



KINDERTRANSPORT RESOURCE CARDS

The following resource has been created by Holocaust Learning UK in partnership with the Holocaust Educational Trust and is designed for use with Holocaust Learning UK's *Kindertransport* film.

Holocaust Learning UK offers a unique array of films, tailor-made for secondary school students, supported by bespoke resources and expertise provided by the Holocaust Educational Trust. All their films are free to view and provide students with the essential historical facts of the Holocaust, together with memorable personal testimony, archive footage and a diverse cast of student actors to foster historical learning and an understanding of the Holocaust's contemporary relevance: linking the past, present and future.

The Holocaust Educational Trust works to ensure that people from every background are educated about the Holocaust and the important lessons to be learned for today. Since 1988, the Holocaust Educational Trust has worked with schools, universities, and communities around the UK to raise awareness and understanding of the Holocaust. The Trust provides teacher training, an Outreach programme to enable Holocaust survivors to share their personal testimonies, teaching aids and resources. Through their flagship programme, the *Lessons from Auschwitz* Project, tens of thousands of young people have had the opportunity to see for themselves the site of the former Nazi concentration and death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. They return inspired and passionate about ensuring that the legacy of the Holocaust continues for generations to come, and having seen where antisemitism can lead, they are committed to calling it out wherever it is found.

INTRODUCTION

This collection of resource cards has been devised to be used in conjunction with Holocaust Learning UK's film *Kindertransport* to explore the largest organised response to the refugee crisis of the 1930s, the Kindertransport programme. The film and these resources are designed to be used in the following settings:

1. Assembly
2. Classroom: History, RE & Philosophy, PSHE

The cards and the prompt questions are to encourage students to reflect on the challenges and themes present in the history of the **Kindertransport** (*a programme*



which began in December 1938 to bring approximately 10,000 mostly Jewish children to Britain until the outbreak of war) and the diverse experiences of the “Kinder” children - the infants and children under 17 who were brought to the UK on the Kindertransport programme. While the cards created for use in assemblies can be used as conceptual signposts for reflection, the discussion should be guided by the teacher/educator leading from the front. The cards created for use in classroom settings, however, have been devised to allow more space for student response and a class-led discussion.

Each card has an accompanying contextual resource for teacher/educator use.

The following resource should not be used as an introduction to the history of the Kindertransport and Jewish refugeeism; rather, they should be used once students have watched the film, *Kindertransport* and hence within the context of prior historical understanding to expand and explore the challenges, moral, political, and emotional dilemmas of organising the Kindertransport and the impact on the Kinder, the children who were thus rescued. The cards explore the historical aspects of the Kindertransport and questions of identity, belonging, and loss to foster a deeper and more empathetic approach to learning about the programme. Considering the diverse questions of humanity and human experience can also aid the development of an understanding of the Kindertransport that unpicks an often-presented redemptive narrative of British pride, and instead supports a more nuanced approach offering insight into the barriers both organisers and Kinder faced.

For effective use, the cards are to be discussed in the classroom with students or explored in an assembly and **not** to be given to students as a homework or independent activity.

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Nazi persecution in the 1930s prompted increasing numbers of German (and, from 1938, Austrian) Jews to seek refuge in other countries. Many looked to neighbouring countries such as the Netherlands or France whilst others hoped to find shelter beyond Europe, notably in the United States and British-controlled Palestine. There were many German and Austrian Jews who tried to come to Britain, due to Britain’s liberal reputation which derived, in part, from its historic ‘open door’ immigration policy.

However, large-scale immigration to Britain by Jews fleeing persecution and poverty in the Russian Empire in the late nineteenth century had been met with growing antisemitism. This had led to the passage of the 1905 Aliens Act, effectively Britain’s first immigration law, which dramatically restricted the right to enter the UK. This



legislative framework, and the prejudice which underpinned it, remained a significant barrier to immigration in the 1930s. In addition, the mass unemployment which characterised the interwar years (even before the onset of the Depression) further encouraged anti-immigrant sentiment.

Like other democracies, Britain therefore proved reluctant to allow Jewish refugees to enter in large numbers, despite increasing evidence of the injustices they were suffering in Germany. As seen in the Holocaust Educational Trust's [Dilemmas, Choices and Responses](#) session, it was only after the Kristallnacht pogrom in November 1938 that policy was relaxed to some extent, with the government agreeing to a proposal from Jewish and Quaker welfare agencies that children under 17 could be admitted to the UK. However, there remained restrictions: the children, with only a few exceptions, could not be accompanied by their parents, they had to be sponsored by welfare agencies who would pay a £50 bond as security that the children would not be a burden to the public finances, and they were only expected to stay in Britain temporarily prior to future emigration. The outbreak of war meant that, in reality, many remained in the UK.

This programme – known as the Kindertransport – began in December 1938 and brought approximately 10,000 mostly Jewish children to Britain until the outbreak of war in September 1939 ended the transports. Most of the refugees came from Germany and Austria but the scheme expanded in early 1939 to include children from Czechoslovakia, initially refugees from the Sudetenland region, which had been occupied by Germany under the terms of the Munich Agreement of September 1938, and then from the country as a whole following its invasion by Germany in March 1939.

The narrative of the Kindertransport is often portrayed as an event of British pride, or even heroism, and is considered to be deeply heartwarming. In many respects, this is valid as many children were saved from almost certain death, although this was not known at the time of its conception, and many Kinder had positive experiences with their foster families and were treated with kindness and care, going on to establish their adult lives in the UK. However, there are also many cases of Kinder being mistreated and even abused. It is important to note that these more traumatic issues will not be raised with students; however, one of the aims of the resource cards is to introduce students to the challenges Kinder faced and for them to realise the difficulties that life as an unaccompanied child and refugee was not easy, and these challenges pertain to both practical/organisational issues and introspective questions of self-understanding, home and belonging.



ASSEMBLY

1. Language Barriers. *Phrases in the languages of Kinder, (German, Austrian, Czech).* **How do you speak when you haven't got the words?**

Many Kinder did not know English or only knew basic phrases and struggled to understand what they were being told and could not communicate in response. Language barriers consequently presented a very real and often emotive set of challenges. This card also suggests the issue of not only having a limited understanding of the language spoken around you, but also not understanding how to communicate how you are feeling internally. Therefore, there is a literal and emotional understanding to this card e.g., the intellectual/factual understanding that you don't speak the language, but also the emotional reality of not always understanding the situations you're in and how you feel.

It may be helpful to reference the experiences of Ann Kirk BEM and Vera Schaufeld MBE (who are both featured in Holocaust Learning UK's Kindertransport film) to contextualise the themes and concepts highlighted by this card. Ann Kirk BEM came to the UK from Germany in April 1939 at the age of 10. Her mother had taught her only a little English and Ann struggled to settle in at the boarding school she was initially sent to. Vera Schaufeld was also sent to a boarding school when she arrived in 1939 from Prague at the age of 9. However, she quickly learned English and enjoyed life at school. The differing experiences of language and its impact for Ann and Vera can aid the diversification of student understanding and acknowledge that Kinder responded to the challenges of their new life in a variety of ways.

Additional Prompt Questions:

- a) *How do you think not being able to communicate impacted Kinder? Consider feelings of isolation, loneliness, anxiety, confusion, but also how their education and ability to form friendships might have been impacted.*
- b) *How did fosterers and Kinder communicate when they didn't have a common language? What other forms of communication could there have been?*



2. When you're journeying into the unknown, what does the future look like?

At this point, it was not known what the full extent of the Nazis' antisemitism would mean for Jewish communities in Germany and across Europe or how long children would be away for. Many children would also have been under the impression that their parents were going to join them at a later date. Therefore, on a macro and micro scale, much was unknown. This had a significant impact on the Kinder and while some considered this an adventure, many also experienced anxiety and fear over what their lives were going to look like. This card prompts students to consider these concerns and look beyond the initial experience of journeying to England and to the challenge of establishing a new life.

Additional Prompt Questions:

- a) What do you think Kinder hoped their future would look like at home before the rise of the Nazis and how do you think this changed?*
- b) Do you think Kinder still had hope for the future?*

3. Where is home?

This card responds to the issue of 'home' and belonging and can prompt exploration, through the drawing, of the emotional and factual concept of home. In other words, the reality of being in a new country and house and attempting to make this a home, while also missing and feeling a strong connection to their family home. The drawing, or the familiar idea of a child drawing, can provide a sense of personal perception and understanding, as well as personalisation of the history the students are learning about.

Some Kinder experienced movement whilst in the UK which further expanded or complicated their understanding of where their home existed and contributed to a feeling of unsettlement. Bob Kirk BEM (who is featured in Holocaust Learning UK's film Kindertransport) stayed with his first foster family for only a week before he was moved to another home for another eight weeks, so his first few months in the UK were not stable.

Additional Prompt Questions:

- a) What do you think home meant to the children based on what they have drawn?*
- b) Is 'home' explored through a place, person, object or feeling?*



4. 'Tea or coffee, love?'

After leaving a volatile environment in their home countries, being greeted with kindness upon arrival had a significant impact on Kinder who were tired, frightened and homesick. In many ways, the first sentences they heard broke the emotional tension they may have been feeling and was a verbal severing of them from a place of fear and danger to a place of safety. Many Kindertransport testimonies reference how being treated with kindness during the journey and upon arrival resonated with them and retell experiences of being offered sandwiches or hot chocolate and this lifting their anxiety. The impact of the kindness of strangers is, therefore, not to be underestimated.

Additional Prompt Questions:

- a) How do you think Kinder were shown kindness when they arrived?*
- b) How do you think this influenced their impression of England?*

5. 25 Words

Following the outbreak of war, communication became difficult and subject to monitoring, censoring and delays. Kinder could communicate with their parents through letters sent via the Red Cross, but they were limited to 25 words. This card highlights this fact but can also prompt reflection on the emotional implications of this rule. Essentially, how do you say all that you want to say to the parents you love and miss when you only have 25 words, and the emotional distance this exacerbated alongside the geographical distance.

To expand the discussion, teachers might want to draw in the experiences of Bob Kirk BEM (Bob is featured in Holocaust Learning UK's film Kindertransport). Bob arrived in the UK in May 1939 at the age of 13. He received letters from his parents, but these abruptly stopped in late 1941. He had no explanation for this until after the war when he learned that his parents had been deported in December 1941 to a concentration camp just outside of Riga, Latvia. Therefore, not only did Kinder have to face the challenge of only being able to communicate via 25 words, but they also often had to grapple with the anxiety of an abrupt end to communication with no explanation or the explanation they feared the most.



Additional Prompt Questions:

- a) *What do you think is more important, to share practical news/questions or express emotions?*
- b) *How do you think this limitation on communication impacted relationships between parents and children? Consider feelings of disconnection and fear over not knowing who your child is becoming.*

CLASSROOM

The following cards can be used in History, RE & Philosophy, and PSHE lessons.

1. 'The war changed everything': how did the outbreak of the Second World War impact Kinder?

The outbreak of war had significant implications for the Kindertransport programme and the Kinder who had been brought to the UK. Practically and organisationally, transports couldn't continue. For Kinder in the UK, the war carried more uncertainty, fear and anxiety to their door as many had hoped their parents were going to join them. Communication with parents also became more difficult as letters were sent via the Red Cross, were monitored and only 25 words allowed. It could take months for letters to be received and responded to. The war also meant that the Nazis antisemitic policies intensified, and the fate of the relatives left behind became more perilous, although many Kinder would not learn about this until after the war, whilst the fear around what was happening or would happen to their family similarly intensified for Kinder old enough to comprehend what was happening in the world.

Some Kinder also experienced further prejudice and hostility as they were viewed as nationals from enemy countries and some were even incarcerated as 'Enemy Aliens' accused of spying or conspiring to hinder the war effort. Churchill is famously known to have said about German nationals in the UK, "collar the lot!". [Henry Wuga MBE](#) was one such Kinder accused and incarcerated and classes may wish to learn about his experiences to accompany discussion around this card.

Additional Prompt Questions

- a) *What do you already know about the outbreak of the Second World War?*
- b) *Do you think the war impacted Kinder differently to English children? If so, how?*



2. Opened Doors, Closed Doors. What were some of the difficulties faced by those organising the Kindertransport?

While the predominant narrative of the Kindertransport is that of historic tolerance and willing from the British government to take in Kinder, the reality was that there was significant resistance and barriers put in place which hindered the rescue effort. For example, the rhetoric that they would grow up to cause more competition in the employment market, would drain welfare resources for native citizens and possibly cause more prejudice and hostility in society were challenges stacked against those overseeing the Kindertransport. Acknowledging and understanding the context and motivations behind these barriers, is important for students in order to critique popular assumptions that the British government was a driving force behind the rescue and not a hindrance. Therefore, this card can support with the development a more nuanced and mature understanding of the history of the Kindertransport and also an understanding of the contemporary question of how national history is written and portrayed for the sake of a positive national identity.

Additional Prompt Questions

- a) Why do you think the British government put up resistance to the Kindertransport?*
- b) Do you think the British government did enough to support rescue efforts?*

3. A numbers game: what practical challenges were there when planning the Kindertransport?

This card can be used to expand and enhance understanding of the practical challenges facing the Kindertransport programme. 'Numbers' can refer to the financial aspects of the organisation: sponsorship, tickets, trains, ships, supplies for the journeys and numbers associated with the policy and governing surrounding the programme. For example, how many children the British government were willing to accept, the timeline of their rescue and life in the UK (the aim was they would eventually return home or emigrate to another country), how many homes were required. Therefore, this card can encourage discussion that is both outward facing – the external challenges such as securing money and support from the government and inward facing challenges – organising trains and tickets. These challenges can be



discussed with 'Resource Card 2' to further explore the barriers to the Kindertransport and the role of the British government.

Additional Prompt Questions:

- a) Why do you think the British government had certain rules for the Kindertransport programme? E.g., why did they want Kinder to eventually leave the UK?*
- b) Do you think these challenges made those involved in the Kindertransport want to stop their plans?*

4. Separate to Save: how/why did parents decide to part from their children?

Often, the first thought or point of discussion around the Kindertransport is that it was an incredible rescue effort. While this is true and certainly part of the narrative, what enabled the Kindertransport to function was the painful act of parents parting from their children without knowledge or certainty that they would ever see them again. The severance of families is a difficult, emotive topic that is easy to sidestep in favour of triumphant heroic narratives of Britain as a rescuer.

The roles/experiences of parents are an important discussion to have and one that can further stimulate empathetic engagement with this history. It can also highlight the complexities behind parents' decisions to part from their children and the dilemma of whether to keep children close or separate to protect them. For some Kinder, their leaving on the Kindertransport was the first moment they saw their parent or parents break down and cry, the separation being so significant and the stakes so high that it tore through parental stoicism to reveal a vulnerability and fear rarely shown to children. Therefore, the moment of separation gained additional significance in their experience of growing up and being forced into maturity by extreme situations.

These discussions can touch upon the motivations behind the Kindertransport, the difficult steps required to make it function and the personal sacrifices involved, making this card particularly evocative.

Additional Prompt Questions:

- a) Why might a parent/s decide not to put their child on the Kindertransport?*



b) *Do you think parents would have regretted separating from their children?*

5. A doll, a dress, a winter coat: why might it have been difficult for Kinder to pack just one suitcase?

Kinder were only permitted to take one suitcase with them and this meant that packing was a practical and emotional challenge. The items packed needed to cover what they would require for different seasons, how they would grow, what smart clothes they might need but also what toys, photographs, family items would bring comfort and sentimental value, a link between them and their parents. The thought and process behind packing this suitcase is another significant moment that punctuates the history of the Kindertransport and draws us to the humanity of the experiences. The objects in the suitcase become metonyms or symbols of their former life which they would literally and metaphorically grow out of in England. Perhaps there was also a hope that the items packed would carry a sense of permanence, that while they were away from home, they were connected to a feeling or idea of home through the items in the suitcase, but ultimately knowing the memories could fade just as easily as the clothes would become worn and outgrown. Upon arrival at their foster homes, the act of unpacking their suitcase became another emotionally loaded memory as it was a final moment of being close to their parent who carefully and lovingly packed their clothes and toys, and for those whose suitcases were unpacked for them, that was an equally emotional realisation.

Depending on age and ability, students may discuss the role of objects in history and humanity and how these objects today can teach us something very personal. In other words, what can we learn from a suitcase that we cannot learn from a textbook?

This card and its themes can therefore take students to questions of individual experiences and approaches to understanding history.

Additional Prompt Questions:

- a) *Do you think packing practical items would have been more important than items of sentimental value?*
- b) *What do you think were some of the emotional difficulties parents and Kinder experienced when packing to leave on the Kindertransport?*



**6. Saying goodbye, saying hello. The journey of departure and arrival.
(What were Kinder saying 'goodbye' and 'hello' to?).**

The moment of parting from parents and the moment of meeting foster parents are two key moments which emotionally, experientially and temporally punctuate the Kindertransport narrative. As well as parting from parents, it also refers to a parting from home, friends, school, routines, language, familiar foods, traditions, and cultures and stepping into a whole new frame of experience. Departure and arrival, therefore, carry a variety of meanings and implications which students can discuss. The connotations of 'goodbye' and 'hello' can also lead students to consider themes of loss and what was left behind, as well as themes of adjusting to new life and maintaining or redeveloping identity and a sense of self. Therefore, this card has the potential to encourage broader discussion on the experiences and emotions of Kinder.

Teachers may wish to reference a quote from Vera Schaufeld MBE (who is featured in Holocaust Learning UK's film Kindertransport) to explore some of these more nuanced themes. Vera describes the 'newness' of life in England being overwhelming and causing her to question herself. Therefore, arriving in England highlighted more starkly what she had left behind and what she would now have to learn and adapt to, the geographical journey to England was consequently the first 'journey' of many. She describes: "Everything was just strange – the language, the food, and the way people were expected to behave wasn't exactly the same as I'd been used to. All sorts of things which at home had been normal suddenly were different and often I felt that I wasn't being correct anymore. All of this was pretty bewildering."

Additional Prompt Questions:

- a) Aside from family, what else were Kinder saying goodbye to?*
- b) What kinds of new experiences do you think Kinder were introduced to when they arrived in England?*