

WHAT HAPPENED TO JEWISH CHILDREN DURING THE HOLOCAUST?

Students explore primary source sets about different children during the Holocaust. This lesson culminates in a jigsaw activity in which students share what they learned about a specific child and his or her family's experience.



QUESTION EXAMINED

How did Jewish families attempt to protect their children from the Nazis?

THEMES Family, Fear, Persecution, Uncertainty, Resilience

Subject
History or
English
Language Arts

Grades
8-12

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RESOURCES INCLUDED

FOR TEACHERS

- Context for this lesson, with links to further resources.
- Key terms
- Focus Questions
- Big Understandings
- Objectives
- Materials needed
- Procedure
- What happened to the people I studied?

FOR STUDENTS

- Worksheet #1 – NOTES on the sources
- Worksheet #2 – What happened to the people I researched?
- Worksheet #3 – Reflection and Seminar questions
- Resource packets – each student needs only one
 - Harry Kranner Fiss
 - Katscher Family
 - Feldstein family

Young children on the Kindertransport, wearing identification numbers. Institut für die Geschichte der deutschen Juden (IGdJ) (Kindertransport; 21-015/266)
Children up to the age of 17 were able to participate. In total 10,000 children were saved through this program, although their families often did not survive.

**EXTERNAL
LINKS**

*About the Leo
Baeck Institute &
the 1938Projekt*

*Key Dates:
Jews Under
the Nazi Regime
1933–1939*

CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON

By the end of WWII, between 1 and 1.5 million Jewish children had been murdered or died at the hands of the Nazis.

This lesson attempts to bring a deeper meaning to this baffling fact by giving students the opportunity to get to know (through an exploration of primary source documents) Jewish children who lived in Germany during the Nazi regime. Photographs, diaries and letters are used for students to learn about 3 specific children and their parents' efforts to get them out of Germany.

These documents show parents using any means possible to find a safe place for their children. Some parents reached out to strangers in the US in hopes of finding someone who could take them. Others sent their children alone to England on the Kindertransport. Diaries and letters reveal parent's and children's struggles as they prepared for this separation.

This multi-day lesson could be placed within a unit on the Holocaust, where students already have some understanding of the time period and the pogrom of Kristallnacht. It could also take place within an ELA unit of Holocaust related literature.

Background resources for introducing the topic:

1. This excellent resource from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum is a valuable introduction for students to explore before getting into the case studies. Relevant aspects of the immigration process and vocabulary are explained.
2. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website offers more information on the fate of children at the hands of the Nazis
3. In this video created by the Leo Baeck Institute, survivors talk about their experiences, as children, during the war. This source could be used as an introduction to the context of Kristallnacht, the separation of families, and the fear children experienced.
4. This article in The Guardian contains short video clips of interviews with people who participated in the Kindertransport.

KEY TERMS/VOCABULARY

Affidavit

Paperwork needed to emigrate from Germany.

A sworn statement in writing. In many examples we see in these collections, German and Austrian Jews were asking for sworn statements from relatives living abroad that they were, in fact, family members willing to sponsor them if they came to the US.

Kristallnacht

The Night of Broken Glass

The night of November 9th, 1938 was marked by violent assaults against Jews living in Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland. The pogroms were sanctioned by the government. More than 90 Jews were killed, and 267 synagogues were burned or otherwise destroyed. The windows of Jewish-owned businesses were smashed, and Jewish community centers and homes were looted and vandalized. National Socialist rioters defiled Jewish cemeteries, hospitals, and schools while police and firefighters stood idly by. The attacks were a turning point in two senses: First, they represented the moment in which mounting legal discrimination against Jews gave way to organized, state-sponsored mass violence. Second, for Jews in the German Reich, they were the decisive sign that emigration was the only hope of survival.

Kindertransport

Transport of 10,000 children to Great Britain between December 1938 and September 1939

Despite the fact that Great Britain, like almost every other country worldwide, had generally stopped taking in Jewish refugees, the country launched a rescue program for Jewish children from Germany in response to the November pogroms. The British government called upon families to take in foster children. Children up to age 17 were allowed to immigrate if they had received an invitation from a patron or a foster family. The first Kindertransport reached Parkeston Quay, Harwich, on December 2, bringing 196 children from Berlin to safety in England. The Nazis tolerated the program for about a year, until the beginning of the war on September 1, 1939. In addition to Great Britain, The Netherlands, Belgium, France, Switzerland, and Sweden accepted Jewish refugee children in similar programs.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

How did life under the Nazi regime affect Jewish children?

How did Jewish parents in Germany try to protect their children from the Nazis?

What actions did people outside of Germany & Austria take to help Jewish children?

How were parents and children affected by these events?

BIG UNDERSTANDINGS

- Jewish parents had the horrible burden of having to predict the extent of Hitler's aims and deciding on the best way to protect their children. For some families, this meant separating, believing that escape was their children's best chance at survival.
- Although many people made efforts to help children and families leave, few actually escaped. Between 1 and 1.5 million children died during the Holocaust. Even when families had contacts abroad who were willing to help them, the bureaucracy of the immigration systems still prevented many people from getting out.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will examine a set of primary source resources to study one child's story in depth.
2. Students will explain what they learned about the child in a jigsaw activity.
3. Students will analyze similarities, differences and themes that arise in these stories.
4. Students will write a reflection about their learning.

MATERIALS NEEDED

EXTERNAL LINKS

Resource Packet:
[Gerda Feldstein](#)

Resource Packet:
[Heinz Katscher](#)

Resource Packet:
[Harry Kranner Fiss](#)

- Laptops or tablets that students can use for the introductory activity, to access the 1938Projekt website, and to search survivor databases at the end of the lesson
- Resource packets - One packet per student
- Worksheet #1 – “NOTES on the sources”
 - for recording information about the sources – students will need multiple copies of the same sheet to record information on each source
- Worksheet #2 – “What happened to the people I researched?” (One copy per student)
- Worksheet #3 – “Prepare for class shareout” (One copy per student)

PROCEDURE

WARM-UP / CONTEXT

One or both of these context activities would serve as a good introduction to the sources.

Context activity #1

- Watch [video](#) from the Leo Baeck Institute which features interviews with survivors, talking about their experiences as children during Kristallnacht

Or watch one of the videos in this [article](#) about Kindertransport

- Discuss:
 - What themes or issues come up?
 - What do you learn about children's and parents' experiences during the Holocaust?
 - How did parents try to help and protect their children?
 - What questions do you still have?

Context activity #2

- Explore and discuss the immigration process using this [resource](#) on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website

PARTNER WORK: RESEARCH

Activity #1 (1-2 periods)

Each student, or pair of students, will explore one family's experiences seeking safety from the Nazis by reading a set of diary entries or letters from 1938-1941 (see Materials Needed, External Links to download packets). There are three different stories. Distribute the readings to students and give them time to read the materials and to record their reactions and observations using worksheet #1.

Activity #2 (10 – 15 minutes)

After reading the source materials, provide students with computers so they can research what happened to the people that they read about. They should record what they learn on worksheet #2. It is important to wait until they read the sources to find this out.

PROCEDURE, cont.

SEMINAR / SMALL GROUP OR FULL CLASS DISCUSSION

Activity #3 (1-2 periods)

Place students in mixed groups (or a full class) so that each will have the opportunity to hear about the stories of families whom they did not read about.

First give students time to reflect on what they read using worksheet #3

In addition to sharing out, students should discuss:

- What similarities are we seeing amongst the stories?
- What differences?
- What do we learn about the affidavit process from these stories?
- How is learning about these children different from reading about the Holocaust in a secondary source material?
- What connections can you make to other events in history or events today?

REFLECTION

Reflection Activity (1/2 day or 1 day)

Students write about one or more of the seminar questions above.

Source for
Teachers only

What happened to the people I researched? (Feldstein)

FELDSTEIN FAMILY
HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AND VICTIMS DATABASE

FRITZ FELDSTEIN

Date of Birth:
7 Jun 1897
Date of Deportation:
27 Oct 1939
Place Deported:
Wien/Nisko
Other ID:
402

GERDA FELDSTEIN

Date of Birth:
13 May 1927
Address:
Wien 20, Bäuerlegasse 20/7
Date of Deportation:
14 Jun 1942
Place Deported:
Wien/Sobibor
Other ID:
401

MARTHA FELDSTEIN

Date of Birth:
1 May 1898
Address:
Wien 20, Bäuerlegasse 20/7
Date of Deportation:
14 Jun 1942
Place Deported:
Wien/Sobibor
Other ID:
407

Source for
Teachers only

What happened to the people I researched? (Katscher)

The Katscher parents did not survive.

First Name Alfred
Last Name Katscher
Date of Birth 18.01.1887
Place of Birth Wien
Residence Wien 2, Obere Donaustrasse
49/35
Date of death 18.09.1942
Place of death Maly Trostinec
Deportation Wien/Maly Trostinec
Date of Deportation 14.09.1942
Listing on geni.com:
<https://www.geni.com/people/Alfred-Katscher/6000000008440518169>



First Name Leopoldine
Last Name Katscher
Date of Birth 22.10.1892
Place of Birth Wien
Residence Wien 2, Obere Donaustrasse
49/35
Date of death 18.09.1942
Place of death Maly Trostinec
Deportation Wien/Maly Trostinec
Date of Deportation 14.09.1942
Listing on geni.com:
<https://www.geni.com/people/Leopoldine-Deutsch/6000000012665337212>



The children can also be found on geni.com

Source for
Teachers only

What happened to the people I researched? (Kranner)

Source: <https://digifindingaids.cjh.org/>

Biographical Note

Harry Kranner was born April 15, 1926 in Vienna, Austria, the son of Edmund and Gertrude (née Römer) Kranner. On June 9, 1929 Edmund Kranner died; Gertrude Kranner later married Emil Fichmann, who owned a leather export business. Harry attended the Zieglergasse primary school and the Kandlgasse Realgymnasium until he was expelled along with all other Jewish students on April 28, 1938. During Kristallnacht, his stepfather was forced to scrub the sidewalk outside the family's residence while his uncle Artur Singer was arrested and spent several months at the concentration camp at Dachau. After attempting various avenues of emigration, the family left Austria for the United States in August 1939 and settled in New York City. After his graduation from high school, Harry was officially adopted by Emil Fichmann, renamed Fiss after immigration.

In August 1944 Harry Fiss volunteered for service in the United States Army. After first receiving basic training as an airplane mechanic, he was transferred to the intelligence division due to his knowledge of German and French. His ship arrived in Europe just after V-E Day and Harry Fiss became part of the occupation forces in Germany. There he was assigned as a translator at the Nuremberg Trials, and became head of documentation for the American prosecutor; he also assisted in interrogations, including of Rudolf Höß, commandant of Auschwitz, and Otto Ohlendorff, a commander of the SS (Schutzstaffel) Mobile Extermination Units (Einsatzgruppen). While in Nuremberg he spent much of his free time with the Displaced Persons in the area and collected food, money, and clothing for them. In early 1946 he returned to Vienna, sent by the International Military Tribunal to find witnesses among the Displaced Persons camps there.

After his honorable discharge from active duty in July 1946, Harry Fiss studied at New York University, where he majored in English. He graduated in 1949 and then went to Hollywood, California, where he eventually found work as a news writer but was hampered in advancement by his accent. He returned to New York, where he worked for a short while as a sales representative in his father's factory for ladies' novelties, but felt little satisfaction with such work. Harry Fiss began attending graduate courses in psychology at New York University; three years later he was accepted into their doctoral program in psychology. It was after he took his final comprehensive examination that he joined New York University's Research Center for Mental Health, under the supervision of his mentor George Klein. There he became involved in studies on subliminal stimulation, which led to his dissertation in 1961, titled *State of Consciousness and the Subliminal Effect*. Just prior to his receiving his doctoral degree he married his first wife, Joan Goldhirsch, a marriage that lasted four years.

Source for
Teachers only

What happened to the people I researched? (Kranner, cont.)

After receiving his doctorate, Harry Fiss worked first at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where for three years he had an appointment in Child Psychiatry and Pediatrics. During this time he married Gerda May; they had two daughters, born in 1963 and 1966. In 1963 Harry Fiss began collaboration with George Klein in conducting dream research. They received a federal grant to establish one of the first experimental sleep laboratories. Their research led to the discovery that dreaming occurs not only during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, followed by the importance of dreaming as an adaptive phenomenon, a subject whose investigation Harry Fiss would continue for much of the rest of his life. This also led to his research into self psychology and investigation of the function of dreaming in developing, maintaining, and restoring the self.

During the late 1960s Harry Fiss became director of the Clinical Psychology Training Program at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, then two years later accepted a professorship at Long Island University. By the 1970s Harry Fiss and his family decided to leave New York, and he found a position at the University of Connecticut's School of Medicine, where he became head of the psychology department and chief psychologist in the department of psychiatry. He spent twenty years there, continuing his research on dreaming, teaching and supervising students, and attending patients. While there he established the university's sleep disorders center. Upon his retirement at the age of sixty-six he continued his private practice and also taught graduate students in psychology at the University of Hartford. In 1990 he returned to Vienna, Austria to give a lecture series on sleep and dreaming, and also gave talks about his experiences during the 1930s.

In 2001 Harry Fiss's wife, Gerda, died after a prolonged illness. He later married Sari Max-Fiss. In 2003 he returned to Vienna as the keynote speaker for the fiftieth anniversary of the discovery of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. Harry Fiss died on May 2, 2009.

Worksheet 1**Notes on the Sources****Family Studied:** _____

Use the space provided to take notes on each source as you read. If you need additional space, use post-its or loose-leaf. You will use these notes when you write your reflection at the end of the unit and also for sharing out later in the week.

Date	Written by	Description of Content <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is discussed in this document?• What themes or issues come up?• What do you learn about children's and parents' experiences during the Holocaust?• How did parents try to help and protect their children?• What questions do you still have?

Worksheet 2**What happened to the people I researched?****Family studied:** _____

After reading all the materials provided, do an online search for the names of the people who you read about in the texts. Find out if they survived or not. Find out what you can about their lives and deaths. Search the person's name using the word "survivor" or "Holocaust" and you will be able to find out more about their lives and/or their deaths. Search for parents, children and other relatives if you have their full name.

Name	What I learned about the person's life and/or death

Worksheet 3**Prepare for class share and seminar**

Prepare for class share out

On loose-leaf, prepare to share what you learned with your classmates. Make some notes about these questions. Use evidence from the text to support your responses. Use additional paper as needed.

- What stood out to you about the life of the people/person you researched?
- What are some of the most important events that you read about in this person's life? Why are these events important?
- What are some of the sentences that you read? Why?
- How did you feel when you learned about each person's fate?

Seminar guidelines

Share out what you learned. After each person has shared, discuss the following:

- What similarities are we seeing among the stories?
- What differences?
- What do we learn about the affidavit process from these stories?
- How is learning about these children different from reading about the Holocaust in a secondary source?
- What connections can you make to other events in history or events today?