

Journeys - The Kindertransport

Leann Looney

Alief Early College High School – Alief (Houston), Texas

Holocaust and Genocide Elective Course

9th – 12th grade

Category: Holocaust

Approximate time: 225 minutes (Two 90 minute classes and 45 minutes from another)

Personal Information:

I am Leann Looney, a teacher at Alief Early College High School in Alief (Houston), Texas. My main teaching roles are that of Pre AP and AP World History (10th grade) courses and an elective course, **Holocaust and Genocide**. I began my 17th year of teaching in August 2017.

Summary:

This lesson is built around the idea of journeys and youth, within the relationship to the Holocaust and WWII. Students will evaluate criteria from readings of Kristallnacht survivors in order to understand the necessity of the Kindertransport, will review articles of the Kindertransport, the KTA, review **Lilli Tauber's** film: *A Suitcase Full of Memories* (Centropa) and create a quilt block representing that journey.

Background Information:

Context for Lesson:

1. Enduring Understanding:

- * That sometimes decisions have to be made that are seen as harsh or unfair, but there are times when for the better good they have to be made and lived with.

2. Goals/Objectives:

- * The understanding that sometimes situations make changes inevitable.
- * To connect students to their own lives, and also to see a connection to what is occurring in the world today.

3. Centropa Film – *Lilli Tauber: A Suitcase Full of Memories*

4. Background Skills:

- * Understanding of the Holocaust/Kristallnacht

The Lesson

It all starts with a journey, a luggage tag and a question.

(15-30 minutes)

- I would begin the lesson with a suitcase which is full of things (i.e., passport, shoes, a banana, photos, etc.....)
 - I would open the case and start to pull them out one by one and think out loud about them, what they mean to me, why I put them in it, and Oh, that's where that banana went to... etc....
 - Write 'Journeys' in the center of a board or flip-chart. Ask students to think about different journeys they have taken, e.g.: journey to school that morning, journey to go on holiday, journey to visit family, and explore the different options, creating a visual spider-diagram.
 - Each of us has our own journey, it's called life. Have a discussion about the differences between an everyday journey, and a life-changing journey. Have any of the students been on a lifechanging journey – for example: have any of your students emigrated/come from another country to find a better life, escape persecution, etc....? Did they come here not speaking the language?
 - Discuss the preparation for any journey. How long do students take to pack their bag each morning before school? What do they pack? Is it part of a routine? What about when students go on holiday? Explore these questions for a while.
 - Give each student a luggage tag and a few minutes on their own to write a list or draw what they would pack in their suitcase if they knew they had only 10 minutes to pack and they didn't know where they were going or when they would come back. What do they think they need to take to survive? (They will probably ask what age they are. I told mine their current age.)

Alternative:

Have students pair up and each take a role of the parent or the child. How would they explain to their child the decision they made and what would the child's response be? Would they view their decision differently?

The journeys that people took during the Holocaust and subsequent genocides were forced; people were taken on journeys that they weren't prepared for, taken to unfamiliar places, not knowing what awaited them.

(90 minutes ±)

- Instructor will introduce the Kristallnacht to the students. (There is a small reading before the Kindertransport reading. Instructors may utilize this and/or expand on it.)

Instructors need to lead the students to the idea that this was a “turning point” in German/Jewish history.

- Students will choose five of the primary source documents (or instructor may choose them) from Kristallnacht survivors located on the Centropa site <http://november1938.centropa.org> and will respond to the following:
 - How did the lives of these children change;
 - Was it the beginning of the end, or the end of the beginning.
- Students will read and **anno-light** (high-lighting and notating questions, vocabulary, “aha’s”. Every time there is high-lighting there is to be a notation attached somewhere on the article or in the margins) the articles on Kindertransport and KTA History. (These can be broken down into a jig-saw. If jig-sawing they need to report back to their group about what they read.)
- While reading, students will create a circle map (graphic organizer) with Kindertransport in the center and completing it with information concerning the characteristics and information of the topic. This may also be done while others are reporting on their part or place butcher paper on the wall and have them create it when they are done reading.
- Students should answer the following questions while reading:
 - Who created and funded the Kindertransport and why did they think it was needed?
 - Why was the Kindertransport created in December 1938, as opposed to another time?
 - What were the limitations of the Kindertransport as a way to save Jewish children?
 - Does the reason someone needs to leave their country make a difference in their journey? In where they end up? In how they build their lives after they are able to settle down? Explain.
- Show the Centropa film: **Lilli Tauber: A Suitcase Full of Memories** <http://www.centropa.org/centropa-cinema/lilli-tauber-suitcase-full-memories> (If you have students who have immigrated many of them may relate to certain portions of the film.).
 - Utilizing both the movie and readings, have students hold a discussion /debate concerning the following or introduce a writing prompt of:
 - Name three ways the Kindertransport resources differed from the stories of:
 - a) people in our class who successfully left their countries; and/or
 - b) refugees today. Be specific.

Exit ticket:

- Why was the Kindertransport necessary? Be specific.

(45 minutes ± or assign for homework)

- Students will create a quilt square:
- Illustrating a child's journey involving the Kindertransport or write a poem about the journey
 - (These can then be taped together or placed on butcher paper to create a quilt.)

Reflection

- Because of the demographics of my students, many have faced journeys to unknown places that have changed their lives. Many times, families are separated and they learn understanding life as not always being fair; they work harder than they ever have and worry about whether or not they will be allowed to stay.
 - Let your students lead you through this, and have frank discussions about the subject. Let them have time to talk and reflect and connect to their own life if it is relevant.
- Gauging what worked well, what didn't, what needs to be tweaked:
 - Are the readings too long, do they need more understanding of the subject?
 - How much lead-in information do they need?
 - I will keep refining it with my students. I always ask them to give feedback about the lesson, what did they like about it, what would they change and if they needed more background information.

My suggestion to teachers is to “make it their own and put their own spin on it”. This was how I did it and it is by no means perfect.

Historical Background

On November 9-10, 1938, the Nazis staged violent pogroms – state sanctioned, anti-Jewish riots – against the Jewish communities of Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland. These events came to be known as *Kristallnacht* (commonly translated as “Night of Broken Glass”); a reference to the broken windows of synagogues, Jewish-owned stores, community centers, and homes plundered and destroyed that night. Instigated by the Nazi regime, rioters burned or destroyed 267 synagogues, vandalized or looted 7,500 Jewish businesses, and killed at least 91 Jewish people. They also damaged many Jewish cemeteries, hospitals, schools, and homes as police and fire brigades stood aside.

Kristallnacht was a turning point in Nazi anti-Jewish policy that would culminate in the Holocaust – the systematic, state-sponsored mass murder of the European Jews.

Kindertransport, 1938-1940



Passport issued to Gertrud Gerda Levy, who left Germany in August 1939 on a Children's Transport (Kindertransport) to Great Britain. Berlin, Germany, August 23, 1939.

— US Holocaust Memorial Museum

[View Photographs](#)



Kindertransport (Children's Transport) was the informal name of a series of rescue efforts which brought thousands of refugee Jewish children to Great Britain from Nazi Germany between 1938 and 1940.

Following the violent pogrom staged by the Nazi authorities upon Jews in Germany known as [*Kristallnacht*](#) (Night of Broken Glass) of 9-10 November 1938, the British government eased immigration restrictions for certain categories of Jewish [*refugees*](#). Spurred by British public opinion and the persistent efforts of refugee aid committees, most notably the British Committee for the Jews of Germany and the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, British authorities agreed to permit an unspecified number of children under the age of 17 to enter Great Britain from Germany and German-annexed territories (namely, Austria and the Czech lands).

Private citizens or organizations had to guarantee to pay for each child's care, education, and eventual emigration from Britain. In return for this guarantee, the British government agreed to allow unaccompanied refugee children to enter the country on temporary travel visas. It was understood at the time that when the "crisis was over," the children would return to their families. Parents or guardians could not accompany the children. The few infants included in the program were tended by other children on their transport.

The first *Kindertransport* arrived in Harwich, Great Britain, on December 2, 1938, bringing some 200 children from a Jewish orphanage in Berlin which had been destroyed in the *Kristallnacht* pogrom. Like this convoy, most transports left by train from Berlin, Vienna, Prague, and other major cities in Central Europe. Children from smaller towns and villages traveled from their homes to these collection points in order to join the transports. Jewish organizations inside the Greater German Reich – specifically the Reich Representation of Jews in Germany, headquartered in Berlin (and after early 1939, its successor organization the Reich Association of Jews in Germany), as well as the Jewish Community Organization (*Kultusgemeinde*) in Vienna – planned the transports.

These associations generally favored children whose emigration was urgent because their parents were in [*concentration camps*](#) or were no longer able to support them. They also gave priority to homeless children and orphans. Children chosen for a *Kindertransport* convoy traveled by train to ports in Belgium and the Netherlands, from where they sailed to Harwich. (At least one of the early transports left from the port of Hamburg in Germany, while some children from Czechoslovakia were flown by plane directly to Britain). The last transport from Germany left on September 1, 1939, just as [*World War II*](#) began, while the last transport from the Netherlands left for Britain on May 14, 1940, the day on which the Dutch army surrendered to German forces. In all, the rescue operation brought about 9,000-10,000 children, some 7,500 of them Jewish, from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland to Great Britain.

After the children's transports arrived in Harwich, those children with sponsors went to London to meet their foster families. Those children without sponsors were housed in a summer camp in Dovercourt Bay and in other facilities until individual families agreed to care for them or until hostels could be organized to care for larger groups of children. Many organizations and individuals participated in the rescue operation. Inside Britain, the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany coordinated many of the rescue efforts. Jews, Quakers, and Christians of many denominations worked together to bring refugee children to Britain. About half of the children lived with foster families. The others stayed in hostels, schools, or on farms throughout Great Britain.

In 1940, British authorities interned as enemy aliens about 1,000 children from the children's transport program on the Isle of Man and in other internment camps in Canada and Australia. Despite their classification as enemy aliens, some of the boys from the children's transport program later joined the British army and fought in the war against Germany.

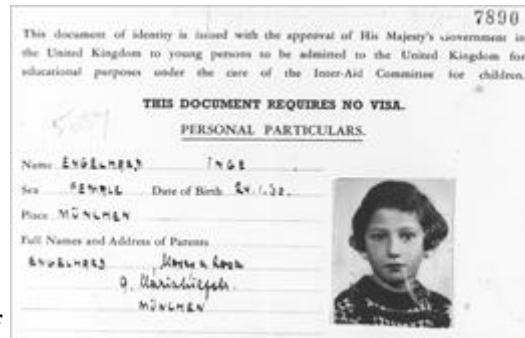
After the war, many children from the children's transport program became citizens of Great Britain, or emigrated to Israel, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Most of these children would never again see their parents, who were murdered during the Holocaust.

<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005260>

KINDERTRANSPORT AND KTA HISTORY

Rising to the Moment

In response to the events of November 9 and 10, the British Jewish Refugee Committee appealed to members of Parliament and a debate was held in the House of Commons. The already existing refugee aid committees in Britain switched into high gear, changing focus from emigration to rescue. The British government had just refused to allow 10,000 Jewish children to enter Palestine, but the atrocities in Germany and Austria, the untiring persistence of the refugee advocates, and philosemitic sympathy in some high places – in the words of British Foreign Minister Samuel Hoare “Here is a chance of taking the young generation of a great people, here is a chance of mitigating to some extent the terrible suffering of their parents and their friends” – swayed the government to permit an unspecified number of children under the age of 17 to enter the United Kingdom. It was agreed to admit the children on temporary travel documents, with the idea that they would rejoin their parents when the crisis was over. A fifty Pound Sterling bond had to be posted for each child “to assure their ultimate resettlement.” The children were to



Identification card issued to Inge Engelhard, a German Jewish refugee child, permitting her to be admitted to the United Kingdom under the care of the Inter-Aid Committee for children.

Photo courtesy of the USHMM

travel in sealed trains. The first transport left on December 1, 1938, less than one month after Kristallnacht; the last left on September 1, 1939—just two days before Great Britain's entry into the war, which marked the end of the program. By that time, approximately 10,000 children had made the trip.

Kindertransport was the informal name of the rescue operation, a movement in which many organizations and individuals participated. Kindertransport was unique in that Jews, Quakers, and Christians of many denominations worked together to rescue primarily Jewish children. Many great people rose to the moment: Lola Hahn-Warburg, who set the framework of rescue in 1933 while still in Germany; Lord Baldwin, author of the famous appeal to British conscience; Rebecca Sieff, Sir Wyndham Deeds, Viscount Samuel; Rabbi Solomon Schoenfeld, who saved close to 1,000 Orthodox children; Nicholas Winton, who saved nearly 700 Czech children; Professor Bentwich, organizer of the Dutch escape route; and the Quaker leaders Bertha Bracey and Jean Hoare (cousin of Sir Samuel Hoare), who herself led out a planeload of children from Prague; and many others. Truus Wijsmuller-Meyer was a Dutch Christian who faced down Eichmann in Vienna and brought out 600 children on one train, organized a transport from Riga to Sweden, and helped smuggle a group of children onto the illegal ship Dora bound from Marseilles to Palestine. She was the one who sped the last transport through burning Amsterdam to the Bodegraven in 1940.

KINDERTRANSPORT AND KTA HISTORY

Life in Britain

Children who had prearranged sponsors waiting for them were sent to London. The many unsponsored children waited in Dovercourt, a summer holiday camp, and other transient camps until individual families came forward to take one or two children into their homes and hostels were readied to take larger group of children. Many organizations and individuals assisted in settling the Kinder in the United Kingdom, including the Refugee Children's Movement, the B'nai B'rith, the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council, various youth movements, the Y.M.C.A., the Society of Friends, and many other Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. Private gifts of money, bedding, and clothing were received as well as offers of foster homes and houses for possible group homes.

Children of the Kindertransport were dispersed to many parts of the British Isles. About half lived with foster families, the others in hostels, group homes, and farms in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Those older than fourteen, unless they were fortunate enough to be sponsored by individuals and set to boarding schools or taken into foster care, were frequently absorbed into the country's labor force after a few weeks of training, mainly in agriculture or domestic service.



Henri Zang, Max Spiro, Egon Drab, and Kurt Deutsch in the Priory, a children's home in Selkirk Scotland, 1940.

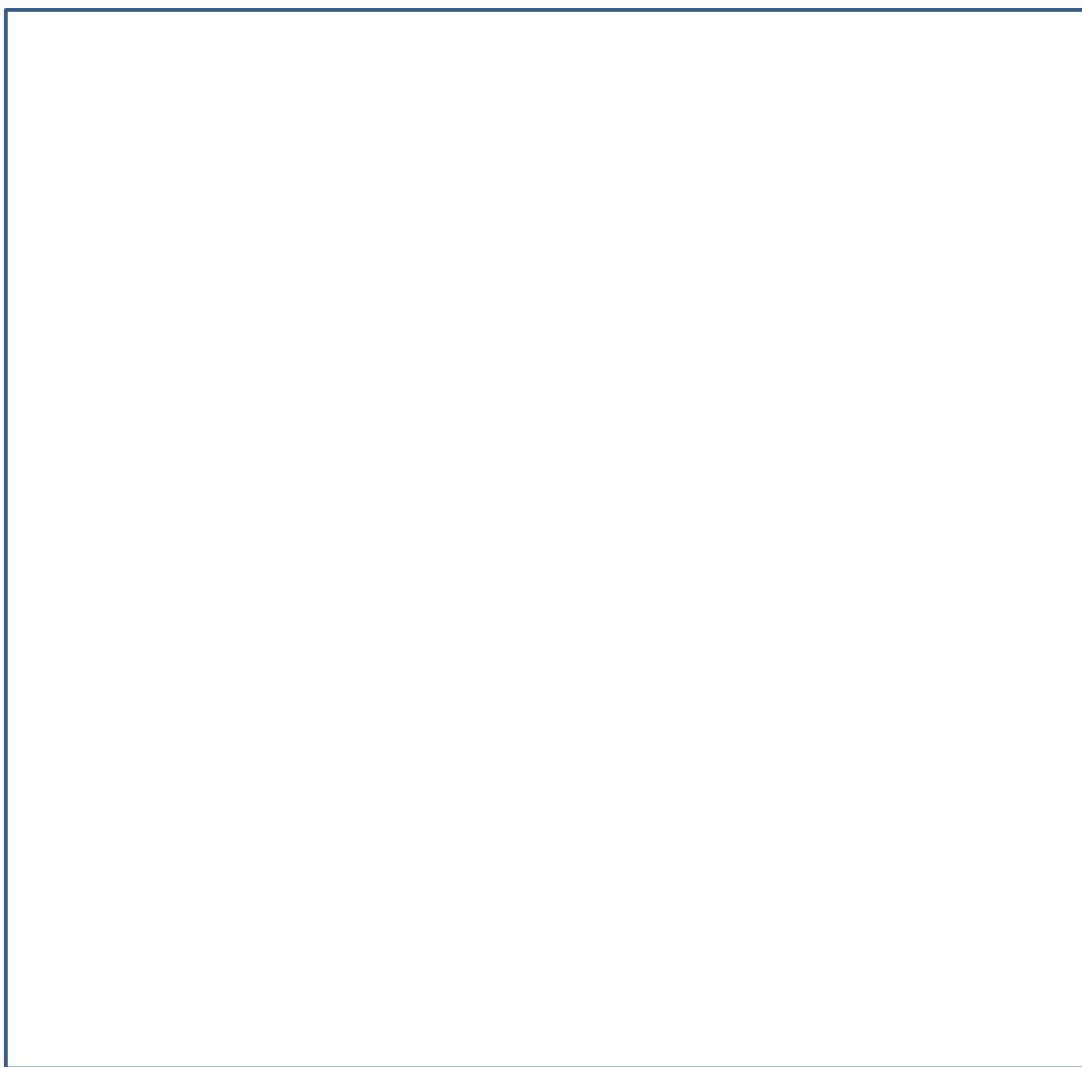
Photo courtesy of the USHMM



Many families, Jewish and non-Jewish, opened their homes to take in these children. Many of the children were well-treated, developing close bonds with their British hosts; however, others were mistreated or abused. A number of the older children joined the British or Australian armed forces as soon as they reached eighteen years of age and joined the fight against the Nazis. Most of the children never saw their parents again.

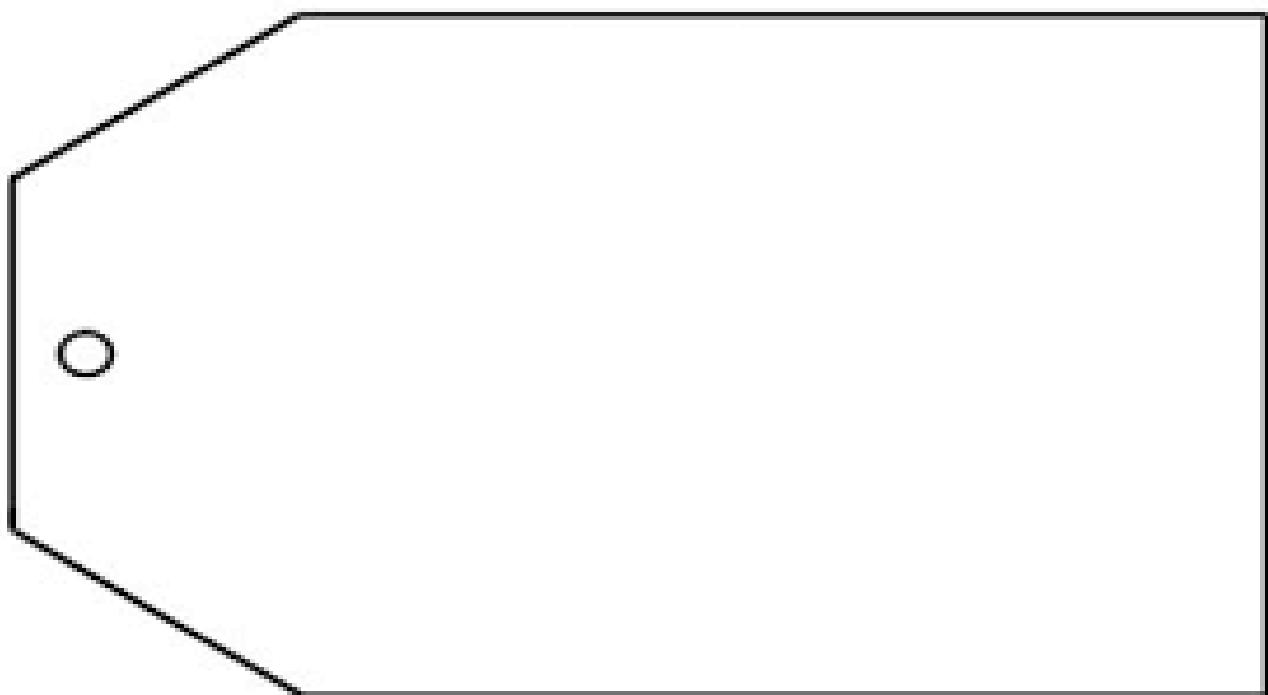
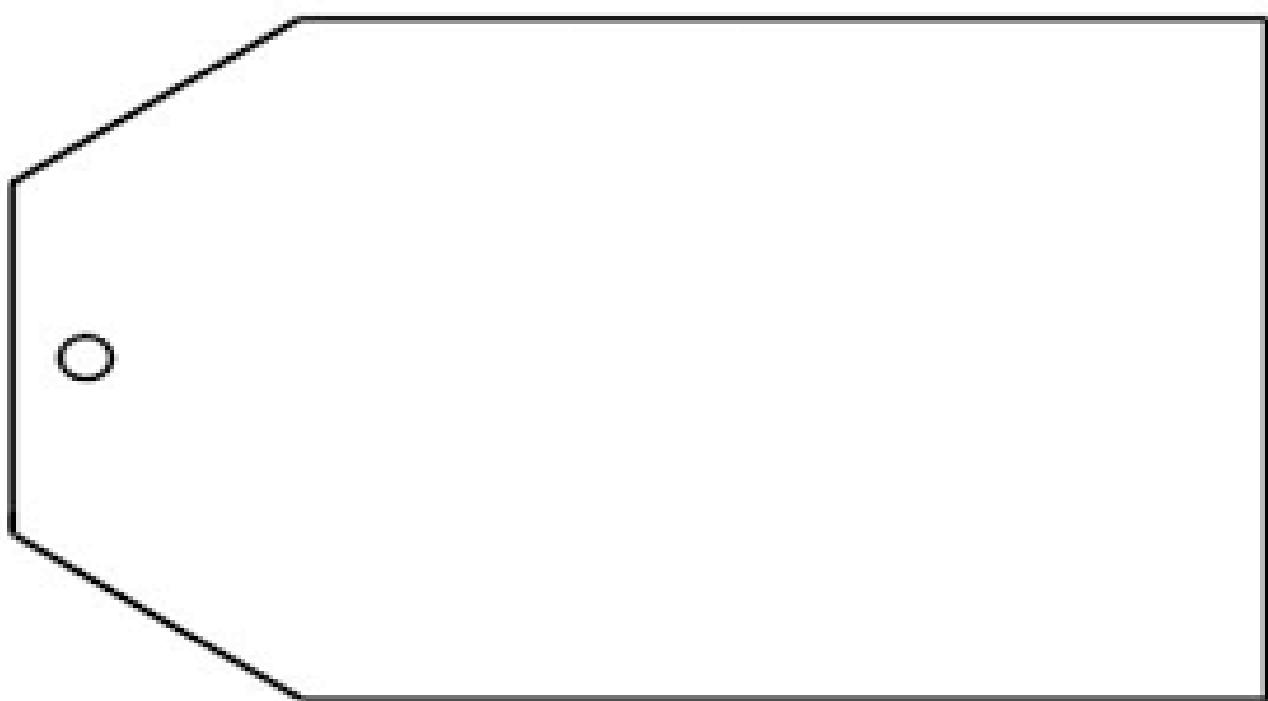
http://www.kindertransport.org/history03_rising.htm

Quilt Square Template





Luggage Tag Template



Samples of Quilt Squares

