

## **Jewish life in Central Europe before World War 2**

### ***Kindertransport* lesson 1 of 4**

#### **Teachers' Notes**

Fleeing across Europe to escape the Nazis, about 10,000 Jewish children arrived in Great Britain between December 1938 and May 1940 on *Kindertransport* (Children's Transport). Most of them had to travel without their parents or other family members. Several of them ended up in Wales. For information on *Kindertransport*, see

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/kindertransport-1938-40>.

In this collection of resources, we explore some of the stories of child refugees who came on *Kindertransport* to Wales.

This first lesson explores the life of a young Austrian Jewish girl, Dorothy Fleming, before she arrived in Cardiff.

This is session 1 of 4 to be used in conjunction with the other resources. It assumes a basic understanding of the Holocaust. You may wish to cover the Holocaust Educational Trust's worksheet '[Defining the Holocaust](#)' before embarking on this set of four sessions.

#### **Curriculum links**

##### **Key Stage 3**

Art and design, History, Literacy skills

## Lesson Plan

### LEARNING AIMS

- To explore 'oral history' as a historical resource.
- To develop knowledge and understanding of Jewish life in Europe before the Holocaust and how life changed.
- To begin to explore how the importance of this story on Wales and the wider world.

### EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

- Copies of student worksheet (1 per student).
- Whiteboard / large paper, markers.
- Transcripts of the audio clips.<sup>1</sup>

### STARTER

Ask the students to name all the different types of historical sources they can think of - e.g., artefacts, newspapers, etc. If 'oral history' does not come up, introduce it to the group.

Definition of 'oral history': The collection and study of historical information using recordings of interviews with people having personal knowledge of past events. More information about what oral history is: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral\\_history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_history) and <https://le.ac.uk/history/outreach/besh/oral-history/what-is>.

Ask the students which of these sources is most powerful and why?  
What advantages does 'Oral History' have over other sources?  
Why might it be particularly important when learning about the Holocaust?

### DEVELOPMENT

Explain to the group that they are now going to hear an extract from an oral history by Dorothy Fleming.

You can also share a short biography of Dorothy Fleming with the students:

Dorothy Fleming was ten when she came to Britain on a *Kindertransport* from her home in Vienna, Austria. She spent much of the Second World War in Cardiff. Before the Anschluss (when Austria became part of Nazi Germany in March 1938), Dorothy lived a happy life in Vienna with her family.

Listen to [Audio Clip 1: Dorothy Fleming, early childhood](#).

Encourage the group to reflect on the similarities and differences between Dorothy Fleming's life in Vienna, Austria in the 1930s before WW2 and the students' own lives in Wales today. Capture these

---

<sup>1</sup> We added the audio clips' transcripts, which you may choose to share with your students if you think it would be helpful. The transcripts are in English and Welsh whilst the audio clips are in English only.

either on the whiteboard or in smaller groups under the heading of similarities and differences. For example:

**Similarities.**

Going swimming.

**Differences.**

School is very strict!

MAIN

As a whole class, listen to [Audio Clip 2: Dorothy Fleming, life after the \*Anschluss\*.](#)

Share this definition of *Anschluss* with the group:

‘The political union of Austria with Germany in March 1938, which meant that the country, alongside Germany, was now under Nazi rule.’ For more information about *Anschluss*, see <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/anschluss>.

Discuss some of the implications this would have had for Jewish people like Dorothy Fleming who were living in Austria at the time. These are also included on the student worksheet.

Students are then to complete the **worksheet** ‘Dorothy Fleming: Life in Vienna, Austria’.

PLENARY

Pose these questions to the class. Ask them to discuss in pairs, then feedback to the whole class.

1. What could German and Austrian Jews do about their terrible situation? (If necessary, explain to students that methods like protest, refusal, etc. might not have worked).
2. For most German and Austrian Jews, attempting to leave the country was the only option. What feelings might they have had about doing this?

## Transcripts

### [Audio Clip 1: Dorothy Fleming, early childhood](#)

I went to Kindergarten in Vienna and then I started the ordinary primary school, which I remember as being very academic, very strict. When I give talks about my story, which I do, I tell the people how we used to have to sit with our hands flat on the desk in front of us unless we were writing. This is so that the teacher would know where our hands were, and when we answered a question, we had to lift them with just two fingers up like the Boy Scout salute. It was very disciplined and very academic, and we just studied the normal academic subjects.

We went to school early in the morning, and you only had morning school, and in the afternoon, you did all the extramural things. And the things I did were skating, swimming, gymnastics, and my homework, and most importantly, English.

My mother was an extraordinary woman, although it was a fashion to have your children privately taught French, she thought somehow that English might be of more use, which indeed, it was. So, I had private lessons in English, and as I came to this country when I was 10, and passed the 11+ at 11+, it's all credit to my teacher I suppose!

So...primary school was just an ordinary primary school nearby; you went to your neighbourhood school, and I must have done reasonably well. And then I went on to a school called the Frauen-Erwerb-Verein, which is a little bit like girls' public day school, trust schools in this country, where I started early; I think we should have started at 11 but I was already there when I was 10, and that was also very academic, but it seems that I was doing alright. The idea was that all the girls who went there would eventually enter the professions, and certainly go to university. But of course, I didn't stay there long enough for that to happen.

[...]

I had a very happy childhood, and full of activity, and very proud when my sister was born when I was six, and I have very good memories of visiting my father's shop, and going to the opera, and swimming, and going on wonderful holidays, and going skiing and skating, and playing the piano. I wasn't that keen on practising the piano although I was beginning to do pieces before we came away and that I enjoyed; scales I didn't enjoy so much! And I enjoyed my English lessons, and a great advantage to me was that I had been away from home two or three times before I came to this country, so, unlike many of the other children who'd never been away before they emigrated, for me it wasn't such a shock.

### Audio Clip 2: Dorothy Fleming, life after the *Anschluss*

And I remember the change after the Anschluss, when mealtimes began to be much more somber, because to begin with they tried not to discuss what was going on in front of the children—as you do—but as time went on it got so bad, that I remember the laughing and the jokes stopping, and the discussions were all about permits and visas, and people who'd been able to get out, and those who hadn't.

[...]

And of course, things changed dramatically at school, because after the Anschluss, suddenly those of us in the class who were Jewish were kept separate from the others - "You sit over there, you're Jewish, nobody has to talk to you." And I remember many of the girls joining the BDM, the Bund Deutscher Mädchen, which is like the Hitler Youth for girls, and I remember what they wore, including the three-quarter length white socks, and I have to say to this day I have a dislike for three-quarter length white socks, although I'm not neurotic about it and my children wore them the same as everybody else, but I don't feel comfortable about them.

And I have a very, very strong memory of that time, which I always relate to people because it made a—it had a big influence on me. I remember the teacher telling the children that we have a new regime now, and you'll have noticed that things are different, and I want you to promise me that you will come and tell me if you hear your parents or any of their friends, or your brothers and sisters, saying anything nasty about this new regime that we have; you are to come and report to me. So, what she was doing, she was encouraging the children to tell on their parents, as we say, and I found at age 10, that that was intolerable, and at age 67, I still find it intolerable!

And when I was training teachers, every year group that I worked with, I invariably told them "You must do what you think is right, you must work out what you think is right and stick with that, not just what they, out there, are telling you".