



## **Refugee Week 2008 – 16-22 June**

The 16<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> June celebrates the 10<sup>th</sup> National Refugee Week. The purpose of Refugee Week is to deliver positive educational messages that counter fear, ignorance and negative stereotypes of refugees, through arts, cultural and educational events that celebrate the contribution of refugees to the UK, and promote understanding about the reasons why people seek sanctuary.

Refugee Week was first held in 1998, and was created in response to the increasingly negative perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers held by the general public in Britain. It remains the only UK-wide event that promotes the importance of sanctuary and the benefits it can bring to both refugees and host communities.

Events take place across the UK to commemorate Refugee Week :  
<http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk/Events/Events+Calendar.htm>

HMDT resources can help you to learn more about the plight of refugees fleeing to the UK to escape persecution under the Nazi regime and in more recent genocides.

Up to 10,000 unaccompanied children and teenagers from Germany, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia arrived in the UK after the events of Kristallnacht in November 1938  
([http://www.hmd.org.uk/press/kristallnacht\\_anniversary\\_2008/](http://www.hmd.org.uk/press/kristallnacht_anniversary_2008/))

The lives of these children changed immeasurably, leaving their family, friends and homes behind them to start a new life in the UK, safe from Nazi persecution. For many of the Kinder, they would never see their families again.

Martha Blend describes her feelings at being one of the Kinder (<http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/item/42/>): "When my parents broke this news to me, I was devastated: an only child who had never been away from home, to travel to a strange country and to strange people with a different language! It seemed more than my now nine year old self could be expected to cope with. But gradually, as the harassment by the Nazis grew worse, I realised that I had no choice

but to go.” She also describes how she, as a young girl dealt with her new circumstances: “The day after I arrived in England, waking up in a strange bed in an unfamiliar room made me feel very homesick. However, when you’re young it’s hard to be miserable all the time and my foster mother did her best to comfort me.”

You can read more about the Kindertransport in our Refugee Information Sheet <http://www.hmd.org.uk/files/1168248911-140.pdf>

Many Holocaust Survivors came to Britain after liberation, and have made a valuable contribution to British life today, you can read their stories here: <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/cat/3/>

If you are celebrating Refugee Week, why not read a book about Refugees? HMDT have produced Book Group Activities on ‘Refugee Boy’ by Benjamin Zephaniah <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/item/204/> and The Suitcase edited by Julie Mertus <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/item/205/>