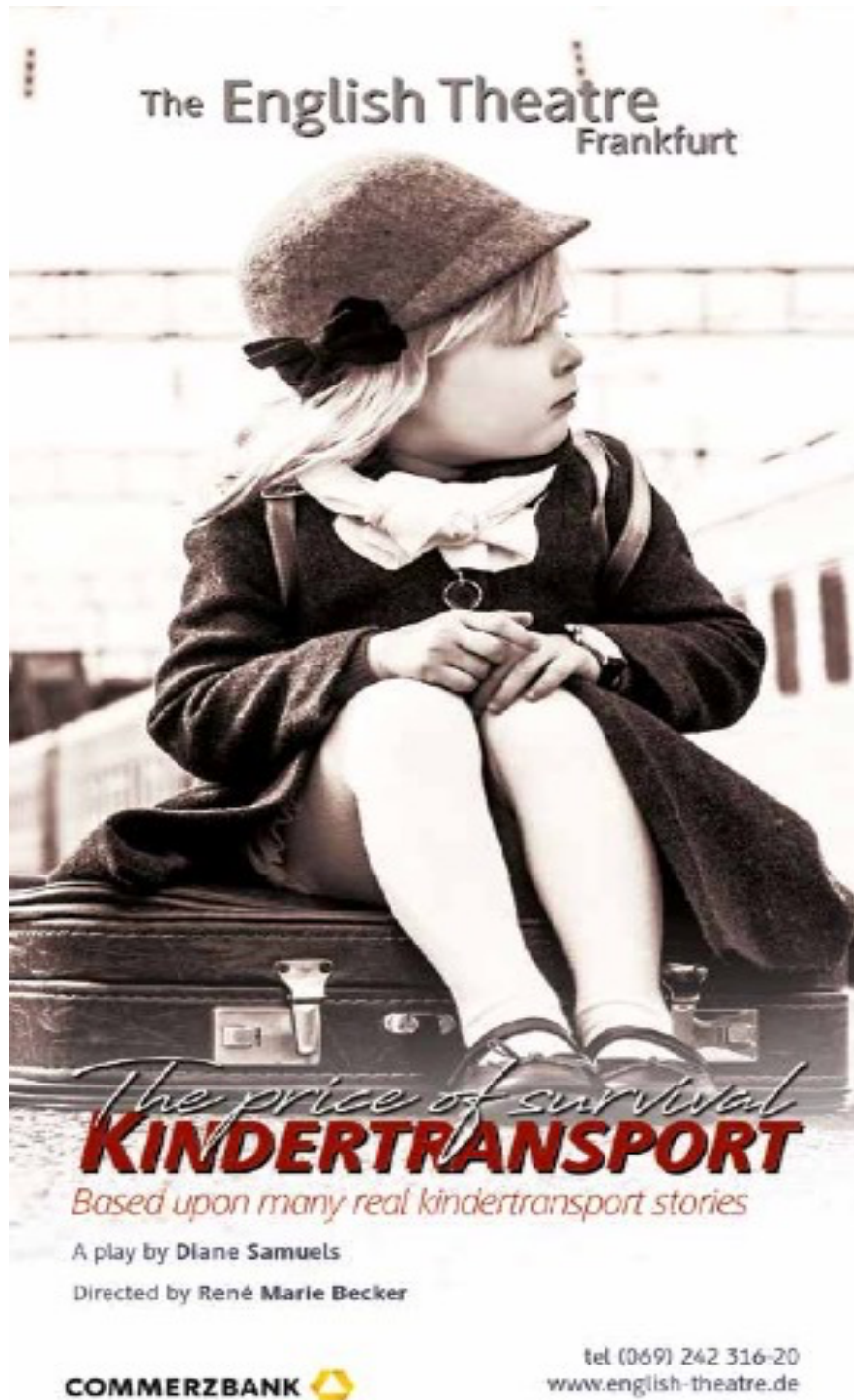


Kindertransport

Based upon many real Kindertransport stories by Diane Samuels



Teachers' Resource Pack

This teachers' pack includes information as well as tasks and topics to be dealt with in the classroom. The tasks do not necessarily build on each other. Cut and paste as you please, and please consult the official program for additional information.

Background information

The Author

Diane Samuels

Diane Samuels is a playwright whose work has been widely produced. Her play *Kindertransport* won the Verity Bargate and Meyer-Whitworth Awards, and was first produced by the Soho Theatre Company in 1993. Subsequently it has been translated into many languages, performed in the West End, Off-Broadway and all over the world, and revived numerous times.

Other plays include: *The True-Life Fiction of Mata Hari* (Watford Palace Theatre, 2002); *Cinderella's Daughter* (Trestle Theatre tour, 2005); *3 Sisters on Hope Street* with Tracy-Ann Oberman (co-produced by Liverpool Everyman/Playhouse and Hampstead Theatres, 2008) and *Poppy + George* (Watford Palace Theatre, 2016).

Her plays for younger audiences include *One Hundred Million Footsteps* for Quicksilver Theatre Company and *Chalk Circle*, *Frankie's Monster* and *How to Beat a Giant* at the Unicorn Theatre.

Her musical, *The A-Z of Mrs P*, with music and lyrics by Gwyneth Herbert, had its world premiere at Southwark Playhouse in 2014.

For BBC radio, plays include *Swine*, *Doctor Y*, *Watch Out for Mister Stork*, *Hen Party*, *Tiger Wings* and *Psyche*.

She also works as a teacher/facilitator of creative writing to all ages.



The Director

René M. Becker

René Marie Becker is a well-rounded theater professional, originally from Upstate New York. She earned her degree in Theater at Nazareth College of Rochester and moved to New York City where she joined the DAP Ensemble, a group of Directors, Actors, and Playwrights from the New School's Actors Studio. In addition to performing as part of their acting company, she went on to serve as their Producing Director for nearly 2 Years. René later began working with The Gallery Players in Brooklyn and served on their Board of Directors as well as Producer of their annual Black Box New Play Festival until leaving for Germany in 2007. After moving to Frankfurt, René co-founded Theatre Language Studio (TLS) Frankfurt, an English language production company and Theater School in Frankfurt am Main. On top of her on-going work as Producing Director, Performer, and Instructor at TLS, she has also taught Drama club at the Strothoff School, coached local improvisation and acting troupes, and developed a literacy project aimed at bilingual children, Storytime with Rita Storee. Complementing both her theater degree and practical production experience, René has studied improvisation with iO Chicago, Imprology, The Maydays, Fabio Marcioni, Lee White and Anundpfirsich. She is one of the English Theatre Frankfurt's Theatre pedagogues and we are thrilled to have her as the director for our play "Kindertransport" at our theatre.

Kindertransport - Synopsis

The play „Kindertransport“ combines a highly emotional intergenerational conflict around the turn of the millennium between a daughter, Faith, mother, Evelyn, and grandmother, Lil, and the story of a 9-year-old German girl called Eva, who had to flee from her home country in 1938 in the face of the persecution of Jews by the Nazi-Regime.

As a Jewish child Eva's parents have the opportunity to send her daughter to safety to Great Britain by train. Since Great Britain only accepted under-age refugees, Eva has to leave Helga, her mother, behind in a Germany shaken by anti-semitic rage and violence. Cut off from her birth family, religion and culture, Eva grows up being torn between the child she once was and the life she leads now with her foster mother Lil. In order to not constantly be torn between two worlds, Eva creates a new self. As a grown-up she calls herself Evelyn and has a family of her own, who is oblivious to what happened in the past.

In the course of the play, Faith, Evelyn's daughter, discovers that her mother had been one of these rescued children but has hidden it from her all her life. Even though she understands that she touches a tender spot, she confronts her mother about her childhood. In flashbacks, we learn about little Eva's story, how she was separated from her German mother Helga, how she met her English foster mother Lil, how she tried to facilitate, as a child still, the immigration of her parents to Great Britain before the war started and how she gradually lost hope and consequently denied her German Jewish roots.

As the trauma of her childhood haunts Evelyn, her foster mother Lil tries her best to care for her and shield her from the terrors of her past while her daughter Faith is furious because she feels that her mother has deprived her of a part of her identity by keeping her family's past from her. The play acts out the explosive conflict between the three of them and negotiates each of their perspectives with one another while merging together past and present into one traumatic time frame. It is a generational drama, a play about motherhood, the meaning of origin, and the price of survival.

Character descriptions

Eva: German Jewish girl. She starts the play at 9 years old in Germany and finishes it at 17 years old in Great Britain. Jewish German becoming increasingly English. Evelyn's younger self.

Helga: Eva's mother. German Jewish woman of the late 1930s. She is in her early thirties at the beginning of the play, educated and well-heeled. She has a caring and loving relationship to her daughter. She sends Eva on a Kindertransport to Great Britain to save her life.

Evelyn: English middle-class woman. In her fifties. The later self of Eva who has started a new life after naturalisation in Great Britain. Distrustful to most people and anxious of being abandoned or left alone. Tends to compulsively cleanse everything around her. Has a rather distant relationship to her daughter but is very close with her foster mother Lil.

Lil: Eva's / Evelyn's foster mother. In her thirties, when she takes Eva in. In her eighties when she is with Eva and Faith in the attic. Caring, loving, reliable, but at the same time resolute. Sometimes trying to mediate between her daughter and her granddaughter.

Faith: Evelyn's daughter and only child. In her early twenties. Still in the process of growing up, finding her own way and becoming independent. Anxious about leaving her mother by moving out, annoyed by her OCD, curious about her mother's past.

The Ratcatcher: a mythical character who haunts Eva/Evelyn, constantly reminding her of the past she so desperately wants to forget.

Kindertransport Historic Context and local reference

At the beginning of the 20th century Jews were a natural part of German society. Many Jewish families could look back at a centuries-old ancestry. Due to this natural belonging to German society many Jews hoped that the Nazi nightmare beginning in 1933 could be put to an end very soon. But with the "Nuremberg laws" in 1935 it became obvious that the Jews should be separated from other citizens, that they should not be seen as Germans any longer – without any regard to their own attitude towards Jewishness or if they were German patriots and had even fought for Germany in the Great War (World War I): The Nazis defined who should be expelled from the society as "Jewish".

Many families – by Nazi law now persecuted as Jews – tried desperately to emigrate but the international conference in Évian/France in July 1938 made it only too clear that almost no country was ready to allow a larger group of Jewish people to emigrate into their country. The November pogrom in 1938 revealed the dramatic situation of the Jewish population to the whole world. But even then only a small population succeeded in finding a country to escape to.

So many parents started to look for solutions to save at least their children. Although it seemed to be unendurable to separate it increasingly became the only option to transfer their children to a safe place abroad. But this option was not easy to achieve and many efforts did not prove to be successful. And all these efforts would have been in vain without those countries accepting at least the emigration of children.

Especially in the UK organizational structures were built up after the November Pogrom in November 9th/10th 1938 to rescue endangered children and young adults. In danger was the offspring of Jewish families, Christian-Jewish families and of so called "non-Aryan" Christian families (i.d. families who had converted/ been baptized) and a smaller group of children from politically persecuted families.



Due to the "Jugend-Aliyah", founded by Recha Freier, groups of young Jewish people succeeded in making Aliyah, emigrating to Palestine (then under British mandate) and about 20.000 children and young adults (up to 17 years of age) could leave Germany and Austria via the so called *Kindertransporte* – much less than needed and had been possible.

The “Kindertransports”

The so called *Kindertransporte* left mainly from Germany and Austria, especially to the UK, the USA the Netherlands and France. **About 20.000 children from Germany and Austria, and above that about 1000 – 2000 from Poland and Czechoslovakia could be rescued between 1938 and 1940.** But compared with that number also those children have to be seen whose parents had wanted them to leave at that time which were about 60.000 children. The USA took about 5.000, Belgium about 1.600, France about 600, Switzerland about 260 children. **The UK took most of the children, i.e. about 10.000.**

Due to the British mandate in Palestine the British government was not ready to allow increased emigration into Palestine although a lot of Jewish families living there wanted to take refugee children. At the same time emigration to Britain was not welcome because the government was afraid of anti-Semitic reactions in Britain itself.

But in the course of events private initiatives of Christian and Jewish people started a discussion which eventually led to a debate in the British Parliament in November 1938 and a decision of the – initially reluctant – members of Parliament to allow the emigration of children and young adults up to the age of 17.

Crucial for this decision was the fact that the expense was not to be paid by the state but by the *Jewish Refugee Committee*, initiated by *Otto M. Schiff* (a London broker of German origin) and via sponsoring campaigns, e.g. initiated by *Lionel de Rothschild* and *Simon Marks* (Marks&Spencer) with their *Central British Fund for German Jewry* (founded in 1933), the *Baldwin-Fund* and the host families and homes/boarding schools.

Many of the other eligible host countries, e.g. Switzerland, followed a restrictive policy and took only a few children. Even the USA took much less children than needed and possible. The Netherlands took children but their possibilities were limited because of the invasion of the German army in 1940 but they tried to rescue those children already living in the Netherlands. Belgium and France also took children but again the invasion stopped further emigration; and here as well people tried to protect those endangered children already living in the country.

The organization of the “Kindertransports”

Because of the rare opportunities to leave parents had to decide at very short notice whether to send their children abroad on their own – always worrying that they could not see them for a long period or even for the last time: Emigration-formalities including a valid passport had to be dealt with; the most important things had to be packed into a small suitcase. And above all the preparations had to look like the preparations for a prolonged holiday – for the sake of the children who should not be worried.

And sometimes the families had to deal with the very difficult decision to accept an offer for a transport even if not all children of the family could get the opportunity to escape the Nazis. The “selection” was mainly due to the “offers” in the countries which



took *Kindertransport-Kinder*. Children between six and fourteen (max. seventeen), preferably girls. Only a few desperate families succeeded in "smuggling" toddlers into the transport. Kids with handicaps had no chance to be taken.

In the host country the children were placed all over the country – given to families or into special homes. Especially boys had to live rather in children's homes than with families. Girls were seen as less complicated and more adaptable and willing to give a hand in the household.

Regarding to reports the admission in their host countries differed a lot: From a warm reception and support for their education and future career to the exploitation as a "cheap" help. Speaking German was not done or at least not encouraged. Many children felt lost and left alone – overwhelmed because even siblings were normally not allowed at the same place. The contact to their parents at home became increasingly difficult. Additionally, Orthodox children had the problem that very often they were not given the chance to fulfill their religious tasks.

Without the support of the transit countries (e.g. the Netherlands) and the host countries (especially the UK) the Kindertransports could not have succeeded. A lot of English organizations started even before 1938 rescuing endangered children, e.g. the *Children's Interaid Committee/Save the Children Fund*, *Refugee Children's Movement*, *B'nai B'Brith* and the *Society of Friends*, which played an outstanding role and were honoured for that with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947.

"Kindertransports" leaving from Frankfurt/Main

The transports leaving from Frankfurt/Main did not only give children from Frankfurt the opportunity to be rescued. Since 1935 a lot of Jewish people had tried to escape from the countryside to the nearby big city or at least sent their children there. Especially Jews from rural areas, from villages and small towns, where life started getting unbearable very soon after the Nazis had come into power, sent their children to Frankfurt, living there with relatives or in different homes like the *Orphanage* in Hans-Thoma-Street/district of Sachsenhausen, the *Israelite Orphanage* in Röderbergweg/Ostend or at the *Flersheim-Sichel-Foundation* in Ebersheim Street/Eschersheim.

The *Jüdische Wohlfahrtspflege* (Jewish Social Services) of the *Jewish Community* in Frankfurt was in charge of the organization of the transports in the south-west of Germany. Frankfurt Central Station was the rail junction for the south-west area, e.g. "Kindertransports" coming from Munich. I want to mention here only two of the outstanding fighters of those days: *Isidor Marx* (head of the *Israelite Orphanage* in Frankfurt) and *Martha Wertheimer* (journalist and social worker at the Jewish social services who accompanied several transports).

(*Kindertransport 1938 to 1940 – An Introduction* By Till Lieberz-Groß, Deputy Chairwoman „Jüdisches Leben in Frankfurt e.V.“)¹

¹ <https://www.juedisches-leben-frankfurt.de/en/home/kindertransport/>

The Kindertransport memorial Frankfurt am Main

In Frankfurt, too, many Jewish families decided to go into exile under the pressure of National Socialist persecution. But most countries only accepted a limited number of fugitives and the hurdles to entry were high. In 1938, desperate people were offered the opportunity to at least bring their children to safety. The Kindertransporte brought about 20,000 children to safe foreign countries, mostly to Great Britain. Frankfurt's main railway station was an important starting point for these journeys.

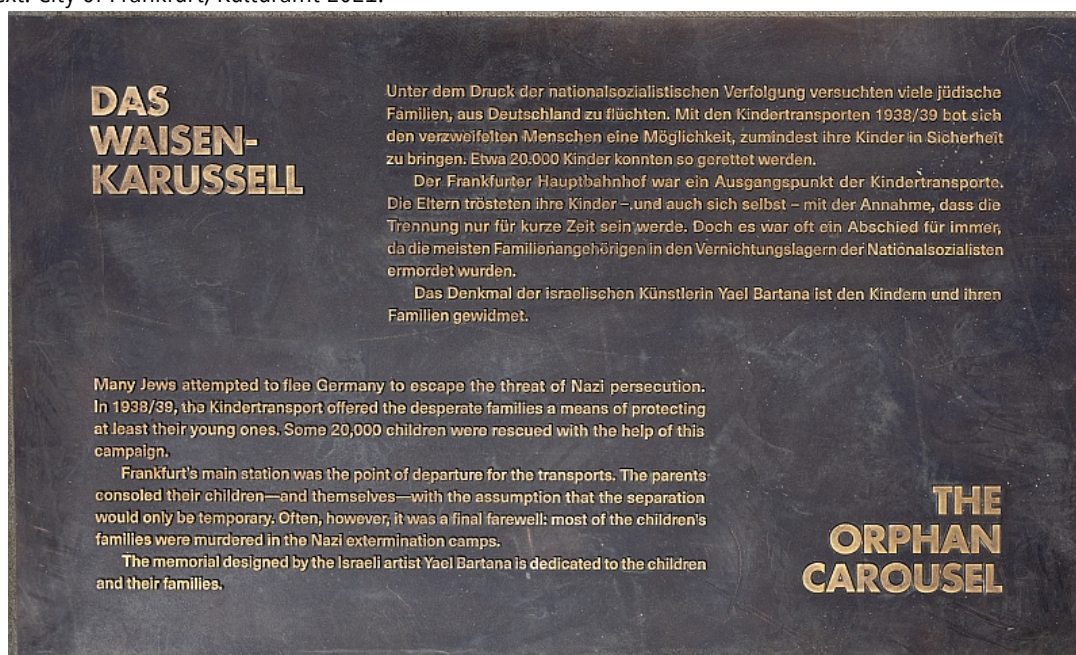
The Orphan Carousel / Das Waisen-Karussell deals with the void left behind after the hopeful as well as painful departure of these children.

The memorial is modelled on an old-style wooden carousel, variations of which can still be found in children's playgrounds today. It can be used as a carousel, but is difficult to turn. Three sentences are engraved on the side walls: "See you soon, my child", "Goodbye, mother", "Goodbye, father" - words of farewell, in other words, full of the joy of seeing each other again. Parents comforted their children - and themselves - with the assumption that the separation would only be for a short time. But it was often a farewell for ever, as most of those left behind were murdered in the Nazi extermination camps.

The memorial is dedicated to the children and their families who were separated in 1938/39. But it also makes us think of the many children and young people of today who have to leave their families behind in their war-torn homeland.

The erection of a memorial to the Kindertransportes was initiated by "Kindertransport children". The design by Yael Bartana was successful in a competition organised by the City of Frankfurt, and the memorial was erected in September 2021.

Text: City of Frankfurt, Kulturamt 2021. ²



² <https://www.kunst-im-oeffentlichen-raum-frankfurt.de/de/page134.html?id=455>

Interview Diane Samuels

This interview was issued on Britishtheatre.com in 2017.

Can you tell us a little about the Kindertransport story?

Between 1938 and the outbreak of the Second World War, almost 10,000 children, most of them Jewish, were sent by their parents from Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria to safety in Britain. In my play nine-year old Eva (based on the actual experiences of a number of children and developed as a single fictional character) comes to Manchester where she is looked after by Lil. When Eva's parents fail to escape Germany, she settles into English life and once the war is over changes her name, becomes adopted by her foster parents and chooses to eradicate her painful loss and background.

In the play, Evelyn, now in her fifties, is confronted by her own daughter, Faith, when she finds some photos and comments from that time hidden in the attic. What inspired you to base a play around those whose lives were impacted by the Kindertransport?

Three incidents led me to write "Kindertransport". The first was a discussion with a close friend, in her late twenties and born into a comfortable, secure home, who described her struggle to deal with the guilt of survival. Her father had been on the Kindertransport and I was struck by how her parent's feelings had been passed down so fully to her.

The second was the experience of another friend who, at his father's funeral, overheard his mother recalling her time at Auschwitz. Until that moment he had had no idea that his mother had been in a concentration camp.

The third was the ashamed admission by a fifty-five year old woman on a television documentary about the Kindertransport, that the feeling she felt most strongly towards her dead parents was rage at their abandonment of her, even though that abandonment had saved her life.

In 1989, I was a young mother with a one-year old son and pregnant with my second child when I saw this TV documentary. I was struck at once by the ways in which parents and children struggled to deal with this desperate parting.

Artists are often drawn to the extremes of human experience in order to reflect also upon what is ordinary. I was compelled to get to the heart of the unresolvable dilemma. Ask a child if they would prefer to be sent away to safety if their family is in mortal danger, and he or she will, in most cases, say that they'd rather stay and die with their parents. Ask a parent what they would do in the same situation and most would say that they'd send away their child to be safe. To be a parent is to live with this hidden contradiction. I wanted to try to face it.

We understand that you were brought up in a tight-knit Jewish community did you feel a connection to the story?

I grew up in a tight-knit Jewish community in Liverpool in the 1960s and 70s. I was taught Jewish history and the Holocaust was given due attention. Yet there was no word about the Kindertransport.

The reasons for this connect with the inner life of the Kinder themselves. Many simply chose not to discuss or raise the matter of where they had come from and how. In their adult lives they had focused on making a living, raising families and "putting the past behind" them.

When the 1989 anniversary came around, the youngest Kinder, who had travelled across Europe and the North Sea as babies thrust into the arms of older children, were in their fifties, whilst the teenage refugees were in their sixties. Late middle age is a time when life catches up with a person.

2019 marks 80 years since the Kindertransport and 25 years since you wrote the play. Do you think this is a story that still feels timely today in a society where many are feeling displaced? Can we draw any parallels but to the current immigration crisis?

People are always being displaced, moving about the planet, leaving home. Violent displacement has long-term effects as well as short term challenges. The play gives audiences a chance to reflect on the long-term, deeply emotional and psychological effects when the news is focused on the acute challenges of survival. The question those who have homes can ask are about how, like Lil, help can be offered. Some things can't be helped. Yet some can.

Many Kinder, now very elderly, have been instrumental in pressing the British government to allow child refugees to come into Britain.

What do you think it is about this story that still resonates so strongly with today's audiences?

The core theme of the play is Separation – of child from mother. Every human being experiences this primal loss at birth and in different ways as they grow up. It happens to us all.

Also, my focus when writing the play was to probe the inner life where memory is shaped by trauma, history meets story, in order to gain psychological and emotional insight into how a damaged psyche can survive, possibly recover, and whether there might ever be an opportunity to thrive. This journey within is what Kindertransport also offers each member of the audience if they allow themselves to go where it ventures, no matter where or when they live.

The play itself is a commentary on many things outside of the story of the Kindertransport, can you tell us a little about these themes and how the play comes to explore them?

See above – separation. Mother-daughter relationships. How a child can inherit trauma from a parent as if they had experienced it too, when actually they haven't. How trauma impacts on people and fear is carried on into every experience, giving an inability to feel safe. How to feel safe? How to heal? I hope that telling the story can be part of this healing for people individually and as a collective.³

Jewish traditions mentioned in *Kindertransport*

In a letter, Eva's birthmother, Helga, reminds her daughter to keep to the Jewish traditions and religious ceremonies in order to stay attached to her culture, even though they as a family were not very religious. In particular, she mentions Passover and the related ceremonies and texts.

'Passover'

*Jewish holiday marked by various traditions lasting 7-8 days, during which the community relives the story of the Exodus, when Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt towards freedom. A symbol of redemption and unity.

³ <https://britishtheatre.com/interview-playwright-diane-samuels-kindertransport/>

The Torah says to celebrate Passover for seven days, but Jews in the Diaspora lived too far away from Israel to receive word as to when to begin their observances and an additional day of celebration was added to be on the safe side.

According to the Book of Exodus the Children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for 210 years. God promised he would release them from slavery, but not before Pharaoh had refused their release and God had visited ten plagues on Egypt to demonstrate his power. (Exodus 3: 19-20)

The first nine plagues were:

The Plague of Blood, The Plague of Frogs, The Plague of Lice, The Plague of Flies, The Plague on Livestock, The Plague of Boils, The Plague of Hail, The Plague of Locusts, The Plague of Darkness
The plagues only affected the Egyptians - the Israelites were unaffected.

The Tenth Plague - **the plague on the firstborn**

An avenging angel would go from house to house killing every first-born son. Israelite children would not be killed and thus God would show that they were his chosen people. So that the angel would know which houses were Israelite homes, the Children of Israel were to follow very specific instructions:

- Each household was to take an unblemished, male lamb, look after it, and slaughter it at twilight four days later.
- Blood from the lamb was to be brushed on the door frames. This would tell the avenging angel that it was an Israelite home and to 'pass over'.
- Then the families were to roast the lamb and eat it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. Every bit of the lamb had to be eaten and any remaining bones burned.
-

The Israelites were to perform this ritual dressed for a journey. At midnight every Egyptian firstborn - from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the prisoner in his cell - and even of the livestock - was struck down by the angel.

The Egyptians were terrified and demanded Pharaoh banish the Israelites there and then.

'Seder'

*A **ritualistic meal** during the first two nights of Passover, a time for reflection, discussion and gratitude. "Seder" meaning "order" in Hebrew, the meal follows a structured sequence of symbolic foods such as bitter herbs and a mixture of fruit and nuts, each **representing different aspects of the Exodus story**.

The highlight of Passover observance takes place on the first two nights, when friends and family gather together for ritual seder meals.

Passover is also called The Festival of Freedom and is a celebration of freedom, not just in Biblical times, but its importance to the individual today and throughout history. Jews believe freedom to be one of the basic human rights. Readings about contemporary slavery or oppression to show solidarity with the oppressed may be included in some traditions.

'Haggadah'

*Text read during Passover, including **biblical passages, prayers and narratives**. With various versions of artistic styles in Jewish communities, the Haggadah serves as **a means of passing down Jewish traditions, fostering unity, gratitude and remembrance**.

The Haggadah is a book which tells in fourteen steps the story of the Jewish experience in Egypt and of the Exodus and revelation of God.

As the **story of each of the ten plagues** is read out a drop of wine is spilt to remind Jews that their liberation was tinged with sadness at the suffering of the Egyptians.

The Haggadah also contains songs, blessings, psalms and Four Questions. These four questions are:

Why do we eat unleavened bread?

Unleavened bread or matzo is eaten to remember the Exodus when the Israelites fled Egypt with their dough to which they had not yet added yeast.

Why do we eat bitter herbs?

Bitter herbs, usually horseradish, are included in the meal to represent the bitterness of slavery.

Why do we dip our food in liquid?

At the beginning of the meal a piece of potato is dipped in salt water to recall the tears the Jews shed as slaves.

Why do we eat in a reclining position?

In ancient times, people who were free reclined on sofas while they ate. Today cushions are placed on chairs to symbolise freedom and relaxation, in contrast to slavery.

Usually, the youngest person present will ask the questions and the father will respond. The paradox of this is that these four questions should be asked spontaneously, but celebrations cannot happen unless they are asked!

Children are central to Passover proceedings and symbolise the continuity of the Jewish people.⁴

The Four Sons'

The traditional Haggadah speaks of "four sons" – one who is wise, one who is wicked, one who is simple, and one who does not know to ask. Each of these sons phrases his question about the seder in a different way. The Haggadah recommends answering each son according to his question, using one of the three verses in the Torah that refer to this exchange.

The wise son asks "What are the statutes, the testimonies, and the laws that God has commanded us to do?" One explanation for why this very detailed-oriented question is categorized as wise, is that the wise son is trying to learn how to carry out the seder, rather than asking for someone else's understanding of its meaning. He is answered fully: "You should reply to him with [all] the laws of pesach: one may not eat any dessert after the paschal sacrifice."

The wicked son, who asks, "What is this service to you?", is characterized by the Haggadah as isolating himself from the Jewish people, standing by objectively and watching their behavior rather than participating. Therefore, he is rebuked by the explanation that "It is because God acted for *my* sake when I left Egypt." This implies that the Seder is not for the wicked son because the wicked son would not have deserved to be freed from Egyptian slavery. This exchange highlights the importance of being a part of the community and sticking to traditions even if they feel uncomfortable or foreign.

The simple son, who asks, "What is this?" is answered with a straightforward summary of the story directly from the Torah "With a strong hand the Almighty led us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage."

And the one who does not know to ask is told, "It is because of what the Almighty did for me when I left Egypt."

Some modern Haggadahs mention "children" instead of "sons", and some have added a fifth child. The fifth child can represent the children of the Shoah who did not survive to ask a question or represent Jews who have drifted so far from Jewish life that they do not participate in a Seder.

⁴ https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/holydays/passover_1.shtml

For the former, tradition is to say that for that child we ask "Why?" and, like the simple child, we have no answer.⁵

'Gold Jewelry, Star of David'

***Gold** holds symbolic significance in Jewish culture, representing **purity and divinity**. The **Star of David**, signifies **identity, unity, and the connection between God and humanity** in Judaism.

In Kindertransport, Eva is sent to a new country to live with a Christian family in order escape the national socialist's terror.

Helga, her birthmother, hides Jewelry in Eva's shoe so she can take it along with her. The golden rings, the golden watch and the star of David symbolize Helga's wish for Eva to be protected by God, to stay united as a family and as a community even if separated by force and in different countries. They are supposed to remind Eva of her roots and give her stability in an unknown country. The fact that, once in Great Britain, Eva cannot remove the Jewelry from her shoe shows us how hard it is for her to keep that connection alive and that all of Helga's good intentions to save her daughter are actually a burden. Helga sends her daughter away who obeys but does herself not wish to leave her family and suffers from the separation immensely. She wants to be a good child and obey her mother's wishes but her roots are simply too far out of reach. Ripped from her family geographically and having to hide her beliefs like the jewelry in her shoe in a still anti-semitistic environment, she slowly but surely loses the ground beneath her feet.

In Eva's first year in GB, Helga sends her daughter a letter, including the "Haggadah". Helga wants Eva to not only celebrate the holiday and holding on to tradition, she wants her to live through the pain of her ancestors, trusting in salvation for in their everyday life, Jews again were persecuted, enslaved or murdered.

Eva, being cut off from all other Jews and Jewish tradition, does not really know when to celebrate Passover. Moreover, she fears being ridiculed by Lil for asking for a seder meal. She wonders if it would be enough to just read the Haggadah. In a way, her and Helga recount the story partly together, Helga in her letter, Eva in response to it.

Eva's mother expresses her grief that they will have to celebrate without the youngest child present to sing the questions. In order to ensure continuity and survival of the Jewish people, they as a community had to be ripped apart. Celebrating Passover in its traditional meaning of reuniting Jews all over the world, by reading the same stories spread all around the world but still together united by their belief that freedom will come, might have reunited Eva with her people and culture in spirit, but little did Helga know that being apart would estrange Eva from her religion and culture as well as from her birthparents.

In a way, at least these few Jewish children that travelled to GB with the Kindertransports were again saved from the "plagues" and sent through water to a new country with the hopes of being able to live in peace and to ensure the continued existence of their people. However, in order to live through the burden of survival and the trauma caused by being ripped from her parents not knowing whether they lived or died, led Eva to deny and betray her roots eventually. In response to her mother's letter she even compares herself to the Egyptians wondering whether she might be led into the sea and drown. This again shows her feeling guilty for turning her back on her religion and her family – whether voluntarily or not.

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_Seder

Lesson Material

Pre-Watching Tasks

Learning about the rescue mission Kindertransport

- 1) Read the info text about the Kindertransports.⁶
- 2) The play “Kindertransport” by Diane Samuels tells Eva’s story – the story of a child, sent away to safety with one of the Kindertransports.
Discuss how parents and children must have felt in the respective situation. What have you learned about fears and hopes on both sides?
- 3) Go into small groups and imagine a Jewish family in the late 1930s. How many children are there? How old are they? What are their characteristics? What do the parents do for a living? How did the rise of National Socialism affect them? How do they live? Are there other relatives close by?...
- 4) When you have a family situation, create a scene starting with the moment when the parents receive a letter confirming that they can send their child/ one of their children to England.
Pay attention to dialogue as well as body language and distance and proximity.
- 5) Play your scene. Not all of you have to take the role of an actor. You could also appoint someone to be the director and make suggestions from an outside perspective while practicing, someone, who can present your imagined family situation before presenting... etc.

Contemporary relevance

‘At its heart, the play is about that universal and timeless aspect of human experience: the separation of a child from its parent. Every person on earth, whatever their age, can relate to that.’

Diane Samuels

Explain Diane Samuels’ quote on her play “Kindertransport”. Discuss whether you agree that this topic is still relevant today and justify your opinion.

⁶ The section about the memorial is not needed for this task.

While Watching Tasks

Visiting the Memorial

Right after the play, you could go to the Kindertransport memorial on Kaiserstraße to reflect on what you have just experienced.

Take your time to deal with the memorial, try to turn the carousel, read the plaque make the connection to the play. Why has the artist chosen a carousel? Make sense of the writings on the side.

Give your opinion on the memorial. Do you think it fulfils its purpose to remind us of the Kindertransport-children and their loved ones? Give reasons and gather ideas for possible alternatives for memorialising the children and their fate.



Quiz

1. What did Helga hide in the heels of Eva's shoes?
 - a) Jewellery as a traveling gift
 - b) An old family picture
 - c) Keys to their old house
2. Which children's story book does Eva want her mother to read to her?
 - a) The Ratcatcher
 - b) A volume of fairy-tales
 - c) Adventures of Tom Sawyer
3. What is the first thing Lil does when she picks up Eva from the train station?
 - a) She shows her around the city.
 - b) She helps her to get rid of her label with the Star of David on it.
 - c) She takes her home and cooks for her.
4. Why did Eva/Evelyn change her birthday to January 7th?
 - a) January 7th was the birthday of her real mother, Helga.
 - b) '7' is her favourite number.
 - c) January 7th was the day she arrived in England.
5. What are Faith and Evelyn fighting about after Faith discovered the box with Evelyn's old things?
 - a) Faith is disappointed and angry that her mother lied to her about her origins and never planned on telling her the truth.
 - b) Faith found items that belong to her and she is angry that her mother took them from her.
 - c) Faith thinks her mother should have got rid of the box earlier.
6. Which reason does Evelyn give for wanting to destroy her old belongings?
 - a) She still likes to look at them from time to time.
 - b) They include documents that prove that Evelyn has a right to stay in England. She is still afraid that someone could send her away.
 - c) A lot of the items remind her of home and she cannot bring herself to throw them away because they are still close to her heart.
7. Who does Evelyn refer to with 'the German woman'?
 - a) A family friend.
 - b) A woman she met at the train station in London.
 - c) Her real birth mother.
8. What does Lil do when she and Eva watch the newsreel of the liberation of Belsen?
 - a) She covers Eva's face with a handkerchief to prevent her seeing the shocking images.
 - b) Nothing. They just watch in silence.
 - c) She refuses to look at the images herself because she cannot bear herself to watch them.
9. Which reason does Eva give for wanting to sell the jewellery, her mother gave to her? (71)
 - a) She wants to get rid of everything that reminds her of her past.
 - b) She wants to give pleasure to someone else by giving it away to someone who has less than her.

- c) She does not wear it anyway and she would prefer to have the money she can get from it.
10. Helga wants to take Eva to New York when they finally reunite. Why?
- a) The remains of their family are in the USA and she wants to make a new beginning there.
 - b) She always wanted to go there and now finally dares to fulfil her dream after everything that happened to her.
 - c) She wants to be as far away from Germany as possible.
11. How does Eva react to that offer?
- a) Reluctantly. She started a new family with the Millers and wants to stay in England.
 - b) She is willing to go with Helga but wants to talk to Lil first.
 - c) Happily. She is relieved her mother asked her to come with her.
12. What is Eva accusing her mother of in the end?
- a) She is angry that Helga gave her away. She says she would have rather died with her.
 - b) She thinks Helga's wish to go to New York is selfish and expects her mother to stay with her in England instead.
 - c) She accuses her of getting in touch with her after the war in the first place.

Jewish religion and traditions in *Kindertransport*

Read the excerpt where Eva reads the letter from Helga.

HELGA. To the very best daughter any parents could wish for. The jobs. The permits.
Thank you.

EVA. It wasn't all me.

HELGA. You have opened the door to a new and hopeful life.

EVA. Mrs. Miller did as much as I did.

HELGA. Not long now. And then all of us together again as I promised.

EVA takes out of the parcel Der Rattenfänger book, a letter and a Haggadah for Passover.

EVELYN unpacks and checks the clothes.

HELGA. Your storybook. I know how much you like it.

EVA opens the letter.

HELGA. I also enclose your Haggadah for Passover.

EVA. When is Passover?

HELGA. I hear that there are lots of Jews in Manchester.

EVA. Is it before or after Easter? . . .

HELGA. It will be easy to celebrate seder night with some of them.

EVA. Maybe it's happened already.

HELGA. We will be having a small seder. Not like the big ones we used to have.

EVA. I can't ask Mrs. Miller to do a seder.

HELGA. 'Why is this night different from all other nights?' What will we do without you to sing the questions for us? What is a seder without the presence of the youngest child?

EVA. She'd think it was silly.

HELGA. We have never been a very religious family, Eva. But this has to do with more than religion.

EVA. Next year when they're here. I'll do it then.

HELGA. The Passover story has special meaning for us.

EVA. Maybe I could just read the Haggadah to myself. Would that count?

HELGA. Remember how the Israelites had to endure hard labour.

EVA. Some of it's quite boring though.

HELGA. How every son was thrown into the Nile.

EVA. The ten plagues upon the Egyptians is good.

HELGA. And Moses led the Israelites out of slavery and the waves of the Red Sea parted to let them through.

EVA. And when all the Egyptians follow into the path between the waves and get drowned. They deserved it.

HELGA. We must tell the story not as if it was experienced only by our ancestors but as if it happened to us. Not legend but truth. 'This is what happened to ME when I came out of Egypt.' This is how we survived and this is how we survive.

EVA. When did there stop being miracles?

HELGA. And remember the four sons: the wise son, the bad son, the stupid son and the son who doesn't even know what to ask.

EVELYN pulls out the coat worn by EVA for her journey out of Germany.

HELGA. Try to be like the wise son, Eva.

EVA. What if I can't be wise?

HELGA. The weather here is lovely at the moment. The garden is looking beautiful. I wish I could bring it all with me over to England.

EVA. Will I get led like the Egyptians into the sea and drown forever?

HELGA. I am so looking forward to seeing you again and meeting your lovely English family. All my love. Mutti.

- a) What is the scene about?
- b) Name the scene's position within the play. What happens before and after this scene?
- c) Make a list of and research the Jewish religious aspects and traditions named in that scene.
- d) Use your knowledge about Passover and Haggadah to explain the meaning of Passover for Helga on the one hand and for Eva on the other.
- e) Helga refers to the four sons who are a part of Haggadah. Research the story of the four sons.
- f) Helga advises her daughter to be the "wise" son. Explain what she means and wishes for her daughter.
- g) Having seen the play, which son do you think, Eva turned out to be? Say why.

Post-Watching

Fear and our Protector

One person will represent what we fear, one person will become our protector. Fun that involves body and mind, encourages flexibility, discretion and quick thinking. This exercise requires space to move, freely.

1. Begin by asking students to scatter around the room, each occupying their own space, and not in small groups. Then ask the students to silently think of a person in the room who "frightens them" (for the purposes of the game only). It is key that this is private information, no student should name or point to the person that scares them.
2. Now ask students to move around the room, trying to keep as far away from the person who frightens them as possible. Students should try not to let the "fear" person know that they have been chosen. Be sure to remind students to be safe and move slowly.
3. After a short time, ask students to FREEZE where they are. Now they should silently think of a different person, who will now be their protector. Again, this should not be said, or indicated aloud.
4. Now everyone must move around again, trying to keep their protector between them and the person they fear.
5. Give a countdown and at zero students must FREEZE where they are.

Discuss: *Who has succeeded in evading the one they fear? What did you notice about your self/the class? What helped you succeed? What was difficult/why? How does this relate to the play?*

Alternatives:

- Use music. When the music stops, students must freeze. Play different types of music. How does this change the exercise?
- Use cards. Have a small group of students up. Students will then pick cards to see who they fear and who is protector. How does this change the game? What if only one student is fear? How does this feel? What other changes do you notice?

Creating a Scene

Create a scene, in small groups, with two people playing the two sides of Evelyn: the external, seemingly ordered, tightly controlled woman and the inner Evelyn full of fear, aggression and depression.

Choose a situation with some conflict within it, perhaps Evelyn's husband leaving, or Faith being in trouble at school or even an everyday scene, such as a row in a shop over being short-changed. Both Evelyns must be in the scene at all times. They must be in physical contact.

Evelyn wants to control and subdue the inner Evelyn who wants to be heard. The other characters in the scene can only see the outer Evelyn.

What happens?

Appendix

While Watching Tasks

Quiz

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