

The journey to Britain

Kindertransport lesson 2 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 second lesson explores the *Kindertransport* journey of a young Austrian Jewish girl, Dorothy Fleming. She made this journey to Britain in 1938 before eventually settling with her family in Cardiff.

This is session 2 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

History, Literacy skills

Lesson Plan

LEARNING AIMS

- To understand the meaning of the term 'refugee'.
- To reflect upon the experiences of Jewish child refugees and the role that *Kindertransport* played.
- To engage with a range of historical sources to create a personal and creative response.

N.B. If you have students in your group who are refugees themselves or have experienced a similar challenging situation, you may need to adapt this lesson accordingly to be mindful of their experiences and perhaps painful memories.

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

- Large pieces of paper and marker pens.
- Art materials (if choosing this option).
- Transcripts of the audio clips.¹

STARTER

How do we define the word 'refugee'?

Watch the first one minute of the animation [Who is a Refugee?](#) from the UN Refugee Agency. Question the class to come up with a definition for 'refugee' that emphasises the difference between refugees and economic migrants. They can do this in small groups first, then write a class definition on the whiteboard or a large piece of paper.

DEVELOPMENT

Re-cap Dorothy Fleming's story from the last session. You can hand out their completed worksheets perhaps peer marking each other's and/or projecting an exemplar. Ask the group to discuss in pairs why German and Austrian Jews might have become refugees in the 1930s. Feedback discussion points to the whole class and refer back to the class definition of a refugee when needed.

Explain that Dorothy and her sister were among 10,000 children who came to Britain on *Kindertransport* travelling alone, without their parents.

Then listen to [Dorothy's account of the journey she made on Kindertransport.](#)

Share the [photograph of Dorothy and her sister in 1938](#) (before their journey) and the [photograph of Kindertransportees arriving in Britain.](#)

¹ 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.

MAIN

Divide the class into four groups. Each group is given one of the following people to focus on:

Group 1: Dorothy

Group 2: Dorothy's sister

Group 3: Boy with the Gold Watch

Group 4: Children in the Photograph arriving at Harwich (if you have a larger class and need more groups, then you identify individual children from this picture and increase the number of groups accordingly).

Ask the groups to write down on a large piece of paper some adjectives to describe how the person they have been assigned might be feeling during the journey. Encourage a range of emotions e.g., 'brave' and 'responsible' as well as 'frightened'. Between the groups, you should have a range of responses for all the different children in the stories. Feedback and share each group's responses with the whole class.

Using the responses gathered, the students are to write a piece of creative writing titled '**The Kindertransport Journey**' to explore some of the experiences that the children might have been going through on the train. This can be in the form of prose or a short poem. To keep some distance from this challenging subject area, the students should write in the third person as a 'fly on the wall' rather than from the perspective of the *Kindertransportees* themselves. You may also have some students who might wish to capture the journey on the train in an artistic way, perhaps by drawing or painting a picture using the same title. Encourage a range of individual creative responses here using different mediums and materials.

PLENARY

Sum up and reflect upon some of the responses to the creative task. Ask the students why they think that the government would only let children in at the time.

Transcripts

[Who is a Refugee? UNHCR Video – First 60 seconds](#)

Who is a Refugee?

Refugees are ordinary people who live through extraordinary times. In the country they live in conflict or persecution have put them at risk. They have no other choice but to flee and to leave their country to seek safety. This means leaving a lot behind. One of the hardest decisions a person can ever take.

So, what makes a person a refugee? Refugees are no longer in their own country and have crossed at least one border. On-going conflict may put them at risk if they return. Or they are at risk of persecution because of their nationality, race, or sexual orientation or because they associate with a religion, a social group, or a political opinion. Some get jailed or harmed physically or mentally.

Dorothy Fleming: Journey on Kindertransport

We're not absolutely sure how my parents heard about the Kindertransport, because they weren't "about", but we think that the Jewish community must have used youngsters like Boy Scouts to go to the homes of families where they knew there were children and explain to them that this opportunity existed. And we actually have the application forms—two—one for me, and shortly after that, one for both my sister and myself.

[...]

You'll know that there were committees formed all over the country here—both Jewish ones and non-Jewish—to try and find places for these children to go, because the government had said they would accept 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish children.

[...]

And so, my parents were prepared to send us to, to this country, convinced that they would be following.

[...]

So, we were given a place and we left on the 10th of January for England, and really that's a very dramatic story. My parents...we, we were allowed one piece of luggage each, and they took us to the Western Railway Station in the evening—it was always in the evening—and they were very sensible, they said their goodbyes, and were just about to leave. But I know that a lot of people were very upset, and some even snatched their children back; they just couldn't let them go. But we got into a compartment which was fairly full of children, and between us the older ones decided that the little ones would go on a luggage rack, which was made of netting; they would be more comfortable up there. So, we put my little sister up there, and she was promptly sick, which was actually very helpful, because the next half hour I was very busy, and my parents said "look after your sister, we must go now, and we'll follow you soon. Bye-bye" and off they went, which was very sensible. And indeed, they did follow eventually.

Now the. the journey started off with rumours going down the train that soon, when we got to the border, the Nazis would come and inspect our papers and our luggage, and if they found anything that we shouldn't have had, we might get sent back or there might be trouble. And they weren't rumours, it was true, and amongst our number was a little lad about eleven, whose father had given him the family gold watch—fob watch—and he got very panicky in case the Nazis found that. So, he dropped it into the slit of a ventilator, and they didn't find it, and we crossed the border having been examined and we all breathed a big sigh of relief, because it was very frightening. And, of course, from that moment onwards he was fiddling around trying to get the watch out, and never did. And I remember with all the wisdom of my ten and a half years, saying to him "look, it's only a watch. Your father would be very happy that you survived." But he was most distressed. I think the

reason he had the watch was partly as, as a family heirloom, but partly his father would have thought maybe he can sell it and maybe live on it. There are pictures also of, of children who came with a violin—again, partly perhaps to sell, partly to make a living.