A Guide for Primary School Teachers
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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide has been created to support the growing number of primary school teachers who wish to explore issues related to the Holocaust with their students. It is centred around a scheme of work specifically designed for late primary, which introduces students to age-appropriate aspects of this challenging history and thereby prepares them for future study in secondary school. Each lesson in the scheme of work, which takes as its principal focus the fate and experiences of Jewish child refugees from Nazism, comes with a complete lesson plan and supporting materials, all of which are freely downloadable from the teaching resources section of the Trust’s website.

This guide also includes core pedagogical considerations for teaching about the Holocaust in primary schools, advice on using Holocaust-related texts in English, and reference materials which provide essential historical context.

WHY STUDY HOLOCAUST-RELATED ISSUES AT PRIMARY?

By the later stages of the primary curriculum – Year 6 in England and Wales, Year 7 in Northern Ireland, P6 and P7 in Scotland – students are emotionally and intellectually ready to explore complex and challenging histories. Study of age-appropriate themes related to the Holocaust enables them to begin to examine a defining moment in human history which raises fundamental questions about human identity, behaviour and ethics.

This is not to say that the primary classroom is a suitable environment for the study of every aspect of the history of the Holocaust. As this guide makes clear, the Trust does not believe that wartime persecution and murder are appropriate topics for this level. Rather, learning about issues such as pre-war Jewish life and culture, persecution before the Second World War, emigration, and rescue introduces students to themes which are important in their own right and which have significant contemporary relevance.

In particular, a focus on the experiences of Jewish refugees who came to Britain in the 1930s enriches students’ critical understanding of the history of their own society whilst also prompting them to consider more broadly what it means to be a refugee, an issue which may naturally encourage some to draw links with more recent events.

As well as its benefits in itself, teaching of Holocaust-related issues in primary school should also be seen as an essential foundation for students’ future learning about the topic. Almost all students will study the Holocaust at secondary school, especially in England where it is the only historical event whose study is a statutory requirement on the National Curriculum. However, a growing body of research has found that many students do not develop secure understanding of the Holocaust’s chronology and geographical scope. By beginning to address these issues in the primary curriculum, teachers can provide solid groundwork for later learning, and assist in students’ overall comprehension of the Holocaust.

Finally, study of appropriate Holocaust-related issues fulfils content requirements in the National Curricula of all four nations of the UK – for more detail, see pages 10-11 and 12.

WHICH ISSUES ARE APPROPRIATE?

It should be evident that both the emotional impact and intellectual complexity of learning about the Holocaust dictate that great care is necessary when selecting suitable content for primary school students. The Trust very strongly believes that it is not appropriate for them to directly study the murder of Europe’s Jews during the Second World War. In particular, the horrifying history of the Nazi extermination camps and other mass killing operations should be avoided.

The resources provided by the Trust instead focus on no less important themes which are age-appropriate and provide essential building blocks for broader study of the Holocaust in secondary school.

1 – e.g. UCL Institute of Education, What do students know and understand about the Holocaust? (2015).
The Holocaust brought about the destruction of Jewish communities and cultures which had existed in Europe for centuries. Study of these pre-war communities in the primary curriculum can help to ensure that they are not forgotten and serves to demonstrate to students the richness and diversity of European societies before the Second World War. This knowledge enhances students’ later explorations of the fate of these communities in the secondary curriculum, and helps to counter any misconceptions about Jewish life and culture which some may have.

Study of the laws implemented by the Nazi regime against German (and later Austrian and Czech) Jews from 1933 can help students to explore how persecution can develop and why people might become refugees. This can therefore serve as an entry-point into the history of Jewish responses to Nazi persecution in Germany, in particular the Kindertransport, which is perhaps the topic most suited to study at primary school.

The Kindertransport (German for ‘children’s transport’) was a programme which brought almost 10,000 children, mostly Jewish, to Britain from central Europe between December 1938 and the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939. Because of government immigration restrictions, most of the children were unaccompanied. Exploration of their experiences, both positive and negative, has a natural resonance with primary school students, who are at a similar age to that of many of the refugees when they came to the UK.

A focus on the Kindertransport also allows exploration of the actions and motives of those who facilitated their escape to Britain and who cared for them when they arrived. This in turn encourages reflection on what makes someone a good citizen and on the wider reactions of British society to a then unprecedented refugee crisis.

Although the horrors visited on Europe’s Jews during the Second World War are not appropriate for primary, there are aspects of wartime history which can be addressed. These are those which relate to rescue and hiding, issues which – like the Kindertransport – highlight the challenges which faced Jewish children and the importance of the actions of individuals and groups in saving human lives. For example, the rescue of the Jews of Denmark by the country’s resistance in October 1943 has inspired the production of a number of primary-appropriate works of prose fiction (see page 14) which can make for rewarding study.

The best known story of wartime hiding is, of course, that of Anne Frank, whose life has been studied by generations of primary schoolchildren. Although Anne’s tragic experiences after her family’s betrayal in August 1944 are not suitable for this age group, her diary can – if handled sensitively – be a powerful and inspiring learning tool.

Further information about these topics can be found in the ‘Historical background’ section on pages 17-19. Each lesson in the scheme of work is also supported by a set of guidance notes, which contain more detailed historical context.
CONSIDERATIONS WHEN TEACHING PRIMARY STUDENTS

PEDAGOGICAL GUIDELINES

Teaching the history of the Holocaust presents unique challenges and opportunities for both teachers and students, particularly in the primary curriculum. The Trust believes that teachers working in the safe space of the late primary classroom are well placed to introduce these topics to their students, thereby laying important foundations for later learning. At the same time, it should be evident that the lessons provided by the Trust explore sensitive and complex issues; teaching methods that are used for other topics may not be suitable or wholly effective.

For teaching to be purposeful, it must be grounded in secure historical knowledge and understanding. Not only is this proper practice for the study of any historical event; it is essential to avoid perpetuating common stereotypes and prevent misunderstanding of some of the most challenging issues raised by the Holocaust. Teachers are therefore strongly advised to consult the reference materials at the end of this guide before beginning the scheme of work.

All lessons and resources created by the Holocaust Educational Trust are informed by internationally-agreed general principles for teaching the Holocaust: detailed commentary can be found on the website of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (www.holocaustremembrance.com), which represents key Holocaust education practitioners from across the world. Teachers may find that these principles are transferable to other histories that focus on sensitive and emotive topics.

- Ensure students are aware of the variety of cultural and religious communities across Europe; it is important to demonstrate both the long history and rich cultural heritage of pre-war Jewish communities. Without a firm understanding of Jewish life before the war, we cannot expect students to comprehend the loss which resulted from the Holocaust.

- It is important that students appreciate that for many European Jews their Jewish identity was not necessarily defined solely (or, in some cases, at all) in religious terms. Teaching Judaism does not automatically mean that the Holocaust should be taught: do not allow Judaism to be defined by the Holocaust.

- Always focus on individual experiences. Statistics are impersonal and can be difficult, if not impossible to grasp. The inclusion of appropriate eyewitness (written and oral) testimony can assist in humanising otherwise chronologically and geographically distant events, and can make understanding the enormity of experiences more personal.

- Choose resources carefully, with sensitivity to students, victims and survivors. Avoid the use of horrific imagery, which can upset and desensitize students, dehumanise victims, and portray those who suffered in a light that would be recognisable to the perpetrators. The Trust does not use atrocity images in its educational resources at any level.

- When selecting testimony (written and oral), always ensure that it is age-appropriate. The experiences of Jewish refugees, including the Kinder, were not necessarily inherently positive, typically involving separation and loss. As with

- Create a positive, student-centred, learning environment. Provide opportunities for students to ask questions, express concerns, and explore misconceptions. Be sure to allocate adequate time and space for reflection.
the selection of imagery, always consider the emotional wellbeing of your students and avoid use of graphic testimony.

- Do not present Jews only as victims. When exploring the Nazi persecution of Jewish communities in Germany, be sure to consider the agency and ingenuity of those who decided to stay or flee ahead of the outbreak of war in 1939. Likewise, when exploring the Kindertransport, highlight the strength and determination of parents who secured spaces for their children and entrusted them into the hands of strangers.

- Avoid role-play/empathy activities. Whilst one would very much hope that students will feel empathy with the victims of Nazism, we cannot imagine, or expect our students to imagine, what it was like to live through the traumatic events of the Holocaust. Such an approach achieves very little as a teaching episode and can expose younger students to unnecessary upset. Genuine empathy is far more likely to be achieved through study of personal stories and age-appropriate testimony.

- Make activities meaningful (no word searches or dot-to-dot games!) The purpose of studying the Holocaust is for students to engage meaningfully with events in the past and to consider their relevance for today.

- Be aware of the potential challenges of using the internet to learn about the Holocaust. Whilst it is impossible to control the websites which students may visit in their own time, teachers should seek to ensure that they search safely within school. With this in mind, we would recommend that teachers utilise classroom time to engage with the issues contained in this resource, and do not set homework involving individual research.

DEALING WITH THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT

It is entirely understandable that some students may find aspects of study related to the history of the Holocaust upsetting. Lessons engaging with issues of discrimination, persecution and displacement can raise complex emotions regardless of students’ educational level. Teachers will know their own students better than anyone else so should exercise their professional judgement as to the best strategies to deploy; they may, for example, wish to pause at certain points to allow students some time for reflection.

As highlighted above, teachers should ensure that activities and materials employed in the classroom are age-appropriate, in particular avoiding the use of graphic imagery and/or texts. It is sometimes argued that it is necessary to intentionally shock or upset students for them to appreciate the reality of the Holocaust. Such an approach is disrespectful not only to the memory of innocent men, women and children but also to the intelligence and emotional wellbeing of students, and potentially raises serious questions about child protection.

For similar reasons, special care should be taken with the use of film in the classroom: even if films have been classified by the BBFC as age appropriate, their subject and content may be deeply distressing for younger viewers. This is especially true of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, whose subject matter, historical inaccuracy and egregiously graphic final scenes render it completely inappropriate.

Teachers should also consider specific circumstances which could affect students’ reactions, such as a recent bereavement. Some Jewish students may have a direct family connection to the Holocaust. Care should be taken to avoid creating narratives which focus only on Jews as victims, hence the importance of exploring pre-war Jewish life and the agency demonstrated by Jewish communities during the 1930s. Equally, German students should never be made to feel guilty for events which happened decades before they were born. The growing number of students whose families come from eastern Europe may have their own
relationship to this history, framed by national and family narratives. For example, it is likely that most students of Polish origin will have lost family members during the Nazi occupation. On the other hand, some students may come from countries in which public discussion of antisemitism and the Holocaust has been distorted by embarrassment at the role of some local people in collaborating with the Nazis. Particular sensitivity should be shown to students whose families have come to the UK to escape war or genocide since study of the Holocaust has the power to revive traumatic memories.

None of these considerations are reasons to avoid or minimise teaching about Nazi persecution and the Holocaust. Rather, they serve as a reminder of the importance of the sensitivity and thought which should be at the heart of any programme of study focusing on sensitive and emotive topics.

USING TESTIMONY IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

Hearing the first-hand testimony of survivors of Nazi persecution and the Holocaust is a uniquely powerful educational experience, putting a human face to history and enabling students to explore its lessons in depth.

Through our free Outreach programme, the Trust arranges for survivors to visit schools to deliver their personal testimony and for trained Holocaust educators to lead workshop sessions. However, the number of survivors whose testimony is suitable for primary school and who are willing to deliver it to such young audiences is small, meaning that it is unfortunately not possible to facilitate talks in all schools. However, we are able to offer educator workshops: for more information, please visit the Outreach section of our website.

Teachers wishing to engage with testimony may instead wish to explore online oral history archives. Whilst most sites predominantly focus on the experiences of camp survivors, some also feature primary age-appropriate audio and video testimonies.

The Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archive (vhaonline.usc.edu – free registration required) provides access to more than 1,300 of the almost 52,000 video testimonies recorded by the foundation since the 1990s. The searchable site features the testimony of individuals who found refuge in Britain before the Second World War, as well as interviews with rescuers, including some who assisted the Jewish population in Denmark.

The British Library’s Sound Archive contains hundreds of audio testimonies, many of them from Kindertransportees and other pre-war refugees, in its ‘Jewish survivors of the Holocaust’ collection (sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Jewish-Holocaust-survivors).
Gathering the Voices (www.gatheringthevoices.com) features audio testimony from individuals who settled in Scotland following their escape from Nazi persecution; the site provides full transcripts alongside the recordings.

Because of the potentially graphic or upsetting nature of some testimonies, we recommend that teachers view/listen to all testimony intended for classroom use, and that they do not allow students to search these sites unsupervised.

MUSEUMS

A number of excellent museums host exhibitions related to the Holocaust. Whilst most are only suitable for secondary, the following offer primary-appropriate opportunities.

The National Holocaust Centre and Museum in Nottinghamshire (www.nationalholocaustcentre.net) is the UK’s only dedicated Holocaust museum. The site houses The Journey, the first exhibition to be built in the UK for primary-aged students, as well as memorial gardens and educational facilities.

The Jewish Museum in London (www.jewishmuseum.org.uk) facilitates a range of activities for primary schools, including object-handling workshops which provide students with the opportunity to explore the artefacts brought to Britain by children on the Kindertransport.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Trust offers a wide range of free continuing professional development programmes for primary teachers and trainees. This includes free in-service training workshops, one-day study seminars with leading academics, a UK-based four-day residential course which seeks to build secure knowledge of Holocaust history and classroom practice, and overseas CPD courses targeted at those committed to advancing their subject knowledge and pedagogy.

For more information on all of the Trust’s CPD programmes, please see our website.
A SCHEME OF WORK FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

CONTENT

This scheme of work consists of the following four lessons which collectively offer students understanding of the impact of Nazi persecution on Europe’s Jews in the 1930s, with a particular focus on the experiences of children. It can be used as a stand-alone programme of study or can be extended through reading of a relevant text or texts from the books recommended in the following chapter.

The lessons can be accessed for free from the Trust’s website at www.het.org.uk/login. Each comes with guidance notes, which include a complete lesson plan and essential historical context, and downloadable classroom resources.

Pre-war Jewish Life

This lesson forms an essential introduction to the scheme of work by encouraging students to reflect on the richness and diversity of Jewish life in Europe prior to 1939 and reminding them of the common humanity of those who would become victims of Nazi persecution. In so doing, the lesson ensures that students remember the individuality and humanity of the Jewish men, women and children who were targeted by the Nazis and understand that they represented communities and cultures across Europe.

Impossible Choices: Life under Nazi Persecution

This lesson builds on the previous one by focussing on the fate of the first Jewish community to suffer under the Nazis: that of Germany. It provides an accessible means of comprehending the chronology and human impact of the Nazi persecution of German Jews, prompting students to reflect on the difficult choices which families were forced to make. This in turn enables them to understand the factors which might drive someone to become a refugee and the reactions of the world to this crisis.

Vera’s Journey

This lesson studies the largest organised response to the refugee crisis – the Kindertransport programme – through the experiences of one Czech Jewish girl. The Kindertransport is often presented as a redemptive story, enabling Britain to take pride in the fact that it opened its doors to save the most helpless of Hitler’s
potential victims; the lesson enables students to take a more nuanced view, offering insight into the challenges faced by child refugees and the reactions of British society.

What Makes a Hero?

The scheme of work concludes by looking at some of the people who made the Kindertransport possible. Through consideration of the actions and motives of those responsible for the rescue of Czech Jewish children such as Vera, it highlights the importance of the choices made by individuals and the necessity of collective action in response to humanitarian crises. This can in turn encourage students to reflect on their own obligations in the world today.

CURRICULAR LINKS

The lessons in the scheme of work fulfil National Curriculum requirements in each nation of the UK.

England

The focus on Jewish refugees to Britain can be taught through the requirement of the Key Stage 2 History curriculum to study “an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils’ chronological knowledge beyond 1066”; it could alternatively, in certain areas of the country where large numbers of refugees settled, be chosen as the local history study. (The national curriculum in England: Framework Document, p. 222.)

In addition, examination of British reactions to refugees can form one part of the statutory requirement of all schools to actively promote British values in their curriculum. It should be stressed here that this should not mean uncritical celebration of Britain's role but rather involve a balanced assessment of what the Kindertransport, and the wider reactions of British institutions and society, may tell us about the importance of tolerance and protection of human rights.

Northern Ireland

The scheme of work links to several statutory Key Stage 2 requirements for the World Around Us, in both History and Geography. They include student exploration of “how they and others interact in the world” (Interdependence), “positive and negative effects of… human events upon a place over time” (Place), “how movement can be accelerated by human… events such as wars” and “positive and negative consequences of movement and its impact on people, places and independence” (Movement and Energy), and the “effects of positive and negative changes globally and how we contribute to some of these changes” (Change over Time). (The Northern Ireland Curriculum: Primary, p. 88.)

Furthermore, study of communities, persecution, refugees and rescue is relevant to the Mutual Understanding in the Local and Wider Community strand of Personal Development and Mutual
WHEN TO TEACH IT

The scheme of work is intended to be taught to students aged 10 and above, i.e. Year 6 in England and Wales, Year 7 in Northern Ireland, and P6 or P7 in Scotland. Due to the emotionally sensitive nature of the content, it is not recommended for younger age groups.

Many schools in England will naturally find that much of Year 6 is given over to preparing students for their Standard Assessment Tests. Nonetheless, History should remain a subject of study in Year 6 and the scheme of work can be used to support reading of texts such as Anne Frank’s diary which are commonly studied in preparation for SATs.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Although it is to be hoped that study of the scheme of work will have an impact on students in ways which go beyond the classroom, this does not mean that academic assessment should be ignored – students’ learning should be evaluated just as for any other topic.

In the changing educational landscape, schools and departments are increasingly devising their own assessment models, particularly in England following the abolition of National Curriculum levels; teachers should therefore follow their normal methods and criteria to judge the effectiveness of their students’ learning.

There are many different means by which students could be assessed. Possible activities include:

- A research project in which students, either individually or in small groups, each investigate one of the individuals studied (or other refugees or rescuers) in greater detail and produce an extended piece of writing, a wall display or a class presentation.
- Where appropriate, a local history project, investigating the stories of refugees or survivors who settled in the community or local people who rescued Jews.
- The design or creation of a memorial to honour those who rescued Jews.

Scotland

The lessons in the scheme of work address the expectation in the Social Studies strand of the Curriculum for Excellence that students develop understanding of “their own values, beliefs and cultures and those of others” and “the principles of democracy and citizenship”. More specifically, they match second curriculum levels in History: “I can compare and contrast a society in the past with my own and contribute to a discussion of the similarities and differences”; “I can discuss why people and events from a particular time in the past were important, placing them within a historical sequence.” (Curriculum for Excellence, pp. 279, 284, 286.)

Wales

Study of Jewish communities and experiences, including those of refugees who came to Britain, fulfil the Key Stage 2 History requirements to “learn by enquiry about the ways of life of different people in [different] periods of history, drawing on important developments, key events and notable people in their locality, Wales and Britain” and to give opportunities to “understand why people did things, what caused specific events and the consequences of those events.” (History in the National Curriculum for Wales, pp. 10, 12.)

In PSE, the scheme of work gives learners opportunities to “value diversity and recognise the importance of equality of opportunity” and “explore their personal values” and to understand “aspects of the cultural heritage and diversity in Wales”, “how injustice and inequality affect people’s lives”, “how cultural values and religious beliefs shape the way people live” and “that personal actions have consequences.” (Personal and social education framework for 7 to 19-year-olds in Wales, pp. 18-19a.)
USING HOLOCAUST-RELATED TEXTS IN ENGLISH

The best Holocaust-related literature, whether written at the time or subsequently, has immense potential to engage students’ curiosity, to give them a greater sense of the moral and emotional complexity of the Holocaust, and to appreciate the humanity of all involved. Studying a relevant text or texts alongside the historical framework provided in the scheme of work can therefore complement and enhance students’ learning experience.

Furthermore, study of any of the texts recommended below meets the requirements in the National Curricula in all four nations of the UK for students in late primary to read an increasingly wide range of texts from different cultural backgrounds.

The answer to the question of which texts to offer students is one that will vary from school to school, and may partly depend on existing library resources. The main considerations in choosing a text or texts, beyond availability, should include age appropriateness and historical authenticity as well as, of course, literary merit.

Age appropriateness is especially important in the context of primary and should involve consideration not merely of the complexity of a text but also of its content – for example, works which directly address the murder process should not be considered suitable for primary school students even if their language and structure might suggest otherwise.

‘Authenticity’ need not mean that a text have been written at the time or by a witness, or even that it be entirely based on fact. Rather, it means that works are informed by knowledge and understanding of, and attempt to be relatively faithful to, the historical reality. This is one of many reasons why the Trust does not recommend the use of John Boyne’s The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas – for more, see below.

By contrast, all of the texts listed here, which have been grouped by theme, are endorsed by the Trust as appropriate for late primary in terms of their reading level, the nature of their content, their fidelity to historical reality, and their quality as works of literature.

To ensure that they are properly contextualised, we recommend that any texts chosen be read alongside the scheme of work.

JEWISH REFUGEES TO BRITAIN

Each of these books links to the scheme of work by focussing on the experiences of child refugees. Three of the books directly address the Kindertransport whilst Judith Kerr’s famous autobiographical novel When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit relates the experiences of a Jewish child who was forced to flee Germany with her family in 1933.

Adèle Geras, A Candle in the Dark (A & C Black)

A short story about the Kindertransport which does not flinch from some of the more uncomfortable aspects of its subject matter, including the attitudes of some British citizens.
ANNE FRANK

Though Anne Frank’s life has long been studied in primary schools, the recent publication by Puffin of an edition of her diary specifically for younger readers has made it easier for students to engage directly with her writing. The scheme of work can be used to provide context to reading of the diary, in terms of understanding why the Frank family left Frankfurt for Amsterdam in 1933 and why they went into hiding during the war. The Anne Frank Trust ([www.annefrank.org.uk](http://www.annefrank.org.uk)) offers a wide range of resources to support study of Anne herself.

Carol Anne Lee, *Anne Frank’s Story* (Puffin)

A perfect introduction to Anne’s diary, which avoids some of the more sensitive diary entries. Through the inclusion of family photographs and beautiful drawings, it provides a valuable insight into the life of this well-known individual, who has become a symbol of the Holocaust.

Judith Kerr, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (HarperCollins)

The perfect text for primary, this autobiographical novel focuses on the challenges of life as a refugee, providing an age-appropriate introduction to the era. The fact that the author – the daughter of a prominent Jewish socialist journalist who was forced to flee Germany in 1933 – will be well known to many from her classic works for younger children only adds to the book’s immense appeal.

Barry Turner, *One Small Suitcase* (Puffin)

Adapted from *And the Policeman Smiled*, a history text for adults, this book uses interviews with former child refugees and those who helped them to tell the story of the Kindertransport.

Irene N. Watts & Kathryn E. Shoemaker, *Good-bye Marianne* (Tundra)

Simply yet effectively illustrated, this partly autobiographical graphic novel addresses the Kindertransport and its context. Watts’s earlier prose version of the same story – *Goodbye Marianne* (Anchorage) – is harder to track down but comparing it with the graphic novel can be a rewarding learning experience.

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Jennifer Elvgren and Fabio Santomauro, *The Whispering Town* (Kar-Ben Publishing)

Based on a true story, this short picture book provides a dramatic account of how neighbours in a small Danish fishing village helped to hide a Jewish family and arrange their safe passage to Sweden.

Lois Lowry, *Number the Stars* (HarperCollins)

An affecting story of friendship and courage which addresses the rescue of Denmark’s Jews by the country’s resistance in 1943.

Michael Morpurgo, *Waiting for Anya* (Egmont)

A suspenseful and sensitively narrated tale, set in the French Pyrenees, whose child protagonist is drawn into a mission to smuggle Jews to safety across the border. Written with human warmth and compassion, the novel carefully avoids simplistic characterisation or moralising. Teachers should exercise their judgement as to the potential emotional impact of the denouement on their students.

Sandi Toksvig, *Hitler’s Canary* (Corgi)

A gripping novel, partly based on the experiences of the author’s father, which – like *Number the Stars* – deals with the rescue of Danish Jews in 1943. Through rounded and believable characters and historically accurate plotting, the book enables accessible exploration of the complexity of human behaviour during the Holocaust.

Josephine Poole and Angela Barrett, *Anne Frank* (Red Fox)

A beautifully illustrated retelling of the life of Anne Frank, from her childhood growing up in Germany to her years in hiding in Amsterdam and subsequent capture. The author chooses not to dwell on Anne’s experiences in the concentration camps and ends with the discovery of the diary. Although a picture book, the compelling text and haunting illustrations make this a perfect text for late primary students.

**STORIES OF HIDING AND RESCUE**

Whilst the scheme of work focuses on pre-war histories, it is possible to extend students’ learning to the wartime period through the study of any of the following sensitively written texts. Three of the books address the remarkable story of the Jews of Denmark: in the space of just a few weeks in October 1943, the Danish Resistance succeeded in ferrying more than 7,000 Jews to safety in neutral Sweden via an improvised armada of fishing boats, rowing boats and even canoes. The largely redemptive nature of this action offers opportunities for reflection on the power of community and the significance of moral choices, as does Michael Murpurgo’s characteristically brilliant *Waiting for Anya*, which also tells a story of rescue. Meanwhile, *Hidden* offers a counterpoint to study of child refugees by looking at the challenges of a child’s life in hiding.

Loïc Dauvillier, *Hidden* (First Second)

A poetic and touching evocation of the confusion, fear and loneliness faced by hidden children during the Holocaust, written and illustrated with younger readers in mind.
THE PROBLEM OF THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PYJAMAS

Few books in recent years have had such an impact on the teaching of English as John Boyne’s *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. The reasons for the novel’s popularity in schools are not hard to fathom. It offers a readable meditation on friendship and the dangers of prejudice, and many teachers have found it an effective tool in encouraging literacy and reading for pleasure.

However, reception of the book has been very different in the world of Holocaust education, where it has been widely criticised by academics (in both History and English) and survivors. There is widespread alarm at its popularity in secondary schools, but it is a matter of even graver concern that a minority of primary schools are using the book. As this guide makes clear, there is consensus amongst Holocaust educators that primary should focus on age-appropriate topics such as pre-war Jewish life and the Kindertransport. It should certainly never address the extermination camps, not least for reasons of child protection.

This point would be true for any book addressing the murder process but there are also more specific objections to *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* due to its distorted representation of the Holocaust. It would, of course, be unreasonable to expect any work of fiction to remain absolutely faithful to historical reality; indeed, it has often been suggested that it is impossible to accurately render the full horror and complexity of the Holocaust in the written word. Nonetheless, the problems with *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* go beyond those inherent in the genre. After all, many other writers have allied their literary imagination to diligent research to create texts, including many for children, which both grip the reader and take them closer to the essence of the Holocaust. By contrast, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* betrays such a lack of knowledge of the Holocaust, and of Auschwitz-Birkenau in particular, that is a ‘fable’ in more than the sense intended by Boyne.

The many criticisms made of the book can essentially be distilled into three main charges:

- **Historical inaccuracy.** John Boyne has given contradictory public statements as to the extent to which he researched the novel. Whatever the truth, the text is riddled with historical errors. Some of these might generously be seen as devices necessary to advance the narrative such as the curiously unelectrified and unguarded fences at the largest death camp in Europe or, indeed, the rather radical recasting of the geography of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp system. Of greater concern is the fact that the entire novel is based on a fallacy: 9-year-old Jewish children were not allowed to spend months in the camp gradually starving to death – they were murdered as soon as they arrived.

- **Characterisation.** The implausibility which runs throughout the story is personified in the breathtakingly inattentive Bruno whose extraordinary ignorance of the world around him is reflected in his repeated inability to understand the word ‘Führer’, a term – and an individual – with which any German child half his age would have been completely familiar (imagine a British boy or girl not knowing the word ‘leader’, its exact English equivalent). Whilst this faux naïf style is a staple of books for children, it may be argued that Boyne pushes it beyond the bounds of decency. The suggestion that any German nine-year-old – still less the son of a senior SS officer – would have been unaware of Hitler, Jews or even, as seems to be the case with Bruno, the existence of the Second World War utterly ignores the lengths to which the Nazis went to win the hearts and minds of children. That they taught nine-year-olds to hate Jews might be considered important to understanding of what made an event such as the Holocaust possible; to deny that such a thing happened has thus been seen by some critics as an abdication of authorial responsibility.

In the case of Shmuel, the problem is less of characterisation per se and more of its absence. Like the other Jewish characters in the book, he is a one-dimensional cipher, only ever presented as a passive victim and denuded of individuality. Unlike Bruno, Shmuel offers the reader few
insights into his inner thoughts whilst the details given of his life in Kraków are perfunctory. His lament that “There are dozens of Shmuels on this side of the fence... Hundreds probably. I wish I had a name of my own” thus rings truer than was presumably intended.

- Messages. It may be argued that a story which presents itself as a fable can be excused its implausibility since it is a vehicle to convey a more elemental ‘truth’. But what ‘truths’ does The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas offer? Whilst it is clearly intended as a warning against hatred and prejudice, readers – especially those with little or no prior knowledge of the Holocaust – may also derive rather worrying messages from the book. Some of these relate to points already made such as seeing Jews only as victims or a failure to appreciate what Auschwitz really was. The characterisation of Bruno is symptomatic of a wider trend in the narrative which implies that most ‘ordinary’ people were either ignorant of Nazi crimes or, as in the case of Bruno’s grandmother, hostile to them: this risks reinforcing a comforting but wholly discredited myth (widely articulated in post-war Germany) that responsibility for the Holocaust lay with a small criminal minority, represented in the book by the ‘Fury’, Lieutenant Kotler and, of course, Bruno’s forbidding father. Were this true, then the Holocaust would prompt rather less troubling reflections on human nature.

An especial concern relates to the book’s denouement. There is anecdotal evidence of reactions from a significant minority of readers along the lines of “but he [Bruno] shouldn’t be there”, the implication being that Shmuel should be. This problem is even more pronounced in the film adaptation of the novel, through both its gratuitous depiction of the boys’ deaths and its final moments which show the pain and anguish felt by a mass murderer at the loss of his son. At no point do viewers see the equivalent feelings of victims’ families and friends, leaving open the interpretation that killing Jews is wrong because German boys might inadvertently be killed as well.

There is a substantial and growing body of academic research evidence that reading of The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas – whether in school or at home – has seriously impacted on student preconceptions and understanding of the Holocaust and the language used to express them, especially as it is often read before students have ever studied the subject in History. In particular, it has given rise to deeply distorted perceptions of life and death in the camps which, as many secondary History teachers have reported, have proved difficult to dispel. For these, and all of the other reasons outline above, the Holocaust Educational Trust strongly advises against any use of the book in primary schools.

The materials included in this section are intended to provide contextual background to topics suitable for inclusion in the primary curriculum only and do not offer a full history of the Holocaust. Teachers looking to further their own knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust are advised to consult the reference materials provided in the Teachers’ Guide to Exploring the Holocaust, the Trust’s scheme of work for Key Stage 3 and S2, which can be found in the teaching resources section of our website.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before the Nazis
Jewish communities have existed in Europe for more than 2,000 years and by the early twentieth century could be found in every country in the continent. Whilst the majority of Jews lived in eastern Europe, particularly Poland, small communities could be found even on the continent’s peripheries in countries such as Norway and Ireland. These diverse communities had very different histories and cultures which were expressed in a bewildering range of languages, religious practices and levels of assimilation.

However, the long history of Jewish life in Europe was paralleled by an almost equally long history of antisemitism, manifested through pogroms, expulsions and legal restrictions against Jews. For most of European history, antisemitism had been an essentially religious phenomenon, drawing on certain strands of Christian thought which falsely accused Jews of murdering Jesus and saw the continued survival of Judaism as a challenge to Christian claims to the divinity of Christ. However, from the late nineteenth century onwards a new form of antisemitism emerged, which defined Jews by their ethnicity rather than their religion and absurdly claimed that there was a worldwide Jewish conspiracy which sought to subjugate humanity; both capitalism and socialism were seen as manifestations of this supposed plot.

The Nazi Party
This racial form of antisemitism was the central and defining element of Nazi ideology. The party, founded in 1919-20, genuinely believed that Jews were a mortal threat to the survival not only of Germany but of mankind. In the 1920s, this belief was expressed in a party programme which aimed to exclude Jews from German society and in antisemitic violence carried out by Nazi paramilitaries.

However, appalling as Nazi ideas and actions were, the party was a marginal political group throughout the 1920s and was not taken seriously by most Germans. The Nazis had attempted to seize power by force in 1923 but their coup was a fiasco. Thereafter, what little electoral support they had enjoyed dwindled. It took the unprecedented economic catastrophe created by the Great Depression from 1929 onwards to bring a turnaround in their fortunes. There is little evidence that the spectacular increase in the Nazi vote in the general elections of 1930 and 1932 was due to antisemitism. Rather, support increased as a result of mass unemployment, frustration with the perceived inability of the major parties to find a way out of the economic crisis, and fear of communist revolution.

Even then, there was no inevitability about the Nazi rise to power. The party did become the largest in the Reichstag (German Parliament) in two elections in 1932 but its support had fallen in the second of those votes. It was rather as a result of political intrigue by competing groups amongst Germany’s conservative elites, who believed they could exploit the Nazis’ mass support to advance their own agendas, that Hitler was invited to lead a coalition government in January 1933.

Nazi persecution of Jews in pre-war Germany
Within weeks of his accession to power, Hitler had skilfully exploited the chaotic political situation in Germany to establish a dictatorship with the consent of all parties except the socialists and communists. This was followed by immediate and escalating persecution
of the country’s Jews, through an array of laws, which increasingly restricted Jewish access to employment, education and social rights, and through waves of antisemitic violence. It is important to stress that this did not mean the Holocaust as we understand it was inevitable; no historians would today claim that it was always planned. It was clear that the Nazis aimed to purge Jews from German, and eventually European, society, but at this stage their strategy sought to exclude Jews from public life and eventually to force them to emigrate.

However, there was growing anger within the Nazi Party at what was perceived as the relatively slow rate of Jewish emigration, even after Jews lost the rights of German citizens in the Nuremberg Laws of September 1935. Indeed, the German annexation of Austria in March 1938 brought almost 200,000 further Jews under German control. This frustration prompted a nationwide pogrom on the night of 9th-10th November 1938, in which thousands of Jewish homes, businesses and synagogues were attacked and at least 91 people lost their lives. The pogrom, popularly known as Kristallnacht, was immediately followed by a barrage of laws which effectively stripped German and Austrian Jews of all remaining rights.

**Britain and the Kindertransport**

In the face of this onslaught, a majority of German Jews did indeed emigrate before the beginning of the Second World War. However, the decision to leave countries in which most families had been settled for centuries was not an easy one and was made more challenging by the difficulty in finding states willing to admit them. Through the 1930s, partly due to a mixture of anti-immigrant sentiment and the effects of the Great Depression, Britain and other democracies refused to allow Jewish refugees to enter in large numbers, despite increasing evidence of the injustices they were suffering in Germany. At the Évian Conference in July 1938, Britain and 31 other countries failed to reach any meaningful agreement on further help for refugees.

The shocking violence of Kristallnacht did prompt a partial change in both official and public attitudes in Britain. The government agreed to relax immigration rules to allow children under 17 to enter the UK but with continued restrictions: the children, with only a few exceptions, could not be accompanied by their parents, they had to be sponsored by welfare agencies, and they were only expected to stay temporarily prior to future emigration, although the outbreak of war in September 1939 changed this in practice. The result was what became known as the Kindertransport programme.

In a sense, the Kindertransport can be – and has often been – seen as a symbol of British humanitarian commitment. Around 9,500, predominantly Jewish, children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia (which was dismembered by Germany between September 1938 and March 1939) were able to find safety as a result of it. The organisation of the transports and subsequent care of the young refugees depended on the kindness, love and goodwill of many thousands of people. In turn, many of the refugees made Britain their home and have contributed much to our society.

However, the story was more complex. In addition to the challenges facing generations of immigrants before them, of adaptation to a new country, with a different language and cultures, most Kinder endured the added ordeal of separation from their families, often at a very young age. Whilst very many were cared for by loving foster families in the UK, a small number of children were mistreated by their foster parents, who sometimes saw them as domestic servants. The war brought with it new challenges, ranging from evacuation for younger children to temporary internment as enemy aliens for the eldest, alongside a pervasive anxiety over the fate of loved ones stranded in Nazi-occupied territories. Only a minority of the children ever saw their parents again.

It is also important to note that whilst the British government permitted the Kindertransport, it did not in any way organise the programme. This was rather the result of the initiative of various voluntary groups, notably Jewish and Quaker welfare agencies, and of remarkably dedicated and determined individuals whose consciences dictated that they act, despite facing immense financial, logistical and bureaucratic obstacles.
Wartime rescue and hiding

This pattern, of a small minority of courageous and committed people taking action to rescue Jews, was repeated in inevitably more extreme forms in continental Europe once the war broke out. In general, only able-bodied young Jewish adults had any chance of survival in the ghettos and camps or amongst the many Jewish partisan units which fought the Nazis. For other Jews, all realistic options invariably depended on the assistance of non-Jews.

Perhaps the most spectacular example of such assistance came in Denmark, the subject of three recommended texts on page 14. Denmark had been invaded by Germany in April 1940 but the Nazis had allowed its democratic government to remain in place due to the country’s strategic and economic importance. This spared Danish Jews the antisemitic persecution inflicted in other occupied countries until the Germans took direct control in August 1943, following increased Danish resistance. As news of planned deportations of Danish Jews leaked out in late September 1943, some members of the Jewish community began to facilitate their own escape to neutral Sweden, initially often paying large sums of money to local fishermen. By early October, the rescue of the Jews had turned into a national effort, in which the Danish Resistance mobilised a significant section of society.

However, Denmark was untypical, not only because of the unique history of its occupation but also because of the small size of its Jewish population and the close proximity of a neutral country willing to accept them, both factors which made a successful rescue operation more feasible. By contrast, Jews who were initially able to successfully escape the Nazis in most other countries typically found themselves either trying to pass as non-Jews or, more often, forced into a life of hiding, as so vividly described by Anne Frank.

Only a very small minority of people, such as the Franks’ helpers Miep Gies, Johannes Kleiman, Victor Kugler, and Bep Voskuijl, were willing to take the often very high risks involved in sheltering Jews. As the ultimate fate of Anne and her family demonstrated, there were equally people prepared to exploit their neighbours’ misfortune by betraying them to the Nazis. As so often in the history of the Holocaust, therefore, the story of rescue highlights the complexities of human behaviour and the importance of individual moral choices, themes which have enduring relevance.

More detail on the history of each topic in the scheme of work can be found in the ‘Conceptual understanding’ section of the guidance notes for the relevant lesson.
### Timeline 1933-1939

**1933**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 30</td>
<td>Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany, leading a coalition of Nazis and conservatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 23</td>
<td>Reichstag passes the Enabling Act, giving Hitler dictatorial powers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>Nazi government organises a nationwide boycott of Jewish-owned businesses in Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7</td>
<td>Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service removes Jews from government employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 25</td>
<td>Law against Overcrowding in Schools and Universities limits the number of Jewish students in state schools and universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10</td>
<td>Pro-Nazi university students publicly burn books deemed ‘un-German’ in towns and cities across Germany.</td>
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**1934**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 15</td>
<td>Nuremberg Laws (see Glossary) issued.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1935**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 1 – 16</td>
<td>Berlin Olympics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1938**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 13</td>
<td>Anschluss with Austria. Immediately followed by pogroms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 6 – 13</td>
<td>Évian Conference (see Glossary).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 30</td>
<td>Britain and France sign Munich Agreement with Germany and Italy, allowing Germany to occupy the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 5</td>
<td>Passports of German Jews stamped with the letter ‘J’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 28</td>
<td>Deportation of 15-17,000 Jews with Polish citizenship from Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 9 – 10</td>
<td>Kristallnacht pogrom (see Glossary).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 12</td>
<td>Jews in Germany are no longer allowed to own businesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 15</td>
<td>Jewish children expelled from state schools and forced to attend segregated Jewish schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 15</td>
<td>British Jewish leaders approach British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to propose the Kindertransport (see Glossary).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 21</td>
<td>Government announces approval of the Kindertransport programme to the House of Commons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1</td>
<td>First Kindertransport departs from Berlin. Regular transports continue over the next nine months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2</td>
<td>First Kindertransport arrives in Great Britain.</td>
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**1939**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>German invasion of Czechoslovakia: Czech lands incorporated into the Reich as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia; Slovakia becomes an independent country under a pro-Nazi regime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1</td>
<td>Germany invasion of Poland begins the Second World War. Last Kindertransport departs from Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 3</td>
<td>Britain and France declare war on Germany.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
employees of Anne’s father Otto. They were betrayed in August 1944 and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau where Anne’s mother Edith died. Anne and her elder sister Margot were transferred to Bergen-Belsen in October 1944 where both died of typhus in the spring of 1945. The diary that Anne kept whilst in hiding was published by Otto, who had survived Auschwitz, in the 1950s.

Gestapo
Nazi secret police force created in 1933. Controlled by Himmler from 1934.

Hitler, Adolf (1889-1945)
Leader of the Nazi Party and, from 30th January 1933, of Germany. Although Hitler’s laziness and dislike of routine meant that he largely avoided day-to-day government business, he was responsible for key decisions with regard to Jewish and foreign policy. Committed suicide in Berlin in 1945.

Holocaust
Literally ‘completely burnt sacrifice’ (Greek). Term most commonly used to describe the mass murder of approximately 6 million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. Although certain other groups were victims of Nazi persecution and genocide, only Jews were targeted for complete destruction. Thus, when used by historians, the term refers specifically to the murder of Europe’s Jews rather than to Nazi persecution in general.

Kindertransport
Literally ‘children’s transport’ (German). Programme whereby the British government allowed the admission of almost 10,000 mostly Jewish child refugees from central Europe following Kristallnacht until the outbreak of war curtailed the operation. Because of immigration restrictions, most of the children were unaccompanied and they had to be sponsored by welfare agencies.

Kristallnacht
‘Night of Broken Glass’ (German). Nationwide pogrom, organised by the Nazis, on the night of 9th-10th November 1938 in which Jewish businesses and homes were attacked and looted, synagogues burned, and 91 people killed. More than 30,000 Jews were
held in concentration camps until they agreed to leave Germany. The pretext for the pogrom was the assassination of a German diplomat in Paris by a young Jewish man whose parents had been deported by the Nazis; in reality, a violent action against Jews had been planned for months.

**Nazi Party**
Popularly used name for the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP). Formed by Anton Drexler as the German Workers’ Party in 1919, it was renamed in 1920. Adolf Hitler became leader in 1921. The party’s core beliefs included antisemitism, racist nationalism, and hostility to democracy, liberalism and socialism. It came to power in January 1933 at the head of a coalition government which also included conservatives.

**Nuremberg Laws**
Two anti-Jewish laws enacted in September 1935 during the Nazi Party conference in Nuremberg which provided the basis for removing Jews from all spheres of German life. The Reich Citizenship Law effectively deprived Jews of German citizenship and associated rights. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour outlawed marriage and sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews as well as prohibiting Jews from employing non-Jewish female servants of childbearing age and displaying the German flag. Supplementary laws defined who was a Jew, with a range of categories created for Germans of mixed ancestry.

**Pogrom**
Violent attack on a Jewish community, usually condoned or sponsored by the state.

**SA**
Paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party, popularly referred to as ‘Brownshirts’ or ‘stormtroopers’. Hitler murdered the SA’s leadership in 1934 because he saw them as a threat, and the organisation’s influence declined. Nonetheless, SA members continued to play a prominent role in anti-Jewish violence, notably on Kristallnacht.

**SS**
Nazi Party organisation which was originally created as Hitler’s bodyguard. Under the leadership of Himmler, the SS grew to become a ‘state within a state’ which controlled the concentration camps and racial policy, ran its own businesses and had its own armed forces.

**Third Reich**
Term (‘Drittes Reich’ in German) used by the Nazis and by many historians to describe Germany under the Nazi regime from 1933. ‘Reich’ means ‘empire’ or ‘realm’.

**Vienna**
Capital of Austria until the Anschluss ended the country’s independence. Approximately 170,000 Jews lived in Vienna in 1938, forming the largest Jewish population under Nazi rule before the Second World War.

**Weimar Republic**
Popularly used term applied to the democratic republic which was established in Germany in 1919 and effectively abolished by the Nazis in 1933. The term derived from the city of Weimar, where Germany’s new constitution was adopted in 1919.
PHOTO CREDITS

Cover: German Jewish refugee girls being inspected by a British policeman; © Wiener Library

Page 6: Former child refugee Hermann Hirschberger speaks to primary school students; © Holocaust Educational Trust

Page 9  (Pre-war Jewish Life): Jewish siblings pose in Purim costumes in Eaubonne, France, 1934; © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Claude & Judith Feist Hemmendinger.

Page 9  (Impossible Choices): SA men block Jews from entering the University of Vienna, 1938; public domain (National Archives and Records Administration, College Park)

Page 10  (Vera’s Story): Vera Schaufeld (née Löwyová) as a girl; © Vera Schaufeld

Page 10  (What Makes a Hero?): Vera Schaufeld with Sir Nicholas Winton on his 105th birthday, 2014; © Holocaust Educational Trust