASK 1**):

- What information about Pinkus does the card provide?
- Why is Pinkus's middle name listed as 'Israel'?
- What does 'Reclassify C' mean?
- Why were so many people who were initially exempted ultimately interned?

MAIN.

Ask the students to first read Heinrich Pinkus's and Evelyn Ruth Kaye's biographies (student worksheet) and then listen to the clips of [Gaby Koppel](#) and [Evelyn Ruth Kaye](#) speaking about their fathers' internments.

Working in pairs or individually, students should answer the following questions on their worksheet (**TASK 2**):

³ We added the audio clips' transcripts, which you may choose to share with your students if you think it would be helpful. The transcript is in English and Welsh whilst the clip is in English only.

⁴ Findmypast, *Britain, enemy aliens and internees, First and Second World Wars: Heinrich David Pinkus* <<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBM%2FHO396%2F135%2F00180&parentid=GBM%2FENEMY%2FALIEN%2FWW12%2F0926189>> [accessed 7 June 2022].

1. How might internees who were being deported have felt? What about their family who were left behind?
2. How would you have tried to pass the time in an internment camp?
3. What might you have requested from a loved one while you were interned?

PLENARY

Ask the students to consider what words could describe the feelings of the internees and their families.

Then, on the board, draw a word cloud and ask the students to add their word(s) to the cloud.

Transcripts

[Gaby Koppel talks about her father's internment](#)

My dad was—must have been one of the younger ones, 'cause he was 17. A lot of people have written about the hardships of internment, but my dad just had funny stories to tell, and regarded the whole thing as a bit of an adventure, which maybe because of his age, it was. He—one thing he said, it was very cold. In Canada, so, he went—first he was interned, he was sent to Huyton in Liverpool, which was a holding camp, then he was sent to the Isle of Man, and he did tell all these stories. I mean, I heard them fresh from him, without any sense of cliché, about how the Isle of Man, it was like a university to him, he learned such a lot about music, the Amadeus Quartet, he heard them play, he learned to play bridge, which was his lifelong passion, and he learned all sorts of things; it was really—a real education. And obviously, he was surrounded by the Mittel European Jewish people, who were the milieu that he was used to, so there was a sort of comfortable...

And he, he'd tell you stories about the, the food, 'cause you had the rations, you know, were absolutely rubbish in Canada, but, you know, you had all these Viennese pastry chefs, and they'd take all the rations and they—all this sort of awful meat, quality of meat, they were being sent—make it into salami and sell it back to the Canadians at a profit. But one thing that must have been missing, so I've got all my—not all, but I've got about 15 or 20 letters that my dad wrote home from the internment camp, and it was, "Please send..." – I mean, he wasn't very, he didn't say very much, quite large writing, quite small paper—"Please send warm trousers and chocolate."

[Evelyn Ruth Kaye talks about her father's internment](#)

Oh, we had one bad moment. You know they sent some of the people from the Isle of Man to Australia, and we had a letter from my father to say he was being sent to Australia, and the ship was sunk, and only ten people were saved, and the BBC announced the names, and my father's name was amongst them. And we waited for about a fortnight, and then he was only allowed to write once a month and he wrote, he had got on the ship, but being absent-minded he'd forgotten his passport so they turfed him out.