

Renie's journey – learning about the *Kindertransport*

Primary lesson plan for HMD



HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY TRUST

Learning from genocide -
for a better future

This is a flexible lesson plan aimed at 9–11-year-old learners that works alongside a PowerPoint presentation.

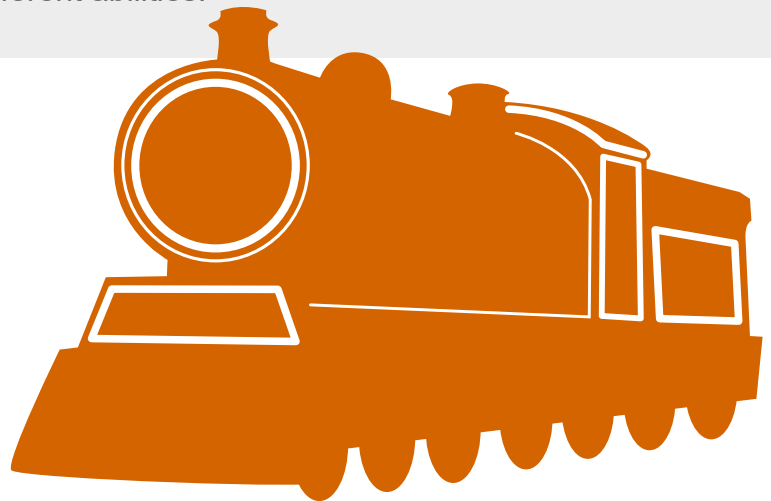
It allows students to practice reading, writing and comprehension, as well as being introduced to the history of the Holocaust in an age-appropriate way. This lesson is differentiated throughout for different abilities.

Learning objectives:

- To learn about the *Kindertransport* programme and the personal experience of Renie Inow.
- To understand what it means to be a refugee.

You will need:

- Renie Inow easy to read life story (one per pupil or group)
- Life story questions worksheet (see differentiation notes – one per pupil or small group)
- Translated letter worksheet (one per pupil or small group)



Overview:

This activity explores the story of Renie Inow, who came to the UK at the age of 10 on the *Kindertransport* – a humanitarian programme which ran between November 1938 and September 1939. Approximately 10,000 children, the majority of whom were Jewish, were sent from their homes and families in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia to Great Britain.

Renie has letters her parents sent her after she left Germany.



Renie Inow

Background knowledge:

This activity would work well for Years 5 and 6 or equivalent. No background knowledge is required, although this lesson would be effective alongside our primary school HMD assembly. You can download this at hmd.org.uk/schools.

Lesson plan

Slide 1 - Holocaust Memorial Day

Holocaust Memorial Day is on **27 January** every year.

It is the day when we learn about events in the past when people were treated badly, and sometimes murdered, because of who they are. For example, because of their religion or the colour of their skin. An event like that is called a genocide.

Today we will learn about someone whose life was changed by one of these sad events. We will also think about our society today, and how we can make the world a safer place for everybody.

Slide 2 - Starter activity

Discussion: think about letters, postcards or emails you have received.

- Who were they from?
- What did they say?
- What do these letters have in common?

(This might include that they are from people who love you, they are talking about holidays, they might be sent on special occasions like birthdays etc.)

Slides 3-9 - History activity

Slide 3

Introduce Renie Inow:

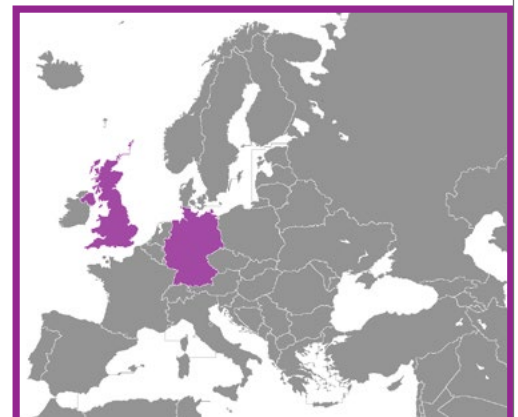
- Today we are going to learn the story of a girl called Renie, who received some very special letters.
- Renie was born in Germany in 1929. How many years ago was that?
- She lived with her mother, father, brother and sister. Renie was the youngest in the family.
- She and her family were Jewish. That means they were part of a small minority group that was Jewish by religion, culture, tradition or family background.

Slide 4

Talk through the Judaism facts on the slide.

Slide 5

Show the class the slide of the map of Europe. Can the class identify which country is the UK? And which country is Germany?



Slide 6

Reveal the answer.

Slide 7

Talk through the history of Nazi Germany:

- The Nazis invaded lots of countries. When they invaded Poland, Britain and France declared war on Germany and the Second World War began.
- The Nazis made laws so that Jewish people couldn't own businesses or go to school.
- They started planning to get rid of all the Jewish people in Europe.

Extension activity:

This extension activity is for higher ability groups, or if you have more time.

Talk through the following questions and discuss as a group:

What is discrimination? When you treat a group of people badly, and say mean and unfair things about them because of their race, religion or part of their identity, this is called discrimination.

What is antisemitism? Antisemitism is discrimination specifically towards Jewish people. There has been antisemitism in Europe for centuries, and the Nazis used this to help them persuade people that Jewish people were a problem in Germany.

Slide 8

When Renie was ten years old she travelled from Germany to Britain on the *Kindertransport*. Ask the students about the longest journeys they have taken. Renie's journey would have taken several days.

What is the *Kindertransport*? A programme which ran between November 1938 and September 1939. It aimed to rescue children from the Nazis. Children came to Britain, without their parents, and lived with foster families when they arrived.

Ask students to have a guess how many children travelled to Britain in this way.

Slide 9

Reveal the answer to the question. Children could take one small suitcase with them.

Extension activity if you have extra time:

If you could only take one small bag with you, what would you pack?

Slide 10 - Life story and questions worksheets

1. Show the picture of Renie Inow and hand out the Easy to read life story. As a class, read and discuss her story.
2. Hand out the Life story questions worksheet.

This activity requires reading skills. Students are encouraged to read the life story sheet to find the answers.

Differentiation:

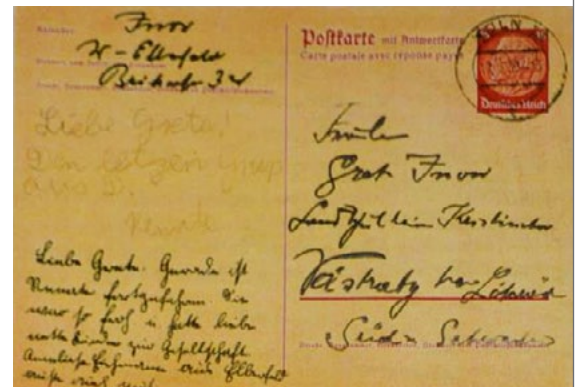
Lower ability – For lower ability students you could do this all together as a group, or focus on fewer questions.

Medium ability – Put students into small groups to answer the questions together.

Higher ability – Students can answer the questions individually, and can expand on their answers with their own research.

Slide 11 - Renie's letters

1. Hand out the *Translated letter worksheet* together and read the letter through. Check that students understand all the words Renie's parents have used.
2. Individually or in your groups, answer the questions on the sheet.



Class discussion:

- Which words are used negatively in Renie's story?
- How are words used positively in the letters we have read?
- Our words are powerful. How can we use our words for good rather than to harm people?

Slide 12 - Child refugees

Read out the definition of a child refugee and the question. Why do the students think that this does/doesn't still happen to children today?

Slide 13 - What can we do?

Reveal that there are still child refugees around the world.

Take a look at the photographs from 2018. What can we tell about these children?

- Luckily, we know that they are now in a safer place as they have reached a refugee camp. They have shelter, food and water.
- However, it looks overcrowded. Although the refugee camp is safer than the country they left, it is not the same as having their own home. The people in these camps want to move on with their lives and make a new home, go to school and get jobs.
- Some of these children have a parent in the photograph and some don't. Some show older children looking after younger children. Some children in refugee camps are there with their families. Some of them might have got separated from their families.

This camp is funded by aid money from the European Union specifically to support Rohingya refugees. Ordinary people like you and I can also donate clothes, shoes and blankets to refugee camps to help.

Now that you have learnt about Renie, the *Kindertransport*, and child refugees today, discuss as a class what you can do next. Here are some suggestions:

- It is important that we learn about people like Renie and what happened to them, so that history doesn't repeat itself. As a class you could find a way to tell more people about Renie – by having an **assembly**, **making a display**, or telling your families.
- You can make a commitment to always do something on Holocaust Memorial Day – light a candle, have a special **school lesson** like today, and learn about more people affected by genocide.
- You can raise awareness about child refugees today by learning more to create a display or assembly.
- You could organise a fundraising activity or a donation drive in your community for unwanted clothing and blankets to send to a refugee camp. (Visit helprefugees.org for information on how to donate money or items)
- We should always remember to be kind to other people, including people who are different from ourselves.



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Important note for teachers - after the lesson:

Please let us know that you and your class have done this lesson, and we would love to hear about any follow up activities. Please contact the Education Officer on education@hmd.org.uk. This helps us to know how resources are used in schools, and your school may be featured as a case study when we talk about the range of activities taking place across the UK for HMD.

Take the learning further:

Find more primary school assemblies and lesson plans at hmd.org.uk/schools.

Find more resources such as other easy to read life stories, films and activities in our [resources hub](#).



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Page 6 of 6

Find out more...

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust: hmd.org.uk
Discover resources for educators and other materials for
your activities: hmd.org.uk/resources

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Learning from genocide - for a better future

Renie Inow

Easy to read life story



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Key words

Jews: People who follow the religion of Judaism.

The Nazi party: The group who were in power in Germany from 1933 – 1945, led by Adolf Hitler.

Concentration camp: Places where the Nazis kept many people as prisoners. They were put there because the Nazis did not like them. In the camps people were forced to work as slaves or they were killed. There were many camps like this in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s.

Vermin: Animals such as rats which are thought of as dirty and carrying disease.

Kindertransport: A programme helping Jewish children to escape from the Nazis. It ran between November 1938 and September 1939.

The Holocaust: The attempt by the Nazis to kill all the Jews in Europe.

Renie Inow (*pronounced Renny*) was born in Germany in 1929. Renie lived with her father and mother, her sister Margalit and her brother Alfred. She and her family were **Jews**.

In 1939 Renie was ten years old. **The Nazi party** were the leaders of Germany. They thought that German people were better than Jewish people. They called Jewish people '**vermin**'.

Renie's parents knew that they were in danger, and tried to leave Germany. Margalit was sent away to live in Sweden. Suddenly, Alfred was taken by the Nazis and sent to a **concentration camp**.

There were lots of stories that bad things were happening to Jewish people in concentration camps, so the family was very scared for Alfred.

Renie's parents were desperate to get her out of Germany to a safer place. They found out about the **Kindertransport**. This programme was helping children to escape and come and live in Britain, but their parents could not go with them. Renie had to leave Germany and travel to England on her own. She was 10 years old.

About 10,000 children from Germany and other countries were sent away from their families and came to Great Britain on the *Kindertransport*.

After Renie left, World War Two started and it was much harder for Jewish people to leave Germany. Renie's parents were stuck there.

Renie began a new life in England, living with her Aunt Hedwig. She received many letters from her parents in Germany, which she still has today.

The journey for many of the children on the *Kindertransport* was scary. Renie's father wanted to hear all about it. He said in a letter to her:

'We are looking forward to reading your report about the journey, how you travelled, what you saw, how long you were on the way and where you stayed overnight. And what do you think of the sea and the large ships?'

Renie's brother Alfred, was released from the concentration camp in 1940 and managed to leave Germany and join her in England.

Life was hard for Renie's parents in Germany. However in all their letters they wanted to sound positive, so that Renie would not worry about them.

On Renie's birthday she received a letter from her parents, including this message from her mother:

'My dear Renie, my very best wishes for your birthday. May you remain lovable and happy and a source of joy to everybody. Father and I think of you all the time.'

The Nazis tried to kill all the Jewish people in Europe. This is known as **the Holocaust**. People like Renie and her brother and sister were lucky that they got away in time. By the end of the war, the Nazis had killed six million Jews, including Renie's parents.

Renie kept writing letters to her sister and brother. She has lived in Britain ever since. She trained as a tailor and dress maker. She has travelled back to her home town in Germany to tell school children there her story.

Find out more...

The Holocaust: hmd.org.uk/holocaust

Life stories of those affected by genocide: hmd.org.uk/lifestories

Renie Inow life story - questions

1. List three facts from paragraph 1

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-
-

2. What was the Nazi party?

3. What does the word Jewish mean?

4. In paragraph 4 the family are 'very scared'. What has made them feel scared?

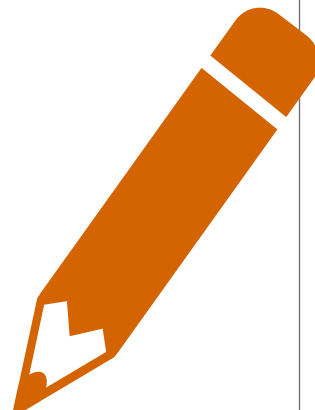
5. How many children escaped from Europe on the Kindertransport?

6. Who does Renie live with when she comes to England?

7. What does Renie's father ask about in his letter to her?

8. How do you think the letters from Renie's parents made her feel?

9. What do you think about Renie's story? How does it make you feel?



Translated letter worksheet

4.6.39

Dear Renie,

I hope that you always help Aunt Hedwig and that you compete with the boys as to who works best.

It goes without saying that you must obey Aunt Hedwig and that all four of you children must try to get on well together.

I see that you have been doing a lot of interesting things. Uncle Mamusch took you to Kensington Garden and Aunt Vi took you to the zoo.

Love Mother

From your letter we can see that you are trying to help us participate in everything you experience. When I read about the race in which you came fourth, I was reminded of our daily race at 8 o'clock in the morning, when the post arrived. I can't run that fast so you always got there first.

I hope you are doing well at school. We constantly talk about all of you.

Love Father

| Questions | Your answers |
|---|--------------|
| When was the letter sent? | |
| Who is the letter to? | |
| What are they talking about in the letter? | |
| Is this similar or different to letters that people in your class have received? | |
| Why do you think it was so important for Renie and her family to write to each other? | |
| Why are the letters useful to us today? | |