

Worksheet: **The Holocaust and Wales: The Welsh language**

TASK 1

a) Read Kate Bosse-Griffiths's biography.

Käthe (Kate) Bosse-Griffiths was born in Wittenberg, Germany in 1910. Her father, Paul Bosse, was chief surgeon at the local hospital while her mother, also Käthe, came from a Jewish family. Although Käthe's parents had been Jewish, she (like her daughter Kate) was raised as a Christian. After the Nuremberg Laws were passed in 1935, however, she and her children were classified as Jewish.

Kate received a doctorate in Egyptian sculpture from Munich University and obtained a post at the Egyptological Museum in Berlin. She was dismissed at the end of 1936 when a colleague reported her Jewish ancestry. She fled Germany and chose Britain as her destination, arriving in January 1937. She obtained a job at Oxford University in 1939, where she met her future husband John Gwyn Griffiths. The pair married quickly in September 1939, in part because of fears that Kate would be classified as an enemy alien and interned. Kate's mother was eventually killed in Ravensbrück concentration camp, although some other family members survived the war.

Kate and Gwyn moved to Wales, where Kate embraced the Welsh language, writing poetry and short stories and submitting them (successfully) in competitions. Initially, Gwyn helped her with translating into Welsh, but she soon became fluent. The Welsh landscape reminded her of the black forests of her native Germany, the "real aimless nature, the thing I had missed so much in the tidiness of the lovely English countryside".¹

Kate and Gwyn were leading members of the Cylch Cadwgan (Circle of Cadwgan), a Welsh-language literary group named after a local mountain. She published her first novel, *Anesmwyth Hoen (Uneasy Joy)*, in 1941, and in 1942 won a short story competition in the National Eisteddfod held at Cardigan for *Y Bennod Olaf (The Last Chapter)*. Many of her works had an autobiographical element, incorporating German and European themes.

The family moved to Swansea after the end of the war, where Kate became curator of the university's Egypt collection. She continued to write for the Welsh-language press, supporting the creation of the Cymdeithas yr Iaith (Welsh Language Society) in 1962. She was even fined for refusing to pay a parking ticket that was written in English. She died in 1998. Her sons continue her passion for the Welsh language. Her eldest son, Robat, runs the publishing press Y Lolfa, while her younger son, Heini, is an author who has written numerous books on learning Welsh.

b) Listen to [a clip of Heini Gruffudd discussing his mother's attitude to the Welsh language](#).

c) Working in pairs or individually, answer the following questions:

1. Why did Kate become involved in the Welsh-language movement?

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¹ Heini Gruffudd, *A Haven from Hitler* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2014), p. 144.

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2. Kate chose to express her feelings through poetry. How can literature and poetry capture the experience of being a refugee?

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TASK 2

a) Listen to [a clip of Heini Gruffudd reading one of Kate Bosse-Griffiths's poems](#):

Hedyn (1971)

(I ateb y cwestiwn, sut y gallwn fod berchen gwreiddiau mewn dwy wlad.)

Hedyn wyf o wlad bell
Wedi ei lynu gan aderyn treigl
Wedi ei gludo dros y mor gan wennol;
Dsgynnodd ar dir newydd ei aredig
A thafu gwreiddiau

Glaswelltyn wyf ar borfa las
Wedi fy mhlygu gan garn defaid
Wedi fy nghnoi gan ddant bustach
Tyflais yn gnawd byw

Tyfais yn rhan o Gymru

A seed (1971)

(To answer the question of how one can have roots in two countries.)

I am a seed from a distant land
Swallowed by a migratory bird,
And carried across the sea by a swallow.
I fell in freshly ploughed land,
I took root.

I am a blade of grass in a green field,
I have been bent by the hoof of a sheep,
I have been chewed by the teeth of a cow.
I became living flesh.
I became part of Wales.

b) Working in pairs or individually, answer the following questions:

1. How does Kate represent her life journey in this poem?
2. Why does Kate describe herself as a seed?
3. What does the green field represent in the poem? What about the sheep? The cow?

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TASK 3

Compose a short poem on the theme of change and integration. Think about the poem's structure, what experiences you want to capture or the metaphors you want to use.

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Read your poem aloud to the class and discuss what themes you have included and why.